Shakespeare and Philosophy

Stanley Stewart

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To Barbara

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Bibliographical Note

Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Shakespeare in my text are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), and all works published before 1800 bear a London imprint. Throughout, I regularize i/j and u/v, expand contractions, and silently ignore obvious printers' errors, meaningless capitals, small capitals, italics, and the like. To avoid annoying intrusions in the text, I have also avoided the use of square brackets to indicate that the initial word in a quotation is or is not capitalized in the original. For the same reason, I avoid ellipsis marks at the end of quotations, when their elimination does nothing to alter the sense of the quotation. I am aware that Nietzsche scholars usually refer to his works by section rather than by page numbers, but because some of the sections referred to here are rather lengthy, I have, for the reader's convenience, cited page numbers. To avoid repetition, and in cases in which more than one work cited was published in the same year, I abbreviate frequently cited works. In some cases, to avoid confusion, I include the author's name; but for complete bibliographical information, see "Bibliography."

Abbreviations

ALFA	*Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*
BJJ	*The Ben Jonson Journal: Literary Contexts in the Age of Elizabeth, James, and Charles*
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy*
BWJR	*The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce*
CAP	*The Critic as Anti-Philosopher*
CV	*Culture and Value*
CWJ	*The Correspondence of William James*
DBGA	*The Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle*
EB	*Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.)
EH	*Ecce Homo*
EMPL	*Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*
E/O	*Either/Or*
EP	*Essays in Philosophy*
EPM	*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*
ERE	*Essays in Radical Empiricism*
EPP	*Essays: From the Parega and Paralipomena*
EUD	*Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*
EW	*The Early Works, 1882–1898*

FD	*Four Dissertations and Essays On Suicide and The Immortality of the Soul*
FE	*Fugitive Essays*
FT	*Fear and Trembling*
GS	*The Gay Science*
HE	*The History of England*
JP	*Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*
JSK	*The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*
LDH	*The Letters of David Hume*
LE	"A Lecture on Ethics"
LGF	*A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in Edinburgh*
LW	*The Later Works, 1925–1953*
MW	*The Middle Works, 1898–1924*
NB	*Notebooks: 1914–1916*
NCW	*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*
NHTH	*Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*
NO	*Novum Organum*
OC	*On Certainty*
OWN	*On the Will in Nature*
P	*Pragmatism*
PA	*The Present Age*
PC	*Practice in Christianity*
PEFW	*Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*
PI	*Philosophical Investigations*
RFGB	*Remarks on Frazer's* Golden Bough
RW	*Recollections of Wittgenstein*

SCH	*Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*
SE	*For Self-Examination: Judge for Yourself*
SLW	*Stages on Life's Way*
SPP	*Some Problems of Philosophy*
SUD	*The Sickness Unto Death*
SWA	*Selected Writings on Aesthetics*
THN	*A Treatise of Human Nature*
TI	*Twilight of the Idols*
TLP	*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
TP	*Theoretical Philosophy: 1755–1770*
UM	*Untimely Meditations*
VRE	*The Varieties of Religious Experience*
WC	*Wittgenstein Conversations: 1949–1951*
WFB	*The Works of Francis Bacon*
WP	*The Will to Power*
WWR	*The World as Will and Representation*

Acknowledgments

Because I have been working on this book for quite a while, I owe thanks to more than the usual number of students and colleagues, even though I may remember some of them only as faces sketched in dubiety during classroom discussions or in dismay at scholarly conferences. I like to think that even questions and comments that might have seemed to me hostile at the time have helped make material and perspectives available that, without them, would have been missed. Of course, it would be wrong to suppose that, because of their good intentions, the students and colleagues who, wittingly or unwittingly, helped bring certain materials into focus should be held accountable for any of the faults in this book. Rather, they deserve thanks—especially those who gave generously of their time to read and to criticize parts of this book as it developed. While Jeffrey Kahan and I were working on an unrelated project, he was always willing to listen to or read the various parts of the book as they took shape; and he also permitted me to test the waters of "Continental" philosophy with a part of Chapter 6 in a volume of "live essays" on *King Lear* (Routledge 2008). I thank the publisher for permission to use a version of "Lear in Kierkegaard" as part of Chapter 6, "Shakespeare and Subjectivity: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche."

Likewise, over the last few years, John Mulryan, editor of *Cithara: Essays in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, let me try out some of my ideas on Shakespeare in eighteenth-century philosophy, including early versions of chapters included here on William Richardson and David Hume. I am grateful to his publisher, St. Bonaventure University, for permission to use reworked versions of those essays in this book. Also, at every step, Richard Harp and Robert Evans, Co-Editors with me on *The Ben Jonson Journal: Literary Contexts in the Age of Elizabeth, James, and Charles*, never failed to offer support and encouragement. Under their sponsorship, I read parts of this book at several Sixteenth Century Studies Conferences; subsequently, early versions of Chapters 1 and 2 appeared in the journal, which is now published by the Edinburgh University Press. I am grateful for their friendship and advice, as well as for their permission to use revised versions of those essays in this book. I owe thanks, also, to Ralph Cohen, Editor, and to the Johns Hopkins Press, publisher, of *New Literary History*, for

permission to use parts of the chapter on Wittgenstein, which appeared in their journal:

> "Was Wittgenstein a Closet Literary Critic?" New Literary History 34.1 (2003), pp. 43-57. c 2003 *New Literary History*, University of Virginia. Reprinted with permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.

The unstinting patience and generosity of my colleagues at the University of California, Riverside, was a great help in this project. John B. Vickery never seemed to weary of my efforts to, as they now say, "access" his rich acquaintance with twentieth-century philosophy for the purposes of my interest in Shakespeare. I am embarrassed to think of the many versions of the chapter on Wittgenstein that he read and, without complaint, critiqued, as if he were unaware of predecessor texts. Then too, I probably would not even have moved in the direction of "Literature and Philosophy" were it not for Bernd Magnus and Jean-Pierre Mileur, with whom I collaborated on *Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as/and Literature* (Routledge 1993). Working on that book shifted my focus from archival study of Renaissance literature to investigation of the diction employed by practicing critics of Renaissance literature and culture. In turn, that shift led to a book-length study entitled *Renaissance Talk: Ordinary Language and the Mystique of Critical Problems* (Duquesne 1997) and, now, to *Shakespeare and Philosophy*.

In fact, my interest in the interrelations between philosophy and literature goes back even farther than the Nietzsche project. Quite early in my academic career, I moved from an interest in linguistics, which developed in graduate school, to philosophers connected with the "ordinary language" movement. While a graduate student at UCLA, and because of remarks that Professor Ralph Cohen made regarding the relationship between philosophy and literary criticism in a seminar on eighteenth-century literature, I attended lectures given by a visiting professor named John Wisdom. He referred often to one of his instructors at Cambridge University, named Ludwig Wittgenstein. When I went to teach at the University of California, Riverside, I learned that Larry Wright conducted a Wittgenstein Reading Group. He invited me to join, and I spent twenty-five years reading Wittgenstein with the Group. Over those many years, Larry Wright remained a source of intellectual stimulation. While writing this book, I have tried to keep his remarks on "reasoning" in mind; and if I have succeeded in replacing "argument" with "reasons-giving," it is probably due to the benign influence of Larry Wright and the Wittgenstein Reading Group.

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S. S.
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1 Philosophy's Shakespeare
Defining Terms

The rise of science in the eighteenth century led David Hume, William Richardson, and others like them to ponder ways in which literature and literary criticism were, or could be, vehicles for the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. A century later, the aim was more likely to be to think of literature in musical terms. When Pater asserts that poetry aspires to "the condition of music," he implies that poetry increases in value in proportion to its appositeness to music. To put that point another way, Pater assumes that music is more valuable than poetry, and so that the prestige of poetry increases with its capacity to mimic the effects of music. Likewise, when one describes a piece of music as a "tone poem," the rhetorical aim is to appropriate value in the opposite direction, toward "programmatic" music, "Pastoral" symphonies, and "Pictures at an Exhibition." In the twentieth century, literary critics were more inclined to emulate the social scientists; presumably, their method and vocabulary were more telling, more important, than those of literary studies. In this context, it was convenient to admire literature in proportion to the way in which it reflected sympathy with one or another social cause or political movement. As partisan zeal increased, this kind of literary criticism became, in Harold Bloom's lively characterization, the academic equivalent of "cheerleading" for paladins of the "six branches of the School of Resentment: Feminists, Marxists, Lacanians, New Historicists, Deconstructionists, Semioticians" (Bloom 1994, 527).

We need not enshrine Bloom's characterization to wonder whether such recent efforts as *Marxist Shakespeares* are enough like English Studies or Comparative Literature to be grouped under these disciplines, which is not to say that, if they are not, they must be consigned to categories with less prestige. We could infer that Bloom is merely saying something about the current emphasis of literary criticism on social concerns. So we might ask: Is *Marxist Shakespeares* about Marx or Shakespeare or both or neither? One answer might be descriptive. Contributors to this particular collection of essays on Shakespeare are professors of English or Comparative Literature. Then if we think the tone of "An Elegy for the Canon" in Bloom's *The Western Canon* is appropriate to the current status of literature in the curriculum, we would seem to share Bloom's regret for the triumph, as

Antonio Gramsci might put it, of "cultural history" over "artistic criticism in the strict sense" (Gramsci 291). Of course, Gramsci is a very different kind of critic from Harold Bloom. Gramsci considered Tolstoy, the Christian, and Shaw, the secularist, as rhetorically identical in their "moral tendentiousness." Gramsci was a Marxist, but if he were writing today, I think he would join with Bloom in criticizing the movement on the left in literary criticism toward an apologetics of moral indignation. He would say that, in their determination to emulate the social scientists, socially motivated literary critics have, perhaps unwittingly, abandoned "artistic criticism in the strict sense". Why, for instance, do we have *Marxist* rather than, say, *Nietzschean* or *Pragmatic Shakespeares*? Do "New Historicism" and "Cultural Materialism" dominate Shakespeare criticism so completely that the field has become the intellectual equivalent of applause for "the last Marxists standing" on the "battleground" of "that strange creature 'Shakespeare' in our cultural politics" (Howard and Shershow 2001, xii)?

Gramsci would not be alone in such an estimate. Historians of ideas might also be amused by the whiff of Whiggish self-satisfaction in the martial figure here (of literary criticism as a "battleground"). At the same time, they might concede that Victorian critics thought they were praising poetry when, in an age that idolized Wagner, they described poetry as "musical." In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom eulogizes literary values because, for him, they seem to be, for all practical purposes, dead. "Cheerleading" has replaced literary appreciation. In this sense, Terence Hawkes sees *Marxist Shakespeares* as an effort "to undermine ancient and inherited prejudices, such as the supposed distinction between 'foreground' and 'background'" (Howard 2001, xi), as one of many signs of the progress of "Cultural Materialism." A glance at the core curriculum of almost any college literature department will show that this effort to replace historical analysis with social advocacy has succeeded.

Obviously, the "Cultural Materialists" consider this success benign, and it may well be so. But if in fact it is benign, it is so because literary values held by critics like Harold Bloom either were, so to speak, "unsound" or "pernicious" or in some way "unproductive"—not benign; or, if the values of these critics were not themselves pernicious, then at the very least they were predicated on perceptions which were "improper" or "biased" or "oppressive" or something of the sort. The point is that, for them, literary history *qua* literary history, accompanied by attempts at objective critical analysis, did not and does not encourage the "right" social outcome. Somewhere here, where literary discussion intersects with philosophy, the temptation to Whiggish self-dramatization can be, I think, both powerful and hidden. When moral judgment marches hand in hand with historical characterization, well-meaning critics may veer toward the cultural attitude of Sir John Frazer, whose analysis of "primitive" religious practices Wittgenstein severely scrutinized. Specifically, Wittgenstein found fault with Frazer for his belief, typical with Victorian anthropologists,

that evolution was a process of inevitably forward progress from savagery toward late-nineteenth-century English institutions and customs. Hence, Sir John Frazer's *The Golden Bough* reflected the views of enlightened Victorian society: "Frazer's account of the magical and religious notions of men is unsatisfactory: it makes these notions appear as *mistakes*" (*RF*GB 1). Frazer wrote as if there were something wrong with the practices of the people that he was studying, as if their rites and ceremonies contradicted, and so blasphemed, the one true God of Victorian England, namely, "science." In fact, Wittgenstein suggests, since the rain dance as well as the prayers of men like St. Augustine and "the Buddhist holy-man" assert no hypotheses, it is impossible for them to contradict any hypothesis. With something like the same stricture in mind, and at the risk of appearing to be one who would hoist the banner of cultural "bias"—even that of the worst "ancient," "inherited" kind—the following discussion will proceed on the assumption that the "distinction between 'foreground' and 'background'" might help explain the history of Shakespeare as a subject *of* philosophy, as distinct from philosophy as a subject *in* Shakespeare studies.

Let me say at the outset that there are many legitimate aims of literary criticism and among them might be "liberating" readers from attitudes that well-meaning critics, whether rightly or wrongly, find pernicious. So when critics suggest that universities should replace Shakespeare in their curricula with authors more tractable to such political interests as Marxist feminism (Howard and O'Connor 1987, 1), we should probably impute a sincere, even charitable, motive to these critics. In the case in question, the argument is, if I understand correctly, that if literary critics can politicize the subject of Shakespeare, they can politicize, and in that way do as they wish, with any author. This statement about the power involved in establishing curricula reflects a view which goes back at least to Plato, and, in one way or another, probably most societies support some version of it. School boards and other "Guardians" spend a great deal of time and money making sure that younger members of society read certain books rather than others. But having said that, I am still inclined to ask: Why, in today's university of all places, would anyone want to replace Shakespeare with an author more malleable to one or another political program? For that matter, why would anyone want to do anything "to" Shakespeare, or "to" his or any other author's works? Returning to *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, I want to say that Wittgenstein was not arguing that religious practices of other societies were improper subjects of scientific inquiry. Rather, he was saying that, as a scholar of the subject, Frazer failed to meet his obligation to get the facts straight about the subject under consideration.

For Wittgenstein (to whom we will return in Chapter 8), description of a culture is an ethical matter, or, at least, it has an ethical component. When we characterize a cultural custom or artifact, we purport to understand it. For centuries, for instance, scholars and critics have tried to explain Shakespeare and his works. They have researched his life, his times, and

his writings, and argued strenuously about the proper means of studying them. We can safely say, I think, that most of these critics share the honorable aim, as the subtitle of Colin McGinn's *Shakespeare's Philosophy* puts it, of *Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays*. They want not only to understand this great poet, but also to share that understanding. And yet somehow the significance of Shakespeare's hallowed texts remains "undiscovered," as if just out of reach of our reading or viewing, just "behind" the words and actions that we perceive or imagine as the work unfolds. Since McGinn is a professor of philosophy, it is not surprising that he approaches "Shakespeare from a specifically philosophical perspective" (McGinn viii). In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the question of the restraints, if any, that historical context imposes on authors like Shakespeare, and, for that matter, on their critics. The Marxists are not alone in this concern. For many critics, the question is: Who or what wrote Shakespeare's plays? Was Shakespeare—the actor, playwright, and businessman—the agent or primary cause of the works attributed to him, or was he more like the warm wax upon which the seal of Elizabethan and Jacobean culture was pressed? Is it possible for an unusually gifted poet to "transcend" the commonplaces of his time, to address ideas and attitudes that neither he nor his audiences would have recognized? If so, we might legitimately claim that Shakespeare, besides being a talented playwright, was also an original thinker. We can probably trace the serious effort to characterize Shakespeare as a philosopher to Leo Strauss and his followers, Allan Bloom in particular. In *Shakespeare On Love and Friendship,* Bloom declares that "Shakespeare was the first philosopher of history" (Bloom 1993, 29). No less straightforwardly, Agnes Heller and Leon Craig argue that Shakespeare was a creative, philosophical mind. For Craig, Shakespeare was "as great a philosopher as he is a poet" (Craig 4). Indeed, "Shakespeare ranks high among true philosophers" (12), and, similarly, Heller writes that, along with Machiavelli, Montaigne, and Bacon, Shakespeare "opened the way for . . . realistic ethics" (Heller 18).

Few scholars of the Early Modern period deny the importance of philosophy in the work of major authors such as Marlowe and Shakespeare. We have good reason to suppose that the authors of *The Jew of Malta* and *Richard III* knew Machiavelli well; "Machiavelli" delivers the Prologue in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, and Shakespeare's Gloucester, who would "get a crown" at any cost, claims that he can "set the murtherous Machevil to school" (*3H6* 3.2.193). As for the reaction of their audiences, as it is with discussion of Freud in the twentieth century, in the Age of Elizabeth, even people who had never read Machiavelli were familiar with ideas attributed to him. And the same could be said of other thinkers. Many dozens of scholars have shown the impress of ancient and modern philosophy on the curricula of Renaissance schools and universities. Richard Popkin has demonstrated the influence of Savonarola and Montaigne, Lily Bess Campbell of Aristotle, Robin Headlam Wells of Cicero, and so on. In a general sense,

we could say that the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Milton exhibit a wide spectrum of reading in philosophy. But this fact does not make any one of these distinguished poets "philosophers" in the sense implied by McGinn, namely, the "specifically philosophical" sense. "Philosophy" is not a normative term. A poet's work may embody significant philosophical substance without being an original philosophical statement. My aim here is not to refute such learned critics as Allan Bloom, Agnes Heller, and Leon Craig, but to investigate the ways in which these critics advance the case for the proposition that Shakespeare was a "philosopher" from, as McGinn puts it, "a specifically philosophical perspective."

Consider, first, Leon Harold Craig's argument in *Of Philosophers and Kings: Political Philosophy in Shakespeare's* Macbeth *and* King Lear. Here, Craig purports to represent "old fashioned views about literature" (Craig 11), while at the same time showing that Shakespeare's plays embody "philosophical merit" (7). To accomplish this task, Craig must first get around what he regards as the prevailing trend in criticism toward philosophical relativism. For how can there be philosophical merit without wisdom, and how can there be wisdom without knowledge? And yet nowadays—especially in the humanities and social sciences—the trendy assumption that knowledge is nothing more than the assertion of raw political power has gained considerable political momentum, so much so that, in many disciplines, it goes almost without challenge. So at least in some circles, since Shakespeare knew nothing, he had no knowledge to impart. For many of the same reasons, it is improper to say that Shakespeare's works reflect "reality," because we have no stable, "unmediated" sense of what "reality" might be, even in our own time, much less in Elizabethan days.

But, setting these worries aside for the moment, Craig says that Shakespeare was the greatest of all contributors to the English language, and that he was so not just because of his facility with the language, which nevertheless inspired over two hundred operas (Craig 3). More to the point of his philosophical argument, Craig insists that Shakespeare's great success reflects his understanding, his wisdom: Shakespeare was "as great a philosopher as he is a poet" (4). Indeed, "Shakespeare ranks high among true philosophers" (12). Literary criticism must not only ask, but answer, such questions as King Lear wanted Edgar, the "Theban" and "philosopher," to address. Here, Craig admits that he is using philosophy in a normative sense, that he in fact presupposes certain value distinctions. But he prepares the way for his investigation by admitting his bias toward traditional literary and philosophical inquiry. For him, philosophy is not a statement of a particular point of view, but an activity aimed at understanding, or rather "a way of life in which this activity is the dominant organizing principle" (12). But then, since, as the subtitle of his book indicates, Craig is primarily interested in *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, it is safe to say that by philosophy he means "political philosophy." Then, given this narrowing of the topic toward practical concerns of governmental consequences, not surprisingly,

Shakespeare is a psychologist, par excellence. Thus, his philosophy derives from the concrete experience of *aporia*. At this juncture, Craig distinguishes between "intellectual" and "experiential" knowledge; true understanding involves both. Angelo is Shakespeare's representation of the one without the other. It follows for Craig that *Macbeth* and *King Lear* show "what can be gained from reading Shakespeare 'philosophically'" (21). Analyzing these two plays, Craig demonstrates that Shakespeare knew, appreciated, and used the political wisdom of Plato and Machiavelli (251).

Given this philosophical perspective, it might seem strange that Craig looks to *Macbeth*, which has far less philosophical discourse than, say, *Measure for Measure, Timon of Athens*, or *Hamlet*. Even *Coriolanus* is more preoccupied with political theory. *Macbeth* is a play marked by horrendous violence, and yet for Craig it is Shakespeare's "most metaphysically ambitious" work (Craig 26). In this context, it is important to remember that there are serious grounds on which Macbeth might rightly claim the throne. The numerous mysteries in the play suggest, Craig argues, that *Macbeth* "is designed to illustrate the political teachings we associate most readily with Machiavelli's *The Prince*" (31). For, although Duncan is the recognized king of Scotland, beloved rather than feared by all, he is also weak, depending as he does on others, especially Macbeth, to lead his armies in battle. In the same way, Macbeth depends on Lady Macbeth for political advice, and it is she—no Machiavelli—who thinks that no one will ask about the chamberlains' motive for killing Duncan. Craig reminds us that the word "metaphysical" occurs only once in the Shakespeare canon, namely, when Lady Macbeth ponders the letter from her husband on his meeting with the Weyward Sisters. She wants to intervene to help the situation with which "fate and metaphysical aid doth seem / To have . . . crown'd" her husband." For Craig, the diction here touches questions of reality, spirit, morality, time, and necessity. Hence, the play's notable appositions between foul and fair, light and dark, good and evil, truth and lie. No Shakespeare play more forcefully confronts metaphysical concerns than *Macbeth*, and none more persistently probes philosophical questions of good and evil, freedom of the will, the nature of the world, and man's responsibility to others. In the latter connection, it is also the author's most unrelenting exploration of Machiavellian principles. It seems clear thus far that, for Craig, Shakespeare is a political philosopher in the sense that he had read and understood Machiavelli.

Now if *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's most philosophical play, *King Lear* is his most misunderstood. Craig disagrees with Coleridge, who thought the first scene was not integral to the play. On the contrary, not only is it integral, but it is crucial, for, remember, Machiavelli insisted that it was harder and more important to sustain than to establish a state. So the division of the kingdom is, at bottom, wrongheaded. The King of France recognizes this, which is why he steps in so quickly to supplant Burgundy. The love test raises the same question that Edmund asks in the following scene: What

does nature ask of parents and offspring? Lear and Gloucester claim to love their children equally, but one bestows "land" on his older "legitimate" rather than his younger "natural" son, and the other wants to give a "more opulent" third of the island to the youngest of his three daughters. When Edmund asks why age and custom, rather than merit, determines inheritance, damning him as "base," he forces the audience to rethink the political reality of family structure and of the commonwealth as well. Legitimate, illegitimate, first, last—in politics, life is unfair. Insofar as the play searches into an understanding of "Nature" (Craig 168), *Lear* is, writes Craig, a play about the "birth of philosophy." Thus, the play examines the difference between the "*natural*" and the "*man-made*," which Shakespeare traces out in the "intellectual transformation" of the protagonist. Lear discovers that if, indeed, the world is "something" as distinct from "nothing," then the world must make sense. And yet in his accustomed reason, he cannot make sense of it. Paradoxically, in his descent into madness—in his surrender of his rational" attachment to his family and the world—Lear survives with a new moral bearing, which emerges from an imaginary trial of his daughter-malefactors, and transcends the seemingly cosmic range of his indignation:

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are yet I know not, but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth! (3.4.279–83)

In Act 4, Lear erroneously thinks that Edmund is kinder to his father than the son "got 'tween the lawful sheets" (4.6.116). But his newfound moral order transcends any relaxation of sanction against adultery. To "let copulation thrive" is to govern only by half measures. Since the power of judgment is the source of Lear's suffering, judgment itself must be brought to the bar, judged, and executed: "None does offend, none, I say none" (168).

Craig is interested, then, in the way in which Shakespeare understands the law; and the law connects the dramatist to philosophy. For instance, in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare examines Plato's view that any society with excessive license produces tyranny. Here, it is almost as if Barnardine and Claudio are examples from Plato's *Republic*; one flouts the law, while the other, a felon convicted of a capital crime, lives a more or less normal life in prison, immune to worry. The questions are how and why Vienna has sunk to such a low condition, and why Duke Vincentio places Angelo, rather than Escalus, in power. Craig finds the answer to these questions in Machiavelli's analysis of Cesare Borgia's pacification of Romagna (Craig 237). The difference is that, to pacify an angry citizenry, Borgia executed the equivalent of Angelo in his reform program. Although Claudio and Mistress Overdone flout the same law, Craig perceives a serious difference between the attitudes of the two offenders. These and similar

Platonic considerations suggest to Craig that Shakespeare's play develops a distinctly Stoic point of view. In that context, the Duke's astonishing proposal of marriage to Isabella is not at all out of place, for "he is by nature a philosopher" (242), which explains the sad state of Vienna at the time of Angelo's commission. At the start a confirmed bachelor, like the King of Navarre in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Angelo is "as good as married by the end" (243). (Craig's Isabella will set aside her plan for a cloistered life and accept Vincentio's romantic proposal.) For Shakespeare, the problem in political philosophy is how to find the middle ground between abstinence (the convent) and licentiousness (Vienna). The Duke learns that private virtue is not the answer. His proposal is an act of self-sacrifice. For Vienna's sake, he must enforce the protocols of marriage, even at the cost of his study and of Isabella's fidelity.

Craig argues, then, for Shakespeare's robust interest in political philosophy, especially as the subject was understood at the time in the writings of Plato and Machiavelli. He is by no means alone in this view. For instance, like Craig, Agnes Heller traces the hard edge of Machiavelli's thought in Shakespeare's work, but she extends the argument for Machiavelli's strong influence to the second Henriad, the Roman plays, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. Allowing that it may seem strange to call Shakespeare a philosopher, who, except for the one speech by Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*, has little to say about the cosmos, Heller construes Shakespeare's skepticism in accord with Machiavelli's. As such, Heller writes, it is more historical than cosmic: "One can only agree with E. M. W. Tillyard's observation in *Political Shakespeare* that Shakespeare hardly mentions the cosmic order." Accordingly, Shakespeare sees the world in "contingent" or "contextual" terms. Thus, in Shakespeare's tragedies, "*heimarmene*, the blind and irrational fate, rules" (Heller 1). From this point of view, Heller meets the question of Shakespeare's status as a philosopher head-on, admitting that the "dubious honorary title of philosopher" need not be accorded him, just because some of his characters engage in philosophical musings. Rather, in Shakespeare, actions do the work of precepts. So, with Craig, Heller turns to Shakespeare's treatment of the character of Macbeth, which, as Heller points out, seems to lend credence to Hannah Arendt's "idea that evil comes from thoughtlessness" (5). With regard to the term "philosopher," it is important to remember that Shakespeare employs it to characterize Edgar and Apemantus as "mad." So Heller insists that Shakespeare has no philosophical agenda, but again, like Machiavelli, he is "infinitely interested in struggle between a human being and fate" (4). In this way, he is more attuned to the perceptions that postmoderns have of Machiavelli than to those of his own time. Again, Heller echoes the theme of "negative capability": Shakespeare makes no absolute judgment of the moral qualities of the likes of Richard II, Bolingbroke, Henry IV, or Richard III. Instead, he examines the effective and ineffective uses of cruelty, when it is employed by the powerful for good or ill political purposes. In this context, although Coriolanus may be an unsympathetic character, he is

not wicked. Goneril and Regan are wicked, "as they are presented in their relationships to others," especially to Cordelia and Lear (370).

It is a telling point for Heller that Shakespeare's plays lack "divine intervention." In Shakespeare, "contingency rules": "There is no meaning here, only misery." This being so, Heller can brush aside Henry VI's recognition "in the young Richmond the future redeemer of England" (Heller 15). Like Machiavelli, Shakespeare sees no purpose in history. He is too skeptical to "entertain such an illusion" (17). On the other hand, because she recognizes development in Shakespeare's attitude toward the plebes, Heller sees the Roman plays, from *Coriolanus* to *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*—as she does the second Henriad—in historical sequence, rather than in chronological order of composition. With this progress in mind, she lays out a program of Shakespeare's dramatic "secularization of the paradox of divine justice" (19). Within this framework she links Shakespeare to Machiavelli, this despite the fact that the latter looks for mechanisms that produce regularity, while Shakespeare is more interested in the uniqueness of personal choices, even if those choices militate against social order. In this way, Shakespeare fits what some critics call the "counter-Renaissance."[1] With Machiavelli, Montaigne, and Bacon, Shakespeare "opened the way for . . . realistic ethics" (18).

To advance her thesis, Heller unpacks the locution, "the time is out of joint," which she sees as the major motif of Shakespeare's history plays. Nature and nurture, legitimate and illegitimate, power and will—these hurl themselves at each other with often equivalent claims to social rectitude. (As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, this line of argument is reminiscent of Hegel.) The Wars of the Roses is just the vehicle to trace out the consequences of the nature–inheritance opposition, and the strength of the conflict carries over in *Hamlet* and *Lear*. In a flourish, following Harold Bloom, Heller asserts that "we are Shakespearean heroes and heroines; Shakespeare reinvents us as well" (Heller 9). She quotes from Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*: "They [Shakespeare's plays] read us definitively" (9). Shakespeare's readership, then, is not so much an active participant in an imaginative art as it is a creation shaped by a powerful creator. This nonjudgmental shaping power avoids moral judgment. This fact explains why Shakespeare's transparently moral characters, Horatio and Brutus, for instance, "have no monologues" (10). (Presumably, Brutus's "serpent's egg" speech—when he delivers it prior to the conspirators' arrival, he is alone onstage—doesn't count. And yet it is the means by which Shakespeare lets the audience know why, late at night, Brutus admits the conspirators to his dwelling.)

Heller is aware that the casuistry implicit in her thesis makes it hard to avoid certain philosophical anomalies. For instance, can we, in accord with the skeptical tradition, say truly that Shakespeare's plays affirm such and such a political proposition? And even if we can, given her postmodern thesis, which seems to deny the validity of moral standards (and depends on

a rather thoroughgoing view of Shakespeare's "negative capability"), how can Heller simultaneously impute to Shakespeare an admirable "negative capability," while registering her own moral indignation? Admittedly, in her "Postcript: Historical Truth and Poetic Truth," Heller tries to answer such questions by denying that answers to such questions are needed or even possible: "The presentation of Shakespeare's poetic truth about history speaks for itself; it does not require, or even allow for, a conclusion" (Heller 367). Is the point, then, that this non-conclusion is the only "conclusion" we can draw concerning Shakespeare's political philosophy? Not exactly. Heller wants to clarify the locution "poetic truth about history" by distinguishing factual from poetic truth. The past is always changing, because "new facts" are discovered, and new theories are generated into which these facts are arranged in explanatory form. These arrangements are only fictions, because they are "approximations," which means that they are something like estimates, and so, of necessity, not accurate. This is so because "one will never know how something really happened, first and foremost because nothing 'really' happened in any one fixed way" (367). But can something be said to approximate this "nothing [that] 'really' happened" in *n* un-fixed ways?

I realize that my question is awkwardly worded, but what Heller has to say about Shakespeare as a political philosopher involves telling what "is *revelatory*" about the past in Shakespeare's plays; and here the criterion of revelation "is the truth that we *accept as it is*" (Heller 367). We do not ask of Shakespeare's Richard II, as we might of a historian's Richard II, whether he really did such and such. Heller writes: "In the hylomorphic tradition (for example, in Hegel), one could say that the content disappears entirely in the form" (368). We know there are *n* variations of *Hamlet*, as performances, either by design or by accident, include or exclude entire speeches or scenes or parts of them. For Heller, these variations do not touch what remains constant and revelatory. Here, assuming that "the whole drama is staged and the end remains unchanged" (369), "there is nothing to approximate, because the drama itself *is* the truth" (369), which truth is not referential, but self-referential. The historical Richard III may have been born with teeth, but we cannot affirm the truth of the proposition that he was born with teeth on the grounds of Gloucester's confession and the Duchess of York's complaint in the first Henriad. For Heller, the "revelatory truth" (370) of Shakespeare's tragedies is like the truth of seder for Jews or of Christmas for Christians. Knowing that we cannot confirm these truths in the same way as we do historical facts does not in the least lessen their importance.

I look closely at Craig and Heller, not because they have broken new ground in arguing for Shakespeare's serious interest in and use of Plato and Machiavelli, but because, although they focus on different works, they do make refutation look unpromising, and maybe even pointless. Even so, we might still ask: Does employment of the wisdom of Plato and Machiavelli

make Shakespeare a "philosopher," that is, a "philosopher" in the sense of Colin McGinn's locution, that is, one with "a specifically philosophical perspective"? To my knowledge, no critic has addressed this question more forcefully in the affirmative than A. D. Nuttall. In *Shakespeare the Thinker*, A. D. Nuttall advances the argument of critics like Bloom, Heller, and Craig, claiming that Shakespeare was not just an intelligent reader of Machiavelli, but a philosopher in his own right. This is so because Shakespeare addresses epistemological and ethical questions in ways that are not at all like those he learned in his Stratford grammar school. If I understand correctly, Nuttall answers the question, "Does Renaissance philosophy circumscribe the possibilities of 'the meaning behind Shakespeare's plays?'" with an emphatic "No." And in the process of that argument, he registers a most strenuous objection to the "social constructionist" shibboleth popular among academics adhering to postmodern doctrine, which holds that philosophical notions represented in Shakespeare's plays reflect the interests and anxieties particular to Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

Nuttall's thoughtful study examines "almost all the plays" of Shakespeare except *King John, The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Edward III,* and *Two Noble Kinsman*, the latter two of which (and presumably *Edmund Ironside*, which he does not mention) he dismisses as "of doubtful attribution" (Nuttall ix). The point is that, for reasons having nothing to do with attribution, Nuttall finds *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles* worthy of comment, and in the latter case, even of serious interest. This is not surprising, though, since Nuttall makes it clear from the outset that, for him, the subject of Shakespeare is personal. So he begins his book in the autobiographical mode, recalling that he attended a Shakespeare conference in Stratford. The dreariness of the proceedings drove him into the streets, where he pondered what it must have been like to be Shakespeare, by modern standards short of stature, and (this had never occurred to me) wandering these very lanes without access to toothpaste. Nuttall recalls that Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, which reminds him that Bill Clinton looked very different in photographs taken thirty years apart. The same is probably true of Shakespeare's house; time must have taken quite a toll. Still, Nuttall felt closer to Shakespeare on the street where the poet lived than he did "in the airless lecture-room [he] had left" (4).

I dwell on this narrative because Nuttall's philosophical approach is often personal, even intimate, in detail. For instance, he tells of attending a performance of *Cymbeline* with a friend, whom "he had always thought of as coldly detached" (Nuttall 343). When in Act 5 Posthumus strikes Imogen, the audience is shocked, even though it knows that Imogen is disguised as a man, and that Posthumus does not recognize her. But when Vanessa Redgrave as Imogen responds ("Why did you throw your wedded lady from you? / Think that you are upon a rock, and now / Throw me again"), his friend's face, "wet with tears," indicated that the shock had quickly passed, making way for a very different emotion. Without imputing an extension

of that personal slant on the material, Nuttall moves to the next work in his proposed chronology, *The Winter's Tale*. Anyone who has read Freud, he says (it matters that Nuttall has read Freud with as much conviction as care), will recognize that Leontes is jealous of Polixenes because of their homosexual liaison "years before" (346). The reason no one saw this until J. I. M. Stewart wrote about it in 1949 is "probably because Jacobean English ['the imposition clear'd, / Hereditary ours'] has become difficult to follow." As Nuttall sees it, at the beginning, Leontes' feelings for Polixenes are only "partly homosexual," but moments later, this partial affection emerges as an imagined "sexual liaison" between Polixenes and Hermione. Nuttall buttresses his argument by the normally sensible suggestion that readers of Shakespeare should "always listen to the lady" (347). Hermione does tweak Polixenes with questions about what he and Leontes did to and with each other in those early, "innocent" years.

This easy movement from textual analysis to personal reminiscence is not only typical of Nuttall's relaxed style, but it is also integral to his thesis, which entails an individual corollary. Nuttall's Shakespeare is always, like the critic, an individual, never simply a cultural product. Moreover—and this is important to the argument of whether Shakespeare is a philosopher—Shakespeare is almost always thinking. I say "almost" because there are exceptions. Nuttall admits that not all of Shakespeare's plays exhibit serious, philosophical thought. For instance, *Pericles* seems not to encourage the idea of a playwright thinking (Nuttall 333); and in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare does not seem to be thinking very hard (226). But these and a few other exceptions do not diminish Nuttall's insistence that the artifacts that Shakespeare produced come from a very particular being, a gifted playwright who focused on experience philosophically. For example, in 1579, a young woman drowned in the Avon near Stratford, perhaps a suicide, which possibility makes Nuttall think of Ophelia, especially when he remembers that the unfortunate young lady's name was Katherine Hamlett (4). This and many other deaths, including the death of a man with the same name as Shakespeare's father, had "the effect of a tolling bell presaging things to come, the death of Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, in 1596, and then the play itself, written around 1600, when the other John Shakespeare, the poet's father, was nearing his end (he died in 1601)" (4). This "train of thoughts," as Hobbes characterized the phenomenon, takes its rise from associations in Shakespeare's mind. Since the movement of thoughts is forward in time, as Shakespeare writes one play, he is already thinking about the next. It seems to me that Nuttall's critical method works in much the same way; he tells us that he first heard of Katherine Hamlett in a footnote in E. A. Armstrong's *Shakespeare's Imagination*. Armstrong was, Nuttall recalls, "a curious figure in the history of Shakespeare criticism" (5), who put him onto the notion that ideas and figures in Shakespeare are "recycled" in such a way that the story of Katherine Hamlett reappears as the narrative of Ophelia's "doubtful death" in Act

4 of *Hamlet* (8). Thus, "the end of his thought remembers its beginning," even as Shakespeare "thematized [*his*—that is, *Nuttall's*] thoughts" (8). In this way, Shakespeare's experience works its way into his plays in the same way that it works its way into the critic's "thoughts."

Nuttall's emphasis on shared features of experience may explain his apology for the length of *Shakespeare the Thinker*, which gathers together an ever more complex aggregate of memories. Accordingly, just as in the first Henriad, with the pivotal figure of Richard III, Shakespeare thinks about mismatched mates (Richard and Lady Anne), so he continues to examine the same theme in *The Comedy of Errors* (Nuttall 56). Also early on, Shakespeare wants to compete with and surpass Christopher Marlowe. So, encouraged by the success of *The Comedy of Errors,* he writes *The Taming of the Shrew*, which, because it is a beautiful love story, segues neatly into *Love's Labor's Lost*. As we shall see, *Love's Labor's Lost* figures prominently in Nuttall's historical perspective on Shakespeare's aesthetics. He argues that, in his earliest plays, Shakespeare develops "thoughts" left inchoate in *Richard III*. But even more important in the early works is the equivocal ending of *Love's Labor's Lost*, which is prompted by the horrific treatment of Holofernes. Although Nuttall refuses to say that, in the final scene of the play, Shakespeare advances "a complex philosophy of language involving not only (mis)representation but also linguistic agency," he does claim that "his play has laid the groundwork for such a philosophy" (99). This is so because, for Shakespeare, the overriding philosophical problem here "is ethical." Shakespeare is not frightened by the "nothing" that postmoderns perceive as the inevitable referent of language. Rather, Berowne's success "haunts" Shakespeare; he is ashamed of "the psychological truth that even if words are variously engaged with the extra-verbal world, we can, by a trick of the mind, focus on the formal expression and so lose full engagement, even while we are still applauding our own cleverness."

Since material in his plays elaborates upon earlier experiences, theatrical as well as personal, and given the importance of religion in Elizabethan England, it is not surprising that Nuttall "recycles" information concerning Shakespeare and Catholicism. There is, for instance, the matter of Malone and the document found in the rafters of the house in Stratford (Nuttall 12). In 2003, Robert Bearman "demonstrated in meticulous detail that there is no basis for the assertion that Campion and Parsons brought the Borromean document to England at this time" (13). Even so, there are many connections between the Shakespeare and Arden families and the Old Religion. Evidence suggests that John Shakespeare shared the views of many of his neighbors in Stratford, an area known as a recusant stronghold. Then, too, it could be that his son, William, married at some distance from Stratford in order to avail himself of a more traditional ceremony. Thomas Jenkins, Shakespeare's schoolmaster, had Catholic sympathies, which may have been echoed at home (14). Furthermore, unlike most English playwrights of the time, Shakespeare portrayed Catholic clerics, Friar Lawrence, Friar

Thomas, and Friar Francis, for instance, in a favorable light. Conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot stayed for a time next door to the Shakespeare family; and Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, seems to have favored their Catholic cause, missing Easter communion right after the failed venture. On the other hand, Susanna married John Hall, a Huguenot (14), whom Shakespeare seems to have gotten along with very well. Just because the Shakespeare and Arden families had ties to the Old Religion, it does not follow that Shakespeare was a recusant. He was, after all, a man of substance, who was buried with honor in the local parish church, and one who seems to have taken pains to hide "any hint of specific allegiance" (18).

Nuttall engages the religious issue because it relates to his philosophical interest in Shakespeare's Stoicism, which spills over from his characterization of Brutus in *Julius Caesar* to *Hamlet* (Nuttall 192). The adage, "to thine own self be true," which sounds to Nuttall like a paraphrase of Cato, may emerge from the mouth of garrulous Polonius, but it is indicative of the value that Stoics placed on self-control. Hamlet admires Horatio, because, in the Stoic manner, he is not passion's slave; and when he says to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (193), Hamlet sounds like a Stoic, too. But for Nuttall, Horatio is the true Stoic. Hamlet is torn between idealism and empiricism, as were Locke and Hume. (Nuttall returns to Hume when he gets to *Antony and Cleopatra*.) In his remarks on *Hamlet*, Nuttall slips back into the personal mode, declaring the relevance of Freudian theory (199). Freud's explanation makes much in the play "intelligible" to him (200), this despite the fact that, as Nuttall admits, *Hamlet* makes a fool anyone foolish enough to offer "a single positive interpretation" of the text, including Coleridge, who thought that Hamlet's problem was simply that he thought too much (201). At the same time, reminding us that he is writing a book about Shakespeare, the thinker, Nuttall counters his thesis on the foolishness of "single positive interpretations" of *Hamlet* with the "positive" observation that thoughts are making Hamlet sick (202). So, while no one interpretation of *Hamlet* can be ruled out—since "all are relevant to the play" (204)—Nuttall rules in Freud's analysis with more enthusiasm than the others because, by fitting the "sickness" scenario, it is uniquely "relevant to the play." This is an important development in Nuttall's argument. Returning to *Love's Labor's Lost*, he observes that Hamlet is like Berowne, who complains in Act 5 that he is "sick" (202). It might appear that Nuttall tactfully measures his support for the Freudian hypothesis. He does deny "that Shakespeare [ever] committed himself to the lunatic idea that all male infants desire to have sex with their mothers and to murder their fathers" (200). But even that qualification aims to buttress his Freudian thesis: "Hamlet is a . . . manifestly peculiar case." That is, Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex fits this particular work.[2] Hamlet sees himself as a "revengeful," but he knows (Rom. 12:19) that "Vengeance is Mine . . . saith the Lord," and that, under the New Covenant (Matt. 5:38), "revenge should be transcended by love" (203).

Nuttall's Freudianism may only partly explain why, in a blurb on the dust jacket of *Shakespeare the Thinker,* Harold Bloom claims Nuttall as his "hero." For the intellectual nexus between these critics involves not only Freud, although both critics read Freud with credulity rather than skepticism, but Bloom would approve, too, of Nuttall's spirited assertion of Gnosticism in Shakespeare's plays. In advancing his argument for this connection, Nuttall admits that he must, again, "speak more personally than is customary in a critical study" (Nuttall 263). He has just made the case for *The Merchant of Venice* being Shakespeare's most Marxist play, given the fact that economic considerations shape the action (262). But it is also a Christian play, which dramatically contrasts Shylock's belief in law with Portia's view of mercy. The latter theme, in turn, points toward *Measure for Measure*, where the politics of mercy has reduced Vienna to a moral shambles.

At this juncture, again, Nuttall reverts to autobiography. It happened that, some time in the past, Nuttall became interested in "Ophite Gnosticism," which holds that, in the Garden of Eden story, God, not Satan, is the evil one. According to this narrative, Adam and Eve do not literally die when they eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Quite the contrary, for Ophites, this key moment is redemptive, because the serpent is Christ, the Redeemer (Nuttall 264). To support this view, Nuttall cites Blake, who held that Christ broke every one of the Ten Commandments. At this juncture, we must remember Nuttall's claim that every thought that came after Shakespeare, Shakespeare already had. For example, in *Troilus and Cressida*, when Ulysses attempts to get Achilles to fight (3.3.95–122), Shakespeare dramatizes an argument akin to the "Structuralist intuition that context is not posterior to identity but on the contrary confers identity" (213). Moreover, Nuttall reminds us, that view is not unique in the time to Shakespeare, but found in, among other places, Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour* (1531). One could say that this aspect of Nuttall's thesis posits Shakespeare's proto-philosophy.

So how far does this thesis extend? Rather far, I think: "Marxian, Freudian, feminist, Structuralist, Existentialist, materialist ideas are all there. Did he never consider Gnostic theology?" (Nuttall 265). Since the "all" in this assertion includes Gnostic theology, then Shakespeare took the matter up; and, we read, he did so in *Measure for Measure*. This being the case, one might ask, then who takes upon himself the role of Christ in this play? The answer is: Angelo. Representing the Christian perspective—the Portia of *Measure for Measure*—Isabella refuses to sacrifice herself for her brother. She cannot then be anyone's redeemer. Later, at the city gate tribunal, when the Duke asks her to reveal herself to Angelo, she says, "You bid me seek redemption of the devil." Nuttall sees a vexed theological point here. Theologians of the time were uncertain whether Christ took man's sins upon himself, and, if he did, in what manner? Calvin was not alone in insisting that Christ took our sins upon himself—became sin itself—for our redemption

(270). Even more explicitly, Luther insisted that Christ despaired (for some contemporaries, the unpardonable sin—think of Dr. Faustus). So, Angelo is at once the polluted one and the redeemer of the city—the true Christ of the play. For Nuttall, the spirit of Simon Magus "haunts *Measure for Measure*." This must be so because, whatever thought has been since Shakespeare, and second-century Ophite Gnosticism is one (revived in the nineteenth century), Shakespeare had that thought before. In proof, Nuttall points out that Marlowe and Donne knew "some vertiginous Gnostic material" (274); and Shakespeare hinted at some of the same ideas. Now Nuttall is getting to his underlying, "all are there" thesis: "If we set aside technological advances like mobile telephones, it is remarkably hard to think of anything Shakespeare had not thought of first" (265). If it is hard for Nuttall to think of anything that Shakespeare has not already thought of, it must also be hard for anyone to deny that Shakespeare not only thought, but was thinking, of Gnostic theology, while he was writing *Measure for Measure*. And if this is so, it follows that Shakespeare felt sympathy for an increasingly unloved Father of Judgment, as he did for that "dysfunctional family," the Trinity (262).

Certain plays lend themselves to psychological and aesthetic questions. Sexual identity and pastoral seem to go together; and in comedy, the two are often linked. Unlike *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing* does not test male friendship in the context of competition for the same woman. Claudio believes Don John immediately; Iago has to work on Othello. In this way, Claudio is very unlike the young men of *Love's Labor's Lost*. In *Much Ado*, the tension between same sex "solidarity" and heterosexual love drives the action. Shakespeare doesn't think hard in this play (Nuttall 226); Dogberry lacks the mystery of Bottom, although both are simpletons. *As You Like It* embodies "philosophy of pastoral" (231), and is "the greatest pastoral in the English language" (235), but nonetheless "a very 'straight' play—for some, disappointingly so" (238), in that it is unrelentingly and unapologetically heterosexual (239). *Twelfth Night* looks at pastoral from another perspective: *et in Arcadia ego*. The play stands between *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Winter's Tale*," children lost and found, death transformed into life (241). This play, not a pastoral, toys with the affinities of the apparently different, Illyria, Elysium, Viola, Olivia, Malvolio. The discordant name of the latter is not meant as a particularly theological comment on Puritanism. Malvolio is simply out of synch with the festive world around him. Macaulay said that "puritans opposed bear-baiting not because it caused pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators" (241). This makes Malvolio's grotesque gestures toward Olivia extremely unattractive; and he can never be a part of Illyria ("I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you"). Perhaps this is why the cruelty that audiences condemn in *Love's Labor's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* remains untouched in this play.

Coriolanus, which follows in 1606, has been a great favorite of Marxists; but Nuttall sees the play in psychological rather than economic terms.

For him, Volumnia is more horrifying than Lady Macbeth, in that she identifies the milk suckled from her breast with blood shed in battle by her son (Nuttall 293). It is "another proto-Freudian moment" (295), which recognizes Volumnia's shaping influence, when Aufidius refers to Coriolanus as a "boy of tears" (295). At the same time, the play "certainly engages, achronically, with Marxian thought" (295), as witnessed by the fact that Bertolt Brecht "felt the need to rewrite this play." Thus, for Nuttall, Menenius's "fable of the belly" is "doubly offensive" (296). He proves this point by identifying Shakespeare's view of the situation in Rome through the eyes of "the great toe," whom even his fellow citizens rebuke as unmindful of the services to Rome that Caius Martius has rendered. Rather than examining the dramatic conflict between the First Citizen and the other rioters, Nuttall—along with Bertolt Brecht—joins the fray: "But Shakespeare uses exactly the same phrase at the beginning of the episode: 'You must not think to fob off our disgrace with a tale'" (296). Shakespeare is seriously interested in the question, "Who creates the wealth?" Here, Shakespeare seems to proffer an observation that will not comfort Marxists. Rome is rich, not because of workers in the field, but because the military has won many victories, and exacted tribute: "Coriolanus is clearly upper-class, but he is no parasite on the labour of those socially below him" (296). Nuttall admits that Shakespeare suppresses Plutarch's claim that many of the rioters bore wounds of battle themselves. Marxians have taught us "now to ask Marxian questions about deep causes" (297), such as who causes death. In *Coriolanus*, Volumnia causes the tragic death of her son. She is the beginning of what many critics of the last half of the twentieth century call the "construction of the self" of Coriolanus, which, for Nuttall, provides the necessary and sufficient conditions of his destruction. Nuttall directs attention to the stage direction in Act 5, where Coriolanus "Holds her by the hand, silent." This is the moment of *anagnorisis*: "O mother, mother, / What have you done?" Coriolanus—and the audience—recognizes how completely his mother has brought about his, now, inevitable death.

Implicitly, as Nuttall suggests that no good purpose is served by separating Shakespeare from his ethical concerns, he in effect denies the Keatsian claim of Shakespeare's "negative capability," at least as it is broadly understood. That is why such responsibility may be imputed to Volumnia, and why, for Nuttall, Othello is not jealous. In the case of Othello, Desdemona explicitly says that the sun took all such "humors" from him (3.4.29–30). Rather than jealous, "being wrought" (i.e., worked upon), Othello becomes "perplexed in the extreme" (Nuttall 278). Aristotle's notion of an "unobvious decision" in the *Poetics* applies to Iago's irrational hatred of Othello. He does not hate the Blackamoor because he has reason to believe that Othello has slept with his wife. If he had reason to believe that, he would be a much less interesting character, and probably no villain at all. Ethically, revenge taken on that account at least makes sense, if only the sense of retributive justice. Hieronymo is no villain, at least not so in the eyes of his Elizabethan

audience. If "negative capability" means that Shakespeare drew back from ethical norms, then he must have separated himself from his Elizabethan and Jacobean audience, which does not seem to be the case.

In his searching remarks on *King Lear*, which he regards as "the greatest tragedy ever written" (Nuttall 301), Nuttall corrects a common historical error: King Lear did not rule in the Middle Ages. Even Holinshed is confused, and Geoffrey of Monmouth is vague. In fact, King Lear reigned in the early eighth century, BC (Nuttall 300), fifty-four years before the founding of Rome (Holinshed), and Geoffrey of Monmouth places his reign at the time of Elijah, that is, long before Sophocles or Julius Caesar or Christ. The Quarto places the play among "true chronicle histories," but the Folio among "tragedies." Obviously, Nuttall agrees with the Folio, and he sees this play, "the greatest tragedy ever written," as a profound intellectual achievement. Nuttall dwells, for instance, on the "mathematical obsession" evident in the play (303), as Shakespeare toys with the ambiguity of the figure zero: "0," "love," "l'oeuf," "nothing," "nil" (302).[3] The figure, Shakespeare knows, can be a sign for "all" and "nothing." And this paradox is carried through in other ways. *King Lear* "is a profoundly moving Christian drama" (307); and yet, in an intellectual turnaround, it becomes "an anti-Christian play" (307). Hence, the echo from scripture in Cordelia's plaintive explanation: "I must go about my father's business" (Luke 2:49). While Nuttall thinks that Lear lacks "the final insight into truth that gives grandeur and dignity to other tragic heroes" (309), he thinks that in delineating Lear, Shakespeare does set out an equivocal representation of moral possibility. Rather, Shakespeare juxtaposes Good with Nothing. And this subtle difference is important to Nuttall's analysis, in that Shakespeare's perspective is appreciably different from philosophical relativism. Nuttall focuses here on Gloucester in Act 4. Edgar convinces him that he has fallen from Dover Cliff. Edgar explains to the audience that he meant to teach his father about the benevolence of divine power (310). For Nuttall, it is important to recognize that, given the trauma of Gloucester's recent blinding, the Dover Cliff episode is believable. Nuttall turns to medical experts, who agree that, under such duress, the sufferer would invest virtually absolute value to any voice from the outside. So when Edgar describes himself as a devil, saying, go ahead and jump, the just-blinded Gloucester believes him (311). Does this line of argument mean, then, that Shakespeare is saying, in the end, that Cordelia is in heaven? Nuttall does not seem to imply that. Rather, the end of the play exhibits Shakespeare's sense of the difference between Good and Nothing.

Still, to flesh out his argument, Nuttall compares *King Lear* with *Timon of Athens*. The latter play examines the difference between repayment of what is owed and gratitude. Lear returns often to his theme of what he has given to his daughters, while the audience becomes evermore aware of what he expects in return. Timon is Lear without family, but only "friends." He learns to his woe that he has no friends, but only agreeable guests and

willing recipients of his largesse. In the sense of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*, Timon does not give disinterestedly. He does articulate a philosophy of friendship ("We are born to do benefits"), which he imagines in some way binding on all of his "friends" in Athens. Since, in his mind, he has no enemies, it follows in the scheme of things that, when he is poor, he will be the recipient of other Athenians' generosity. Timon may not be as clever as Apemantus, Nuttall writes, but "Shakespeare philosophizes in *Timon of Athens*" (Nuttall 315), and the play is "cleverer than anything in [J. L.] Austin's writings" (316). In fact, there is a connection between *Timon of Athens* and *The Merchant of Venice*. But Nuttall finds a deeper affinity with *Lear*, which he thinks was written only shortly before *Timon*, probably in 1606 (many date the play about two years later). And *Antony and Cleopatra* likewise embodies serious thinking on "the philosophy of experience," namely, "empiricism" (327). In the manner of David Hume, Cleopatra wonders aloud if such a man as she imagines Antony to be ever existed, or could exist. We know that she believes that her image of Antony is so life-like that Dolabella's negative answer must be false. She imputes reality to the "vivacity" in her image, a view which, in professional philosophy, "melts at once into idealism," as we see "openly in the philosophy of George Berkeley" (327). But as in Anselm's "ontological proof of the existence of God," experience teaches that we like certain things, that is, that we experience them as "good." But goodness, then, does not take on an existence of its own by virtue of our experience. But if existence were a virtue, it must follow that Hitler is a better person than Mr. Pickwick because he "exists," in the sense that he is not a fictional character. Shakespeare is enthralled by Cleopatra's idealism, but quietly sympathetic with Dolabella's mournful skepticism: "a plural ontology" (328). The grandeur of their love–death exceeds the moralistic domain of *Romeo and Juliet*, because, for Nuttall, in the later play he envisions a merging of two pagan worlds: Rome and Egypt, in one pagan Elysium of erotic splendor.

Although Nuttall's philosophical Shakespeare is primarily concerned with ethics, in the end, as we might expect of a Renaissance thinker, he did confront the major question facing Renaissance thinkers, namely, that of epistemology. At this point Nuttall turns to popular culture: *The Tempest*, the Shakespearean work most robustly concerned with what is and what is not true about the world, is science fiction. Specifically, "Nicholas Nayfack's science fiction film *Forbidden Planet* (1936) is a version of *The Tempest*" (Nuttall 361). Prospero is a contemporary stand-in for John Dee and Giambattista della Porta, and Gonzalo's speech imagines a species of Utopia. Moreover, Nuttall thinks that perhaps too much has been made of references in the play to America. There was a famous shipwreck near Bermuda in the period, but Prospero's island is in the Mediterranean, not the Bermuda Triangle. But anachronistic interpretations of the text are hard to avoid. Postcolonial critics may recoil at the idea of Caliban as an alien, but Giordano Bruno questioned whether American Indians were descended

from Adam (363). Moreover, Indians shared that view, in their belief that they descended not from one man, but from one woman (263). Here, Nuttall's Freudianism reappears: In *The Tempest*, "Prospero is fighting his own incestuous desire for his daughter" (368). This explains why, in this play, we find realized the very "nihilism" that some critics—not Nuttall—find in *Lear* (374): "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep." Thus, returning to his philosophical thesis, Nuttall writes of this late play, "It is monist—but monist-*un*realist" (375). Prospero walks, not because he is upset by Caliban and his fellow conspirators, but he is bothered by "the thought that he has never really been born at all" (375). Of course, Prospero is not Shakespeare; but, for Nuttall, he is the character in the Shakespeare canon that most resembles Shakespeare (376). He is also very much like Berowne, with whom Nuttall began his discussion: a man who repents "his verbal cleverness" (376). (This explains why, in Nuttall's thinking, *Love's Labor's Lost* is such an important early play.) Prospero sees this facility as a pathway to despair, which Nuttall refuses to call philosophy. Rather, he suggests, perhaps Shakespeare "was ashamed of what he had done" (376).

In the "Coda" to his reflections on the Shakespeare canon, Nuttall returns to the streets of Stratford, where his reflections on the Shakespeare canon began. He admits that possibly, even probably, Shakespeare has eluded his best effort to codify Shakespeare's philosophy, which is, "finally" (a word that is the underlying subject of this "Coda") impossible. So where does Nuttall's learned, if idiosyncratic, analysis of Shakespeare as a philosopher lead? Clearly, Nuttall is not happy with the tendency of current criticism to "social construction" talk. Yes, Shakespeare was a shrewd businessman, but the general concept of economic interests did not write a line of his plays: "Shakespeare wrote *Shakespeare*" (Nuttall 377). Nuttall suggests that "death of the author" talk is an unfortunate convergence of vapid truisms with baneful attitudinizing. We need not wait for the First Folio to know Shakespeare as the author of his plays. Although some of the earlier quartos do not bear his name on the title page, many of the later ones—those dating from the later 1590s and the first decade of the seventeenth century—do. And, in the end, Nuttall concedes that Shakespeare is, first and foremost, this particular kind of philosopher: "Of course he is not a systematic philosopher; he is a dramatist" (378). But then not all great philosophers were systematic. Think of Socrates, Montaigne, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein. Nuttall writes: "Hamlet has as much to do with Existentialism as with Elizabethan neo-Stoicism" (379). Historicist "construction" or "production" of Shakespeare "is absurd" (379). We may not "know" precisely what Shakespeare "thought—finally—about anything" (380). But Nuttall insists that Shakespeare is a better political mind than Shaw, because he was neither a socialist nor a conservative (381). Milton tried to answer the question regarding the origin of evil, and came up with the belief in freedom of the will as a gift of the Creator. Nuttall

doubts that Milton was "finally" satisfied with that answer. Shakespeare "is the philosopher of human possibility" (381). Karl Popper detested Hegel and Heidegger, and their political counterpart, Marx. For Nuttall, Shakespeare, like Popper, is content with a universe of possibilities, and the quasi-Darwinian notion that the truth will come out in due time. Milton thought that the works of Shakespeare turned him, in a manner of speaking, into "marble." The intellectual turn was no match for the wonder of Shakespeare's undecided worlds of possibilities.

I doubt that Nuttall intended his "Coda" as a disclaimer to his thesis that Shakespeare was a philosopher. Nuttall argues strenuously that, as he wrote for the stage in the Elizabethan and Jacobean London, Shakespeare expressed every thought that philosophers have had before or since that time. I have discussed his argument at length because, if one wants a learned, thoroughgoing, to-the-point argument that Shakespeare is a philosopher, one could do no better than turn to A. D. Nuttall. And yet, if this argument stands, it does so with some inconvenience. As we will see in the following chapter, for a century after Shakespeare achieved fame on the literary scene—and he was famous from early on in his career—philosophy paid no attention to him. Indeed, philosophy would not be changed a whit had Shakespeare never written a line. Montaigne, Herbert of Cherbury, Bacon, Descartes, Glanvill, Cudworth, Clarke, Culverwell, Whichcote, Smith, Hobbes, Locke, Butler—philosophers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have known Shakespeare—may have read his *Sonnets*, may have read or seen performances of his plays—but they do not talk about him when they are "doing philosophy."

In the following pages, I will be discussing Shakespeare as a subject of philosophy, that is, what philosophers say about Shakespeare when they are "doing philosophy." There are very good books (I have mentioned only a few) on philosophy in Shakespeare. This book is about Shakespeare in philosophy. Terminology matters with prepositions, just as it does with propositions. So many "philosophical" authors receive little attention, and it is likely that the focus may be sometimes skewed. I could have focused more on Voltaire, Dr. Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Marx, Freud, Eliot, and perhaps others, whom some readers consider philosophers. Voltaire did compose *A Philosophical Dictionary*, and Freud speculated about "other minds." But the former was a playwright and raconteur, and the latter a physician. (Freud's remarks on *Hamlet* fall under the category of literary criticism, as Shakespeare was, strictly speaking, not his patient.) Karl Marx knew Shakespeare backwards and forwards; he frequently elucidates remarks by citing passages from Shakespeare, often with a humorous edge, and apparently by heart, since he does not bother to check his quotations. But for purposes of this discussion, his writings are predominantly in economic history and ethnography, not philosophy. Some readers will think, too, that I should have paid more attention to T. S. Eliot, who was, after all, a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard, and who wrote his doctoral

dissertation, which was published in 1964, on F. H. Bradley. No doubt other names could be added to the list of famous authors with legitimate claims to standing as philosophers, who are more or less excluded from this study.

The most obvious figure who comes to mind is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom many consider the greatest Shakespeare critic in literary history. Ever since John H. Muirhead argued in his seminal *Coleridge as Philosopher* (1930) that Coleridge was the outstanding "founder" and "the most distinguished representative" of "the voluntaristic form of idealist philosophy" (Muirhead 176–77), the issue of the poet's standing in philosophy has been joined, with scholars of notable reputation taking opposite sides in the controversy, especially with respect to what some critics consider the derivative nature of many Coleridge compositions.[4] Herbert Read was ready to "defend the philosopher in Coleridge" (Read 10), as well as his reputation as a poet and critic. Read recalls that no less a thinker than John Stuart Mill admired Coleridge as a philosopher (11). Further, Read argues, not only was Coleridge well read in all of the major German philosophers, but his rise as a thinker is comparable to that of Kierkegaard, for both point the way toward "existentialism" (11). Questions of the originality of Coleridge's philosophical ideas aside, it would be pointless to ignore the fact that he delivered and published ten lectures on philosophy, which have been ably edited by Kathleen Coburn (we will return to this matter shortly). Moreover, no less a figure than Owen Barfield pointed out that, at the time of Coleridge's death, he was regarded more as "a thinker than as a poet"; and he adds his more contemporary judgment of "Coleridge's thought as a complete and coherent structure" (Barfield 3, 174).

As Paul Hamilton writes, one of the problems in considering Coleridge as a philosopher stems from the "prodigious and untidy" corpus of this thought (Hamilton 170). His philosophy emerges in letters and *Notebooks* as well as in his more formal *Lectures on Politics and Religion* and *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Although an early follower of the English empiricists, Coleridge became disenchanted with the way in which Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Hartley sponsored what he came to think of as an "irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels,—especially the doctrine of Necessity" (*CL* 2, 706). Of "the originality and merits of Locke, Hobbes, and Hume," Coleridge claimed, "I am *confident*, that I can prove that the Reputation of these three men has been wholly unmerited" (707). René Wellek attributes this shift in thought to Coleridge's absorption of German idealist philosophy. In particular, Wellek credits Coleridge with a "thorough knowledge of Kant's writings" (Wellek 68), which led to his rejection of the "doctrine of association" (71). As for his "Coleridgean whole" (66), a "system of philosophy" (65), even setting the "old charge of plagiarism" aside, Coleridge lacked the discipline to produce a unified "system of philosophy" (65). Again, there have been notable studies of Coleridge that argue the exact opposite thesis.[5] The subtitle of Mary Anne Perkins'

Coleridge's Philosophy, The Logos as Unifying Principle fits the aim of the Ninth *Lecture On Philosophy*, in which Coleridge writes:

> Delightful harmony which ever will be found where philosophy is united with such poetry as <by> Milton and Shakespeare—or <by> those who have endevoured to reconcile all the powers of our nature into one harmony and to gather that harmony round the cradle of moral will. (Perkins 395)

Whether or not that unity amounts to philosophical coherence is still in dispute. But Coleridge's emphasis on voluntarism comes through in this quotation, which seems to justify Wellek's claim that the primary aim of Coleridgean thought was to "escape from mechanistic and atheistic doctrines" (Wellek 72), to strike down the doctrine of necessity, and so to defend Christianity.

Many of these remarks on Coleridge could be applied as well to William Hazlitt, who began his writing career with *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805). Since he aimed to prove that man was "naturally interested in the welfare of others" (Hazlitt 1, 1), he was seriously out of sync with the by-then established "association of ideas" views of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, David Hartley—and the French philosopher, Claude Helvetius, in particular. From Hazlitt's point of view, the centerpiece of the "association of ideas" school of thought was the "mechanical principle of self-interest" (1, 50), which these thinkers held to be behind even the most benevolent of human emotions. He believed that he had found the flaw in this "mechanical" system of thought, and he laid his critique out in the first of his published works, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action and Some Remarks On The System Of Hartley and Helvetius* (1805). John R. Nabholtz writes that "to the end of his life [Hazlitt] regarded [this work] as his most important achievement" (Nabholtz v). Advocates of the "association of ideas" depended entirely on the past and present; Hazlitt thought that, by introducing the future, which could only be known through the imagination, he had trumped the Hobbesian theory, which held that the imagination was merely "decaying sense," nothing more than memory gone awry. As Nabholtz observes, this principle was behind everything that Hazlitt wrote, including his remarks on Shakespeare. No critic, to my knowledge, has written more eloquently on this subject than Hazlitt:

> He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion or turn of thought. He had 'a mind reflecting ages past,' and

> present:—all the people that ever lived are there. There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar: 'All corners of the earth, kings, queens, and states, maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave,' are hardly hid from his searching glance. (5, 47)

And yet, notwithstanding his beginning effort, Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action and Some Remarks On The System Of Hartley and Helvetius* makes up only one of the twenty-six volumes of *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*. Of Hazlitt, philosophers of his time and since seem to have taken no account.

Coleridge and Hazlitt are probably not the only literary figures, with equal or greater claim to philosophical standing than many of those on whom this study focuses, who are more or less excluded from discussion. It is not enough to say that I have nothing to add to what has already been said about Coleridge and Hazlitt, or about any of a number of poets, playwrights, physicians, journalists, and drama critics, who are, or in the past have been, known for their interests in, and contributions to, philosophy. I must say that I do have reasons for the selections that I have made here. To make this point clear, I should note that I am using the terms "philosophy" and "literary criticism" in what I take to be a descriptive, as distinct from a normative, sense. I do not hold the one kind of writing above the other; nor do I think that expressions of the one kind are elevated or failed expressions of the other. Literary criticism does not gain weight by virtue of its being written by a philosopher. I realize that there is disagreement on this matter. A Coleridge critic like Herbert Read may attribute the fact that Coleridge is head and shoulders above every other English critic "to his introduction of a philosophical method of criticism" (Read 18), but what makes Coleridge a troublesome case for me is that his *Philosophical Lectures*, and several excellent scholarly books on certain of his writings, might be found in the philosophy as well as in the literature section of the library.

The fact that Kathleen Coburn's landmark edition of *The Philosophical Lectures* (1949) presents roughly the same texts as J. R. de J. Jackson's edition of *Lectures 1818–1919 On the History of Philosophy* (2000), found in Volume 8 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* means that, for some purposes, someone other than Coleridge thinks of at least some of his writings as 'philosophical." We cannot say that someone made a mistake in cataloguing the Coburn edition in the "B" section, and the Jackson edition in the "PR" section of (at least some) libraries. The fact that a text appears in more than one section of the library indicates that a clear boundary between literature and philosophy is, at least from the standpoint of some librarians, not firmly established. As we will see in Chapter 4, in the eighteenth century, William Richardson struggled mightily to distinguish between philosophy and what, prior to his entering the discussion, literary critics were saying about Shakespeare. He wanted the discipline of

literary study to become more philosophical, and, centuries later, Herbert Read would agree with him. I will argue that these critics, and others who share their view, proceed on the assumption that philosophy is more valuable than literary criticism, *per se*. On the other hand, most of us recognize a relationship between the two fields, and we probably have no trouble at all ambulating from one section of the library to another. Apparently, we do not need a clear line between philosophy and literature; but even a wavy line might still be useful, which is only to say that it is not for nothing that, under the Library of Congress system, philosophy is found in the "B" section, and literature, including literary criticism, in the "P" section of the library. So texts of Coleridge's writings on philosophy appear in the "B" section as well as in the "PR" section of the library. They do not gain or lose value by their placement. And yet the fact that *The Collected Works*, as well as the *Collected Letters* and *Notebooks,* of Coleridge are shelved in the "PR" section does have significance. For the purposes of *Shakespeare and Philosophy*, then, "philosophy" is what librarians—as well as philosophers (and here, admittedly, opinions vary)—say it is.

2 Philosophy's Shakespeare

Breaking the Silence

Without denying evidence to the contrary, I would argue that literary criticism today is still interesting and even instructive. Admittedly, on occasion the field is muddied by convoluted prose, and a tendency to ignore historical evidence to make way for moral hectoring and psychosexual political attitudinizing. Sometimes credulity takes the place of healthy skepticism. As we have seen in the last chapter, even sophisticated critics like A. D. Nuttall take psychoanalytic theory seriously, confident in their belief that its canons apply to literary analysis (although, it seems to me, it is never made clear who would treat whom for what symptoms for how long). By no means all of these critics, but a significant few hold nothing sacred except their project of demystifying whatever tradition reveres. Shakespeare's standing in the world is the relevant case in point. These critics, sometimes called "social constructionists," would raze to common ground any and all literary works that history's extraordinary praise has elevated above the status toward which, as Erwin Panofsky would have it, all works of art inevitably move, namely toward that of a lifeless document (Panofsky 10–24).[1]

Not long ago, one of these critics claimed that we pay too much attention to Shakespeare, and that we do so for the wrong reasons, with lamentable results. Not surprisingly, a propædeutic resolve accompanied this judgment: Literary scholars must turn from "the study of [Shakespeare's] work," because of its tendency "to a universalizing and overtly apolitical" perspective, toward authors more congenial to benign political interests, such as Marxist feminism (Howard 1987, 1). The idea is that Shakespeare critics must change "specific practices—beginning with pedagogical practices—associated with the dissemination of Shakespeare in culture" (5). Although this might be a good idea, in fairness, I should probably admit that, in a "materialist" project, moral zeal seems to me a puzzling fit. How can cultural materialists justify moral indignation toward an "unregenerate New Critic" (5), believing as they do that such individuals are products—victims, really—of history? It seems to me unlikely that "materialists" of any denomination can strip the concept, "unregenerate," of its theological overtones, since they assume that the "original sin" of capitalism dooms every "New Critic" to complicity in a system of relentless canon-mongering,

with the establishment of Shakespeare's importance as both means and end. Hence, the "unregenerate New Critic" cannot escape wallowing in a fallen state. But wait. The figure carries with it a promise of redemption, for the very moment of condemnation offers the possible advent of a "regenerate New Critic," christened as a Marxist-feminist New Historicist—"born again," so to speak, with those outward signs of inward grace: tenure and plenary indulgence from the previous norms of archival research. The critical assumption is that, if they can politicize the subject of Shakespeare, and subvert the end of Shakespeare study to politically desirable goals, then they have mastered the power move of canon construction.

We could ask, of course, Why would anyone want to do *that*? And maybe this question would lead to productive inquiry. But I want to move in a different direction, that is, to investigate this odd rage of professional Shakespeareans against "apolitical" study of Shakespeare, not because it contradicts any high principle, nor because I was taught that only sentences, as distinct from sighs, moans, and furrowed eyebrows, can be contradicted. We can for the moment set logic and common sense aside, to take this Marxist-feminist New Historicist suggestion seriously, namely, that we rid ourselves of the historical, idealized, patriarchal, or whatever Shakespeare studies. What would the world—I mean, the domain of our talk about literature and value—look like without Shakespeare? Let me suggest that, to answer this question, we need to distinguish between normative and descriptive talk about Shakespeare. For when "materialist" critics say that, if we can politicize, and in so doing de-canonize, Shakespeare, we can do it to anyone, they are talking about more than a possible or probable outcome of a proposed intervention. They are applauding this imagined outcome.

Nor do I mean only to point to the cognitive dissonance between the way people talk inside and outside the academy walls. If we set critical theory in its usual practice aside as an occult way of talking, then the project of "demystifying" Shakespeare would seem more "fool's errand" than standard missionary work. For in fact, this project of "demystification" clashed with social reality during the last two decades, which witnessed a singular outburst of popular interest in Shakespeare. As the hue and cry of Shakespeareans against Shakespeare rose, it was as if theory would challenge the tenuous difference between fact and fiction, and the fantasy in *Shakespeare in Love*, of the great poet suffering writer's block, could be achieved by the triumph of cultural critique over literary history. While angry Shakespeareans sought to diminish Shakespeare, Shakespeare became the most prolific screenwriter in history, with over a dozen cinematic treatments of his plays, not counting the BBC collection, including four *Hamlets*, three *Richard IIIs* (one a Barrymore film buried in the archives since 1919), a *Henry V*, which included lines from *2 Henry IV*, two *Romeo and Juliets*, a *Titus*, a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a *Twelfth Night*, and literally dozens of films like *O* and *Ten Things I Hate About You* loosely based on Shakespeare. Then should we infer a cause and effect relation between

the assault on Shakespeare by Shakespeareans and this cinematic surge of interest in his works? It would make just as much sense to say that social constructionists kept the tide of Shakespeare interest from becoming a tsunami, overwhelming popular culture with X-rated War of the Roses video games, collectible Caliban Beany-Babies, and frozen meat pies in Titus Andronicus and Hannibal Lector flavors (hawked in TV commercials by chef Anthony Hopkins).

Moral posturing by cultural materialists is not the only philosophical anomaly in Shakespeare criticism. In his Foreward to *Philosophical Shakespeares*, philosopher Stanley Cavell expresses concern about a seeming disconnect between Shakespeare criticism and Continental philosophy. And this is odd, too. I think it was Wittgenstein who said that he never knew of a philosophical problem that he did not get from some other philosopher. If a disconnect between Shakespeareans and Continental philosophers—presumably, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, and so on—is indeed a problem, how do we learn that it is such? For if we do not learn it, how can we teach it to others? I mean, what value do we derive by appreciating this supposed disconnect as a problem? We could say that, if it is a problem, we can put its consideration to good use. But here the required assumption does all the work. So whether it is problematic or not, I want to consider Cavell's concern symptomatic of the confusing vocabulary that we are investigating, which involves, not the Continentals' imagined "death of the author" or "of God" or of "agents" in general, but the more exigent demise of a needful distinction between the prepositions *of* and *about*, as in the difference between ideas expressed *in* and those expressed *about* Shakespeare and his works.

Taking the absence of certainty of Cordelia's love in her father's mind as his prime example, Stanley Cavell thinks of *King Lear* as an instance of Cartesian "doubt." This perception strikes me as odd, and not just because it seems like a surprising twist of Descartes' doubt of received claims to knowledge. Like Bacon and Cherbury (whom Gassendi referred to as a "second Verulam" [Butler 1897, 25]), Descartes doubted the foundations of knowledge, as he had learned them at school. Like Bacon, he challenged the totality of the received curriculum, in effect, the method underpinning what his mentors regarded as the foundation justifying consent to any proposition. My point here is that there are many kinds of doubt, and that the fevered questions that plague Lear are different in kind from those of Descartes, which are largely methodological in nature. Moreover, Descartes insists that his method is personal:

> So it is not my intention to present a method which everyone ought to follow in order to think well, but only to show how I have made the attempt myself. Those who counsel others must consider themselves superior to those whom they counsel, and if they fall short in the least detail they are to blame. I only propose this writing as an autobiography,

> or, of you prefer, as a story in which you may possibly find some examples of conduct which might see fit to imitate, as well as several others which you would have no reason to follow. (Descartes 3)

If we take his disclaimer seriously, Descartes' "autobiography" could as easily be named "Discourse on *his*" as on "*the* Method"—or better still, "Discourse on his Story." For Descartes narrates, not how his reader should, but only how he himself in fact did move from doubt to affirmation—what worked for him. If I can say with certainty that *I am thinking*, I have already said with certainty that *I am*. In turn, Lear's intemperate rage against his daughters is less reflective, less academic, and *more* personal than Descartes' *Discourse*, and this notwithstanding the philosopher's autobiographical mode of expression.

These remarks are not meant to deny that history is an important influence in Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, as it is in Shakespeare's *Lear*. On the contrary, historical context presents another reason why I find Cavell's philosophical conflation of the two works odd. And my sense of anomaly is all the keener in light of Cavell's numerous appeals to Freud, which imply that speculations of a late-nineteenth-century Viennese physician are germane to an understanding of Shakespeare's play. We cannot forget that, as a literary critic, Freud studied *Hamlet* for forty years, employing presumably Freudian methodology, finally coming to the conclusion that Shakespeare did not write the play. Again—and this is odd, too—elsewhere, Cavell objects to Lily Bess Campbell's use of Aristotle in her analysis of *Lear,* because "she follows a typical assumption of [historical] investigations—that if Shakespeare's work is to be illuminated by these contemporary doctrines, he must illustrate them" (Cavell 2003, 58).

I say "odd" here because it seems to me that Cavell has the concept of historical development turned around. Lily Bess Campbell assumes that, since Aristotle was part of the curriculum in Shakespeare's time, it is at least possible—and in Lear's case, probable—that Shakespeare and his audience understood the characters and the catastrophe in *King Lear* in an Aristotelian context familiar to Elizabethans. In contrast—dubiously, I would think—Cavell holds the writings of Freud pivotal to an understanding of Shakespeare. (In this way, Cavell, to whom we will return in Chapter 9, is close to the views, discussed in Chapter 1, of Bloom and Nuttall.) I would say, to the contrary, that the hermeneutic question should be: How did native speakers in Shakespeare's time understand the situations and conflicts represented in this play?

Even more to the point of historical relevance, as Craig, Heller, and others have shown, we have good reason to suppose, from *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, that Shakespeare knew something about Machiavelli. So if the historical connection between Shakespeare and Descartes works at all, it would have to work the other way around. For by the time Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637) saw print, Shakespeare had been in his Stratford

grave for sixteen years; and that work was not translated into English until over a decade later. Descartes' *Meditations*, first published in Latin in 1642, was translated into French in 1661, and into English in 1680. So what do we gain by thinking of Lear's feelings about his daughters' affections in Cartesian terms? It seems to me that if we impute something essentially Cartesian to questioning others' affections, we are obliged to think of Medea's passion toward Jason as a harbinger of Descartes' philosophy. Surely this constraint is counterintuitive. One may doubt one's lover's constancy, and yet be the soul of credulity when it comes to the question of our knowledge of the external world.

Returning to critics who would redirect interest from Shakespeare to ideologically more congenial authors, not only does Descartes say nothing about Shakespeare, but, *a fortiori*, we need only look at seventeenth-century philosophy to see what the world of academic discourse would look like without Shakespeare. From the early days of Jonson on, literary critics, including Milton and Dryden, knew and admired Shakespeare. Not so with philosophers. Bacon, Lord Herbert, Gassendi, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Glanvill, Smith, Culverwell, Whichcote, More, Cavendish, Conway—philosophers of the time had plenty to say, often about each other, and sometimes even about poetry. But they were mute on the subject of Shakespeare.

We can learn from this fact, because it enables us to inquire into the dynamics of a world less interested than we are—indeed, one that appears to be not interested at all—in Shakespeare. It would be fruitless to investigate the phenomenon of silence on this subject in philosophers of our own time, for they are often inclined to heady statements about Shakespeare. For instance, as we saw in Chapter 1, Straussian Allan Bloom claims that "Shakespeare was the first philosopher of history" (Bloom 2000, 29), and Emmanuel Levinas, whom we will discuss at greater length in Chapter 9, thinks "the whole of philosophy is only a meditation of Shakespeare" (Levinas 1987, 79). But although Shakespeare was well known in the period, no seventeenth-century philosopher says anything remotely like this. (What, if anything, would it add to this statement to say that no seventeenth-century philosopher *could* have said anything like this?) Although Bloom and Levinas are by no means isolated examples among recent philosophers who impute philosophical significance to Shakespeare, it would not overstate the case to say that seventeenth-century philosophy would remain as it is had Shakespeare never written a line. And yet one historian of philosophy holds that "philosophy flourished in the seventeenth century, to a degree perhaps unmatched before or since" (Chapell v). So we know what the world would look like without Shakespeare. Those living in the world of seventeenth-century philosophy were occupied—a better word might be "preoccupied"—with other subjects.

In *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, Hans Reichenbach states that it was with "the rise of modern science, about the year 1600, that empiricism

began to assume the form of a positive and well-founded philosophical theory which could enter into successful competition with rationalism" (Reichenbach 78). In Francis Bacon, "empiricism ha[d] found its prophet" (84). "*Novum Organum*," Reichenbach writes, "is historically the first attempt at an inductive logic and therefore occupies, in spite of many deficiencies, a leading place in world literature" (83). Bacon is surely the most important English philosopher of Shakespeare's time. And yet, for Bacon, philosophy was an avocation, not a career. By profession, he was a supplicant, nothing if not ever the courtier in suit of advancement.[2] Technically a lawyer, Bacon struggled with the financial difficulties of a stepson in a patriarchal system. Unfortunately, he was often on the wrong side in dangerous intrigues. For instance, he encouraged the Earl of Essex in his calamitous Irish adventure, and so, prior to its collapse, he might have enjoyed Shakespeare's apostrophe to "the mirror of all Christian kings," where, in lines alluding to Essex, Shakespeare's Chorus portrays London's reception of Henry V after the victory at Agincourt:

> How London doth pour out her citizens!
> The Mayor and all his brethren in best sort . . .
> Go forth and fetch their conqu'ring Caesar in;
> As by a lower but by loving likelihood,
> Were now the general of our gracious Empress,
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit,
> To welcome him! (*H5*, 5.Chorus.24–34)

Here, sometime between spring and fall of 1599, Shakespeare envisions Essex as the embodiment of Elizabeth's power. Tyrone's devastating counterattack was yet to come (Sessions 8–9). So with throngs of Londoners, cosmopolitan Bacon might have enjoyed Shakespeare's imagined celebration of the earl's return, and with it, realization of his hopes for advancement.

Might have. The fact is that we have no evidence that Bacon saw or read *Henry V*, or, for that matter, that he ever saw or read *any* of Shakespeare's plays. Given Bacon's involvement with Essex, the fact of his silence on his great contemporary tells us something about the standing of the stage—and of poetry—in Bacon's future-oriented thought. We might expect that Bacon would consider the theatre, established in "liberties" beyond reach of city laws, as an area of the culture free from superstitions and customs of the past. As Paolo Rossi points out, Bacon disparaged interest in literature of the ancients, which did not advance science (Rossi 90–91). For example, he praised Machiavelli's histories as opposed to the mythology of the ancients (96). In the ten "centuries" of *Sylva Sylvarum* (1627), Bacon aims at something like an encyclopedic "Natural History," surveying a wide array of phenomena: bodies, pressure, earth, water, fire, air, gravity, plants, fruits,

diet, tobacco, copulation, pestilence, creatures, sound, music, even "immaturiate virtues and Force of Imagination." With all of his breadth of interest, Bacon has next to nothing to say about imaginative works, because to his mind no science "doth properly or fitly pertain to the Imagination" (Bacon 1889, 3, 82). It is true that by some "secret operation," the imagination can, through the operations of belief, affect "the thing itself" (1, 654). But, unlike the workings of the loadstone, the function of the imagination remains "secret," and therefore not open to inductive reasoning.

It would not be amiss to think of the one thousand entries in the ten centuries of *Sylva Sylvarum* as the "body"—today we might say "material"—that forms the world of "second causes." Bacon knew that words, especially words from Scripture, affect behavior, but they do so in ways that evade rigorous observation. So Bacon dedicates his verse translation of the Psalms to George Herbert, and *The Great Instauration* to King James, not the other way around. In Part 1 of the latter work, "Division of the Sciences," Bacon pays attention to the history of poesy, but even here he associates its forms with ancient wisdom, practices, and even superstition. As "work of the Imagination" (Bacon 1889, 4, 292), like art, poetry is "something different from nature" (294), and as such, less important, less effective than scientific inquiry in improving the conditions of life.[3] Bacon supports an academy transformed by a shift in emphasis from mental exercise toward empirical observation. So although he includes literary history in his comprehensive program (as he does the history of bed-stuffing), Bacon more than once questions the value of "poesy" in relation to other forms of intellectual endeavor. He recalls, for instance, that, because it "engenders temptations, desires and vain opinions" (5, 26), one of the Church Fathers considered poesy "'the wine of the demons." And, he adds (in a paragraph not included in *The Advancement of Learning*):

> Dramatic poetry, which has the theatre for its world, would be of excellent use if well directed. For the stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and corruption. Now of corruption in this kind we have enough; but the discipline has in our times been plainly neglected. And though in modern states play-acting is esteemed but as a toy, except when it is too satirical and biting; yet among the ancients it was used as a means of educating men's minds to virtue. Nay, it has been regarded by learned men and great philosophers as a kind of musicians bow by which men's minds may be played upon. And certainly it is most true, and one of the great secrets of nature, that minds of men are more open to impressions and affections when many are gathered together than when they are alone. (Bacon 1905, 89)

Unfortunately, Bacon observes, contemporary critics overlook the one area of convergence between drama and philosophy. Originally, the stage was an instrument of moral uplift and education. In this line of thought, Bacon

echoes Sidney's lofty response to Stephen Gosson's attack on the theatre in *The School of Abuse* (which was dedicated to Sidney), and, implicitly, on imaginative writing in general. For Bacon, drama is like a stringed instrument on which the artist performs harmonious strains, taking advantage of the good spirits that accompany social gathering. Bacon is thinking of the state's annoyance with published satire, the laws against which provided a major impetus to the stage in the time.[4] But in the main, he perceived the impact of the theatre on human conduct, although largely an ignored subject, as the obvious connection between philosophy and literature.

While Descartes' method emphasized mental process as much as Bacon's depended on the operations of the senses, the two thinkers shared much the same attitude toward poetry. Bacon imagined a variegated aggregate of disciplines on which a curriculum would be established. Descartes narrated a line of thinking that satisfied him: "I only propose this writing as an autobiography, or, if you prefer, as a story" (Descartes 3). He disavows any suggestion that his method would work for everyone, or, in its entirety, for anyone but himself. If Descartes addresses the curriculum of the schools at all, he does so only indirectly, recalling that he had been to the best schools, read voraciously from childhood, and yet remained unsure that he had learned anything that could certainly be called truth. Although he had absorbed what his mentors called philosophy, he recognized in what he had learned only the ways to talk about truth that academia admired. Although as a young man he "loved poetry," he came to see it as the product of those with "the most agreeable imaginations" (5). Above all his subjects, Descartes esteemed mathematics, and he could not understand why, with such a firm foundation, philosophy had not built upon it. Just as Descartes imagined extending the physics implicit and explicit in Galileo's observations, he looks ahead to the overwhelming success of science that mathematics would achieve a hundred years later.

We should recall here that it was the exact prediction of the return of Halley's Comet that earned science the unqualified adulation of society. The perception was that science had "prophesied" the future. Unfortunately, the Royal Society's Edmond Halley was neither a great astronomer nor a great mathematician. His prediction of the return of the comet named after him was off by almost a year. It was Nicole-Reine Etable de la Briére whose meticulous calculations revealed that Halley had ignored delays in the comet's journey caused by the planets Saturn (100 days) and Jupiter (518 days). Halley expected that the comet would be visible toward the end of 1758. So when he died in 1742, the event seemed a long way off. But by 1757, excitement grew about the power of science to predict events (Sagan 83). The calculations of Nicole-Reine Etable de la Briére Lepaute, which were completed under the pressure of time, indicated that Halley's mathematical errors offset his astronomical miscalculations. In fact, he was not far off, for the comet reached perihelion on March 13, 1759: "Science had succeeded where generations of mystics had failed. Newtonian prophecy

had been fulfilled" (85). No single event did more to establish the prestige of science than Lepaute's precise prediction of the return of Halley's comet, and more to establish the picture of a mechanistic world as the clockwork of God (84); in effect, it bore out Descartes' view that certain knowledge would have the precision and inevitability of mathematics.

It does not follow from this focus on mathematics and admiration of Galileo that Descartes and others like him were unfamiliar with literature. On the contrary, Descartes, Bacon, and Cherbury had the familiarity with literature customary to their rank. They probably attended the theatre. But the point is that philosophers of this epoch did not talk about doing so. For instance, Lord Herbert's *Autobiography* exhibits interest in sexual intrigues, personal affronts, debts, rivalries, challenges, tilts, and duels, but his memoirs are as bare of references to the theatre as Thomas Bodley's library shelves were of the works of playwrights. Like Bacon, Herbert was preoccupied with knowledge and its relationship to society. That interest shows itself in the title of Cherbury's most important philosophical work, *De Veritate*, which was published in 1624. And like both Bacon and Descartes, who grappled with the problem of knowledge in its ebb and flow across geographical and religious boundaries, Herbert wanted to "advance" knowledge, but in order to do that, he must first answer Montaigne: "Now I hold neither that we can know everything, or that we can know nothing; but I think there are some things which can be known" (Cherbury 78). For Cherbury, knowledge, rooted as it is in human experience, was not limited by national or religious boundaries. Hence, what is true is true for everyone, namely, those perceptions and inferences common to all cultures: "Since the Common Notion of a rose coincides in man's experience, all men will agree with me that objects which affect the whole of the faculties in the same manner produce the same results."

Knowing where Hobbes would go with apposite assumptions, we can see the political implications of Cherbury's cosmopolitanism: "Every Common Notion is directed towards man's preservation" (Cherbury 140). Since physical needs are universal, so are human passions, desires, and institutions: "The only Catholic and uniform Church is the doctrine of Common Notions which comprehends all places and all men. This Church alone reveals Divine Universal Providence, or the wisdom of Nature. This Church alone explains why God is appealed to as the common Father. And it is only through this Church that salvation is possible" (303). For Herbert, then, there is truth in the doctrine, outside the Church, there is no salvation, but it is not the truth of exclusion. Since all societies subscribe to "the doctrine of Common Notions," it follows that one's estrangement from them is nothing less that expulsion—excommunication—from the human race. In this way, Herbert reaches across the great divide of his time, the Reformation. By secularizing a doctrine of the Roman communion, he renders virtually meaningless the doctrinal issues that fractured European culture, bringing the whole of Christendom, indeed, the whole of humanity, under

one creed. Since the universal church is founded on God's Providence as articulated in the five Common Notions, it is "open to the whole human race in these Articles" (306).

Decades ago, Basil Willey pointed out that the Cambridge Platonists sought truth, not strictly defined in the manner of Bacon, but predicated on experience and reason. They sought to meld "new philosophy," or science, with enlightened Christianity, grounded in "Common Notions," or "universal consent," which might be subject to empirical inquiry; but that inquiry would be into social practices. This line of reasoning sees the truth of religion in the uniformity of peoples' perceptions. Salvation rests only on adherence to shared beliefs. Hence, investigation of differences can reveal only dispensable novelty, not truth. Herbert's thinking points toward Kant's views of aesthetic judgment. For him, "indubitable truths" (Willey 123) and their opposites are reflected in all religions, because "Universal consent . . . is the sole criterion of the truth in these necessary things" (124).

It seems to me that Lord Herbert sounds like a Renaissance equivalent of a modern anthropologist, as he defines religion in terms of societies' five shared beliefs, namely, that: 1) there is a supreme power; 2) this sovereign power must be worshipped; 3) the best part of worship is proper conduct; 4) vice should be expiated and repented; and 5) there are rewards and punishment after death. By proffering an alternative to doctrinal factions of his time, Cherbury shared Bacon's aim "that human life be endowed with new discoveries and powers" (Bacon 1889, 4, 79). By establishing religion on universal experience, Herbert likewise seeks "the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate" (3, 294), but he had not lived, as Thomas Hobbes had, through the Civil War. For Bacon's amanuensis, Hobbes, the passions of men were such that it was simply not possible to set religious differences aside. England had descended into the horrors of the Civil War on precisely such differences. It was better to admit, Hobbes reasoned, that there could be no universal church, because Christians admitted to no common earthly power to which all were subject. And since the end of worship is power, and power descends by irrevocable social contract from and through the sovereign, it follows that the Church of England determines the canons of Holy Scripture, and codifies the norms of public worship.

Although later in his life Hobbes translated Homer, and, while writing *Leviathan* (1651), also engaged in a discussion of epic poetry with Sir William Davenant, he nevertheless thinks of poetry as limited to such "Consequences from Speech" as "*magnifying*, v*ilifying*, &c" (Hobbes 3, 73). Thus, poetry and drama primarily concern the fancy, or imagination, which, from the outset, Hobbes characterizes as infirm: "*decaying sense*." Reducible to distorted memory, works of fancy are, then, suspect, since, like dreams, they tend toward absurdity. The problem in society is that individuals sometimes insist that their fancies originate from God, that they are "inspired," and therefore not subject to the sovereign's laws:

> It hath been also commonly taught, *that faith and sanctity, are not to be attained by study and reason, but by supernatural inspiration, or infusion*. Which granted, I see not why any man should render a reason of his faith, or why every Christian should not be also a prophet; or why any man should take the law of his country, rather than his own inspiration, for the rule of his action. (3, 331)

What, then, stands between the individual and reversion to "that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man" (3, 113)? In the state of nature, there can be no injustice, but only the striving of individuals to satisfy their passions: "Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues" (3, 115).

Advocates of Hobbesian atomism and power may have flourished in politics, but in philosophy, the late seventeenth century inclined toward Cherbury's benign cosmopolitanism. Perhaps the best example of Cambridge Platonism's determination to resolve religious controversy by philosophical reason is Anne Conway. Tutored by Henry More, Conway thought of her work as a complete answer to Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. She sought, in a way that neither Hobbes nor her mentor did, to conform her rational epistemology, in the manner of Renaissance syncretism, to her Christian faith. In practice, this means that her *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (1690) is generously imbued with the spirit, as well as the expressions, of the Hebrew *Kabbala Denudata* (1677), the first volume of which was published two years before her death. Alluding often to the Kaballa, Conway thinks of her philosophy as a refutation of Descartes, who "claims that body is merely dead mass" (Conway 63), of Hobbes, who argues "that God is material and corporeal" (64), and of Spinoza, who "confounds God and creatures and makes one being of both, all of which is diametrically opposed to our philosophy" (64). Conway's work, which Liebniz admired and emulated, explicitly fuses Christian, Hebrew, and Islamic notions of the Godhead. Specifically, Conway rejects an orthodox understanding of the Trinity, not because she was not a Christian, but because she envisioned a view of the Deity inoffensive to Jews and Moslems:

> There is spirit or will in God, which comes from him and which is in terms of substance or essence nevertheless one with him, through which creatures receive their essence and activity; for creatures have their essence and existence purely from him because God, whose will agrees with his most infinite knowledge, wishes them to exist. And thus wisdom and will in God are not entities or substances distinct from him but, in fact, distinct modes or properties of one and the same substance. And this is that very thing which those who are the most knowledgeable and judicious among Christians understand by the Trinity. If the

> phrase concerning the three distinct persons were omitted—for it is a stumbling block and offense to Jews, Turks, and other people, has truly no reasonable sense in itself, and is found nowhere in Scripture—then all could easily agree on this article. (10)

In this passage, the idea of consensus resonates with key phrases from the Nicene Creed: "God is spirit, light, and life, infinitely wise, good, just, strong, all knowing, all present, all powerful, the creator and maker of all things visible and invisible" (9). Since Conway wants to unite rather than divide, she would, while valuing its metaphoric significance, jettison the "personhood" figure of the Trinity, and in so doing, affirm only to those principles established by universal custom.

After a century in which philosophers, with their epistemological, political, and religious concerns, barely mention poetry, and do not refer to Shakespeare at all, the Earl of Shaftesbury breaks the long silence, with his very influential *Characteristicks* (1711). Remembered as the philosopher of an innate moral sense, Shaftesbury was the first philosopher whose remarks on Shakespeare have come down to us. And it is clear from Shaftesbury's reference to Shakespeare as "our old dramatic poet" that Shaftesbury recognized the poet as already venerable, through the praise of poets and critics like Jonson, Milton, and Dryden. Indeed, as a national treasure, Shakespeare's name was a virtual synecdoche for the genre—not even named—that he had mastered.

What does this change of subject suggest, and how do we explain the philosopher's sudden interest in Shakespeare? Like Vico (who may never have read Shakespeare), Shaftesbury believed that each nation, and even the same nation at different times, exhibited particular genius. For instance, in her courtly manners, France surpassed England. However, England was not, as her authors sometimes implied, barbarous. In fact, English literature soared over that of the French, and this because it was *more* English than French. The French were masters of manners, and this made them a success in satire. But great tragedy and great epic required the nurture of England's richer soil of liberty. Even England's rudeness and barbarity lent to achievement in the grander forms of epic and tragedy. In Shakespeare and Milton, "the British Muses . . . lisp in their cradles" (Shaftesbury 1, 115), raw and awkward, not yet supreme.

The first philosopher to remark at length on Shakespeare, then, Shaftesbury takes even Shakespeare's weaknesses, as well as his strengths, as indicative of English taste, which he perceived to be in a primitive state. In more ways than one, the English stage of Shakespeare's time was not far from the barbarous bear-baiting pit. Unable to recognize the bond between literature and morality, eighteenth-century English readers revel in barbarity. And as they take pleasure in "grotesque and monstrous figures," they become inclined toward these as the norm of enjoyment. "But," Shaftesbury inquires, "is this Pleasure *right*?" (Shaftesbury 1, 175). Like manners,

taste is learned. As one inclines to the familiar, so one is, willy-nilly, acculturated to the books that are around in one's youth. In this way, corrupt taste perpetuates itself, as the low material read when one is young becomes the subject matter of mature research and reflection. With the passage of time, then, the culture, reared in low enjoyments, is rendered unable to appreciate great poetry.

In the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot would argue that, by reading widely, the individual is able to offset the influence of strong, often malign influences. Shaftesbury argues that, since most literary influences are pernicious, one must resist the drift of culture from the moral bearing of great writing toward "a Multiplicity of Reading":

> We care not how *Gothick* or *Barbarous* our Models are; what ill-designed or monstrous Figures we view; or what false Proportions we trace, or see describ'd in History, Romance, or Fiction. And thus our *Eye* and *Ear* is lost. Our Relish or *Taste* must of necessity grow barbarous, whilst *Barbarian* Customs, *Savage* Manners, *Indian* Wars, and Wonders of the *Terra Incognita*, employ our leisure Hours and are the chief Materials to furnish out a Library. (Shaftesbury 1, 176–77)

Travel literature corrupts, and now the popular monster is the literary descendant of medieval narratives of St. George and the dragon and the like. Shakespeare's popularity is another case in point:

> This Humour our old Tragick Poet seems to have discover'd. He hit our *Taste* in giving us a *Moorish* Hero, full fraight with Prodigy: a wondrous *Story-Teller*! But for the attentive Part, the poet chose to give it to Woman-kind. What passionate Reader of *Travels*, or Student in the prodigious Sciences, can refuse to pity that fair Lady, who fell in love with the *miraculous* Moor? (1, 178)

As Shaftesbury quotes from Othello's speech to the Senate, the play exemplifies the perverse desire for exotic travel, adventure, and strange people—deserts, cannibals, and tribes of humans without necks:

> Seriously, 'twas a woeful Tale! Unfit, one wou'd think, to win a tender Fair-one. It's true, the Poet sufficiently condemns her Fancy; and makes her (poor Lady!) pay dearly for it, in the end. But why, amongst his *Greek* Names, he shou'd have chosen one which denoted the Lady *Superstitious*, I can't imagine: unless, as Poets are sometimes Prophets too, he shou'd figurative, under this dark *Type*, have represented to us, That about a hundred Years after his Time, the Fair sex of this Island shou'd, by other monstrous *Tales*, be so seduc'd, as to turn their Favour chiefly on the Persons of the *Tale-Tellers*; and change their natural Inclination for fair, candid, and courteous Knights, into a Passion for a

> mysterious Race of black Enchanters: such as of old were said to *creep into Houses*, and *lead captive silly Women*. (1, 179)

Shaftesbury is using the term "silly" here in its Renaissance sense of "innocent" or "unsophisticated." Desdemona is the precursor of a flighty generation of women, whose reading from their earliest days has been in lurid tales, which impute a species of honor, even virtue, to wild and primitive foreigners, especially if they are black: "A thousand Desdemona's are then ready to present themselves, and wou'd frankly resign Fathers, Relations, Countrymen, and Country it-self, to follow the Fortunes of a *Hero* of the black Tribe."

Shaftesbury sees Desdemona as evidence of Shakespeare's prescience concerning the English reading audience, which had come to exhibit the taste of "the silliest Woman, or merest Boy" (Shaftesbury 1, 179). The problem, then, is systemic; even the foreign sources of these exotic tales, which so enrapture British youth, have been corrupted. For uncorrupted by "Commerce," the primitive people whose experience gave rise to these tales would exhibit their natural, benign characteristics. But civilization had taught them "Treachery and Inhumanity" (1, 180). The true poet knows and responds to the original, natural, human impulse, which is to know and do the good:

> 'Tis the same case, where *Life* and Manners are concern'd. *Virtue* has the same fixt Standard. The same *Numbers*, *Harmony*, and *Proportion* will have place in Morals; and are discoverable in the Characters and Affections of Mankind; in which are lay'd the just Foundations of an Art and Science, superiour to every other of human Practice and Comprehension. (1, 181)

Only the false poet's sophistry explains the rules of art and morality as mere "*Caprice* or *Will*, *Humour* or *Fashion*." Such views are a mock upon nature. In fact, the rules of music, poetry, and architecture are not arbitrary: "For Harmony is Harmony by *Nature*, let Men judg ever so ridiculously of Musick." Indeed, it follows (in what will become a common theme in eighteenth-century thought) that the true poet and artist "is in truth no other than a *Copyist after* Nature" (1, 181).

For Shaftsbury, then, Shakespeare is the prime evidence that the English "are not altogether so *barbarous* or *Gothick* as they pretend" (Shaftesbury 1, 144). To the contrary, he is the sign that English taste is improving, but only in one area. In language, Shakespeare exhibits the typical genius of the English, which is, at best, ambiguous in its taste:

> Our old Dramatick Poet may witness for our good Ear and manly Relish. Notwithstanding his natural Rudeness, his unpolish'd Stile, his antiquated Phrase and Wit, his want of Method and Coherence, and

> Deficiency in almost all the Graces and Ornaments of this kind of Writing; yet by the Justness of his Moral, the Aptness of many of his *Descriptions*, and the plain and natural Turn of several of his *Characters*, he pleases his Audience, and often gains their Ear; without a single Bribe from Luxury or Vice. (1, 144)

As this periodic sentence unfolds toward the "yet," Shaftesbury brackets Shakespeare's faults, holding these merely technical deficiencies in suspension, so that they may be balanced against the playwright's conceptual achievement. First, and most important, his morality is in accord with nature, as, often strikingly, are his characterizations. Shaftesbury is thinking now of *Hamlet*:

> That piece of his which appears to have most affected *English* Hearts, and has perhaps been oftenest acted of any which have come upon our Stage, is almost one continu'd *Moral*: a Series of deep Reflections, drawn from *one* Mouth, upon the Subject of one single Accident and Calamity, naturally fitted to move Horrour and Compassion. (1, 144)

Here is evidence that the English audience matures. *Hamlet*, chiefly known for its great soliloquies, is, as "one continu'd *Moral*," an unlikely tragedy. Shaftsbury emphasizes that the play presents "no blustring *Heroism*," and in fact avoids the usual machinery on which "the hinge of modern Tragedy" relies.

3 Hume's Shakespeare

It would be hard to overstate the importance of Hume in philosophical discourse in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Tom L. Beauchamp notes that "several hundred discussions of Hume's writings were published between the date of the *Treatise* (1739–40) and the end of the eighteenth century" (*EPM* lxiv). Among these were serious reflections by such thinkers as Richard Price, Thomas Reid, and Adam Smith. Most of these many commentaries, which put Hume on the defensive from early on in his career, focused on his perceived skepticism and its supposedly pernicious consequences. In *A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in Edinburgh* (1745), Hume, stunned perhaps by the opposition of Francis Hutcheson to his candidacy for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University no less than by clergyman William Wishart's scurrilous pamphlet, aimed at blighting his hopes for appointment,[1] answers six specific charges lodged against the *Treatise*. The most important of these, and the one that stuck for decades, was that of "Opinions leading to *downright Atheism*" (*LGF* 21–22). Although Hume responds first to the charge of philosophical skepticism, his dismissive tone suggests that this is not the central issue. Nobody takes the arguments of Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus seriously: "As to the *Scepticism* with which the Author is charged, I must observe, that the Doctrine of the *Pyrrhonians* or *Sceptick*s have been regarded in all Ages as Principles of mere Curiosity, or a Kind of *Jeux d' esprit*, without any Influence on a Man's steady Principles or Conduct in Life" (*LGF* 19). Hume approaches the second charge—of atheism—with more caution: "To give you a Notion of the Extravagance of this Charge, I must enter into a little Detail" (22). In this connection, philosophers distinguish four kinds of evidence: "*intuitive*, *demonstrative*, *sensible*, and *moral*." One type does not necessarily provide greater "assurance than another. For instance, "*Moral Certainty* may reach as high a Degree of Assurance as *Mathematical*." "Certainty" does not always depend on evidence of the senses or the rules of logic. Nor does this modest observation threaten the imminent downfall of Christianity.

By the mid-forties, Hume's burgeoning reputation as "David Hume the Infidel"[2] rested on only three works, all published anonymously: the *Treatise*

itself, an *Abstract of a Treatise*, published a year later, and *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741–42). The point is that Hume's rumored "atheism" was of interest almost solely to people in Edinburgh involved in replacing Professor John Pringle, who was retiring from the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University. One of Hume's grievances against his accusers was the partiality of their interest, which left out of account the ambitious aim of the *Treatise*. In fact, *A Treatise Of Human Nature* lays out a broad range of scientific interests which, at the time of the *Letter*, Hume was developing, not setting aside: "There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science" (*THN* xvi). Ralph Cohen points out that the subtitle of the *Treatise* lays out the rhetorical thrust of the work toward "An Attempt to introduce the experimental method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects."[3] Hume insisted that human passions were subject to the same inductive method as the natural sciences, namely, "fact and observation." For him, the basis of "censure or approbation" was "a question of fact," and therefore only "the experimental method will yield success" in any venture to explain such phenomena (*EPM* 6). And he was sure—or at least pretended to be—that society was ready to recognize this truth: "Men are now cured of their passion for hypotheses and systems in natural philosophy, and will hearken to no arguments but those which are derived from experience" (7).

In Edinburgh at that time, Hume's "atheism" was only one aspect of the perceived unbelief that made him unpopular, and, by some lights, dangerous. The other aspect of his skepticism concerned Shakespeare. Although Hume's view of Shakespeare did not achieve the notoriety of his remarks on cause and effect, it did touch a sensitive nerve of national pride. Thus, to some of his contemporaries, Hume's philosophical project involved two related absurdities: his atheism and his unbelief in Shakespeare's genius. Although the official statement that kept Hume from appointment at Edinburgh University focused on the former, public ridicule of Hume's beliefs linked his skeptical view of Shakespeare's literary standing with his religious unbelief. Twelve years after *A Letter from a Gentleman*, Hume published *Four Dissertations* (1757), which included a Dedication "To The Reverend Mr. Hume, Author of *Douglas*, a Tragedy." By then, the controversy over Pringle's post in Moral Philosophy had subsided, but Hume, along with Lord Kames, had come under fire by the Scottish Presbytery, and in 1756 faced excommunication by the General Assembly (Mossner 1954, 343–45). They were charged with being "the Disgrace of [the] Age and Nation," and with writing books "subversive of All Religion Natural and Revealed," and so for corrupting "life and morals" (343). Before the matter could be settled, "the Reverend John Home" became embroiled in a similar controversy, and, as Ernest Mossner writes, "the affair of the two Humes consequently became in 1757 the affair of the three Humes" (352).

The problem was that Hume's "namesake" and "quasi-cousin" (Mossner 1954, 360), John Home, a Scottish clergyman, had written a play entitled *Douglas*, which David Garrick had declined to produce in London. Unlike the Church of England, officially, the Church of Scotland did not hold with stage plays. For the Scottish clergy, it was unthinkable that one of their own would attend, much less write, produce, and act in a play for the public stage. The fact that *Douglas* was commercially successful only compounded the offense. Maybe Home and his associates thought that, because the play was on a Scottish theme, and produced in Edinburgh, love of country might persuade the evangelical wing of the Church of Scotland to set aside its opposition to the theatre.[4] In fact, it only changed the terms of the Evangelicals' anti-Hume campaign from excommunication to the legal and moral proscriptions against stage plays. One consequence of this shift in focus was to turn the public's attention from Hume's celebrated infidelity to his heterodox opinion of Shakespeare. Thus, Hume's role in producing and publicizing his friend's play took the brunt of public scorn.

We should remember that "Queen of the Bluestockings" Elizabeth Montagu's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* popularized opinions that were enshrined for a century and a half by dozens of literary critics, including Jonson, Dryden, Rowe, Pope, Warburton, Addison, Malone, and Johnson. Montagu summarizes the consensus view of England's cognoscenti, who had not strayed far from Ben Jonson. In his elegy "To the memory of my beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us," which was published in the 1623 Folio, Jonson ranked Shakespeare, alone among English poets, as the equal of "Æschilus, Euripides, and Sophocles":

> . . . alone, for the comparison
> Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
> Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
> Triúmph, my Britaine; thou hast one to showe,
> To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
> He was not of an age, but for all time! (Jonson 8, 391)

From the outset of the history of Shakespeare criticism, "Intimations of Immortality" were the norm. Soon Milton praised "sweetest *Shakespeare*, fancy's child," as endowed by nature to "Warble his native Wood-notes wild" (Milton 71). In his *Essay*, *Of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden claims that "Shakespeare was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily," that is, without effort: "He was naturally learned" (Dryden 56). Among the earliest to envision a "Science of Criticism," Lewis Theobald claimed that even in Shakespeare's lesser works, readers "encounter Strains that recognize the divine Composer" (Theobald 1, xl, xxxiii–xxxiv). Addison wrote that

"*Shakespeare* was indeed born with all the Seeds of Poetry . . . produced by the spontaneous Hand of Nature without any Help from Art" (*SCH* 2, 280). In *An Essay upon the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare* (1712), John Dennis declared that "*Shakespeare* was one of the greatest Geniuses that the World e'er saw for the Tragick Stage" (*SCH* 2, 282). Not one to mince words, George Stubbes offered the settled opinion that Shakespeare was in fact "*the* (italics mine) greatest Tragick Writer that ever liv'd" (*SCH* 3, 40). And Pope affirmed that " Shakespeare was . . . not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her as that she speakes thro' him" (*SCH* 2, 404).

Such remarks reflect the abiding British literary wisdom in Hume's time, which helps explain the enormous popularity of Elizabeth Montagu's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769).[5] Accordingly, whether or not he was steeped in the ancients, Shakespeare was a "Prodigy of Nature," a "genius" who transcended the rules of art. In contrast, in his theory of "genius," Hume is closer to Vico and Shaftesbury than to Montagu or Addison. Hume's critical approach appealed to thinkers like William Richardson precisely because it seemed to be "philosophical" or "scientific" rather than belletristic. Accordingly, in "The Rise of the Arts and Sciences," Hume writes that "genius," being "a happy Talent for the liberal Arts and Sciences, is a kind of Prodigy among Men" (*EMPL* 549). There are, of course, different kinds of genius, and they differ in value. The highest genius, seen in such men as Galileo and Newton, is "philosophical." The second level of genius is manifest in poets: Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Lucretius among the ancients, Milton, Pope, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, and Voltaire among the moderns. Given the many essays and treatises of the time on the genius and writings of Shakespeare, the absence of his name among Hume's pantheon of geniuses is as notable as the fact that Hume thinks of Voltaire, not as a philosopher, but as one of the four French poets ranked with the highest. In this company, only two English poets, Milton and Pope, deserve mention.

It might be tempting to say that Hume's omission of Shakespeare's name here should not be overstated; Chaucer, Sidney, Marlowe, Jonson, Spenser, Donne, Webster, Marvell, and Dryden are missing, too. But in fact, going hand in hand with his supposed atheism, Hume's distaste for Shakespeare was an occasion for public ridicule, the caricature of Hume in *The Philosopher's Opera* (1757) being perhaps the most telling case in point. John (Lord Dreghorn) Maclaurin's play is an obvious parody of Hume, who, as Mr. Genius, courts the affections of Mrs. Sarah Presbyter, mother of "Jacky" (John Home), whose new play, *Douglas*, has just opened in Edinburgh. In his Preface to the play, Maclaurin makes clear that "two characters, and but two" (John Home and David Hume) "are not imaginary" (Maclaurin iii). Because the intellectual calumny directed at both men is quite direct and, at times, even vulgar, Maclaurin is at pains to point out the poetic justice involved. Readers "would do well to consider the scurrilous terms in which they have

pointed out two men long since dead and gone. Remember the barbarism of Shakespear, the licentiousness of Otway, and that the author of *Douglas* has been preferred to both." Ridicule is justified when it aims "to expose known falsehood"—and here Maclaurin aims directly at David Hume. One of the two men proclaims—as fatuously as Don Quixote declared his Dulcinea "the most beautiful princess in the universe," "that *Douglas* is a faultless play."

The fact that "this tragedy was written by a Scotch clergyman" is, on its face, an offense, because everyone knew that the clergy in Scotland were steadfastly opposed to stage plays. So to have a clergyman publicly admit to writing a play for the stage went beyond impertinence:

> He can't help numbering the tragedy of *Douglas*, and the circumstances attending it, amongst the most remarkable occurrences that have ever happened in this country. If Scotch clergymen may, with impunity, not only write plays, but go to see them acted here, and absent themselves for months together from their parishes, in order to solicit their representation at London, the religion and manners of this country are entirely changed. (Maclaurin iii)

This perceived impropriety explains why Mr. Genius pursues Mrs. Sarah Presbyter, praising her wrinkles as evidence of her "philosophical sedateness" (4), and declaring that men rightly seek old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old books to read, "and old women to love and caress." So maybe Mr. Genius (Hume) courts orthodox believers in the person of Mrs. Sarah Presbyter, but it is not her confidence ("These breasts" [*putting his hand in her bosom*]") that he admires. In fact, largely because of the *Douglas* controversy, playwright John Home was, to the dismay of Voltaire and others on the Continent, forced from the pulpit.[6]

Understandably, Maclaurin's indignation is directed primarily at Home's flouting Church of Scotland strictures on the theatre. Dreghorn lambasts the claim of the play's merit, put forward as it was by the nation's most celebrated infidel. As Henry Mackenzie wryly observes: "in such a temper of the public mind, it was not wonderful if the appearance of a tragedy, written by a Presbyterian clergyman, should scandalize and provoke the Church of Scotland" (Home 3, 42). Here, in an "Account of the Life of Mr John Home," he lays out how "the Presbytery published a solemn admonition on the subject," pointing out its differences with the Church of England on the matter of the theatre. But Maclaurin is offended, also, by the violation by both Hume and Home of the norms of literary judgment:

> As it was the first play [Home] ever had made public, one would have expected, that he and his friend would have ushered it into the world, either with a real or affected modesty: but, on the contrary, they declared the play to be perfect, and the author to be endowed with a genius superior to that of Shakespear and Otway. (Maclaurin iii)

The two Humes may have hoped to draw from the well of national pride. Not only is *Douglas* based on a famous Scottish ballad, but its author and his most vocal public supporter are Scots. Unfortunately, in the public mind, that supporter was, first and foremost, the most notable Scottish proponent of atheism. So, in the play, Mrs. Presbyter, "relict of Mr. John Calvin," is on her way to see her son's play, *Douglas*. She is grateful to Mr. Genius for placing the weight of his reputation behind the play. In fact, Hume did talk the play up, and in fact sold tickets to its performance; moreover, in his dedication of *Four Dissertations* (1757) to Home, entitled "To the Reverend Mr. Hume, Author of *Douglas*, a Tragedy," Hume did register a high opinion of the work:

> I own too, that I have the ambition to be the first who shall in public express his admiration of your noble tragedy of *Douglas*; one of the most interesting and pathetic pieces, that was ever exhibited on any theatre. Should I give it the preference to the *Merope* of *Massei*, and to that of *Voltaire*, which it resembles in its subject; should I affirm, that it contained more fire and spirit than the former, more tenderness and simplicity than the latter; I might be accused of partiality: And how could I entirely acquit myself, after the professions of friendship, which I have made you? But the unfeigned tears which flowed from every eye, in the numerous representations which were made of it on this theatre; the unparalleled command, which you appeared to have over every affection of the human breast: These are incontestible proofs, that you possess the true theatric genius of *Shakespear* and *Otway*, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one, and licentiousness of the other. (*FD* iv–vi)

Here, Hume concedes the likelihood of "partiality" in his estimate of *Douglas*. Be that as it may, his remarks tell us something about a subject that was very much on his mind. At the time of this production, Hume was working on his essay "Of Tragedy," which was published seriatim with "Of the Passions" in *Four Dissertations* (1757). Clearly, the quotation above says as much about Hume's thoughts on Shakespeare and Otway as it does about those on the author of *Douglas*. The point is that Hume praises *Douglas* for what it is not, as well as for what it is: "unparalleled" in its "command" of "every affection of the human breast." Then, in favorable contrast, he presents Shakespeare and Otway, who possess a singular "theatric genius," one, presumably, capable of entertaining. But at the same time the two authors provide Home with examples of how not to write tragedy. This is so because the results of their "theatric genius" are "unhappy"; in turn—and happily—the resourceful playwright, namely, John Home, reads Shakespeare to learn how not to write barbaric plays. In the future, playwrights will read *Douglas* to learn the method of refinement: how to write tragedy unflawed by "barbarism."

So *Douglas* is "noble" in that it is "most interesting and pathetic," without being "barbaric" or "licentious." It is a "noble tragedy," and, as Hume argues in "Of Tragedy," this particular dramatic form provides "an unaccountable pleasure (*FD* 185), in that plays of this kind depend entirely on "uneasy passions." When these passions end, so does the play. Only one joyful moment can be tolerated, and this moment ordinarily coincides with the conclusion. Paradoxically, the audience experiences pleasure "in proportion as they are afflicted; and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion" (186). The dynamics of "this singular phenomenon" has received attention from only a "few critics, who have had some tincture of philosophy." First Dubos claims that humans prefer any passionate state of mind to none at all: "No matter, what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better, than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquility and repose" (186). Obviously, tragedy portrays human suffering in the extreme, with protagonists entering a state of repose only when they die. It is unthinkable that tragedy would produce a "languid, listless state of indolence" in its audience. But even though these extremities relieve us from torpor, we cannot deny that they induce a state of unease; and, being painful, they cannot alone give pleasure. So this account can be only "in part satisfactory" (187), that is, "in part," unsatisfactory.

Fontenelle attempts to fill in what is left out of this "theory" (*FD* 188). For him, the pain that we feel in these events has a certain kinship with pleasure. Pleasurable stimuli, when exaggerated, can become painful, and movement in the opposite direction is also possible. Pleasure becomes pain, and pain becomes pleasure, depending on the degree of stimulation. In this way, events that we perceive in a theatre are attenuated by the surroundings, which tell us that the events, however vividly presented, are not real:

> We weep for the misfortune of a hero, to whom we are attached: In the same Instant we comfort ourselves, by reflecting, that it is nothing but a fiction: And it is precisely, that mixture of sentiments, which composes an agreeable sorrow, and tears that delight us. But as that affliction which is caused by exterior and sensible objects, is stronger than the consolation, which arises from an internal reflection, they are the effects and symptoms of sorrow, which ought to prevail in the composition. (*FD* 189)

Again, the problem for Hume is that the account in question leaves too much unexplained. Fontenelle's analysis presupposes the transformation of one passion into another, whereas, in Hume's mind, "All the passions, excited by eloquence, are agreeable in the highest degree" (190). Passions need not become anything other than themselves. Rather, there is a hierarchical order of reactions answerable to the particularities of expression. The

exemplar of this rhetorical truth is Cicero, the great orator and advocate. His "epilogues" are the very embodiments of "eloquence," which renders even the most horrible of atrocities agreeable, not because they turn what is horrible into something tender and nice, but because they invest the narration of a past horror intensely present, instilling in the audience intense resentment and indignation at the defendant, Gaius Verres. The audience is "convinced of the reality of every circumstance." How is it that this rendition, which "still retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorrow," provides a phenomenon so easily recognized as pleasure?

Hume answers, *contra* Fontenelle, that it is not knowledge that this is fiction, because it is not. Nor does Cicero in any way modulate the awful circumstances of the suffering of the Sicilian victims. Rather, he brings the event vividly present, in all of its gory details. The audience is convinced of its truth: The audience knows the suffering of those Sicilian captains, who had endured torture and death for crimes that they did not commit, at the hands of a self-absorbed libertine and tyrant. Gaius Verres, scion of a great family and Governor of Sicily, brutalized innocent men, and then turned on their parents, extorting money from them for the privilege of seeing their young sons decently interred instead of having their body parts thrown to wild animals. Like eloquence, imitation—and "tragedy is an imitation"—"is always of itself agreeable." Just as an eloquent account of an atrocity pleases, so its dramatic equivalent—tragedy—gives pleasure, by the "mechanism"—a rousing [of] the mind," which is a "movement," a "transformation:

> It is thus the fiction of tragedy softens the passion, by an infusion of a new feeling, not merely by weakening or diminishing the sorrow. You may by degrees weaken a real sorrow, till it totally disappears; yet in none of its gradations will it ever give pleasure; except, perhaps, by accident, to a man sunk under lethargic indolence, whom it rouzes from that languid state. (*FD* 192–93)

Here is Hume's psychological thesis, which, like any hypothesis, requires proof, namely, "instances, where the subordinate movement is converted into the predominant, and gives force to it, tho' of a different, and even sometimes tho' of a contrary nature" (193). For Hume, Shakespeare provides the relevant example, with that memorable sequence of scenes in Act 3 of *Othello*, in which the subordinate passion of impatience exacerbates the protagonist's "predominant" one: "every spectator is sensible that *Othello's* jealousy acquires additional force from his preceding impatience, and that the subordinate passion is here readily transformed into the predominant" (194). By itself, jealousy is powerful. But without it, the delights of love would not exist. Parents are likely to favor the weakest child. Here, the transformation of weak into powerful, compounded by the pleasure that fiction and eloquence afford, explain the "regular mechanism" of tragedy.

We must bear in mind, I think, that Hume is talking about a science of mind. "Of the Passions," printed just before "Of Tragedy" in *Four Dissertations*, ends with this reminder:

> I pretend not here to have exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy. (*FD* 181)

So Hume does not set "Of the Passions" forward as the last word on this behavioral science. But he does insist that "there is a certain regular mechanism" that can be observed in the same way as the scientist observes "the laws of motions . . . or any part of natural philosophy." Science explains the "regular mechanism" of things, the way the world works. And humans respond, under the same stimuli, in the same way. It is important to recognize this, as we turn to the following essay, "On Tragedy." For, again, the passions come into play:

> Nothing is more capable of infusing any passion into the mind, than eloquence, by which objects are represented in the strongest and most lively colours. The bare opinion of another, especially when inforced with passion, will cause an idea to have an influence upon us, tho' that idea might otherwise have been entirely neglected. (180)

Hume is saying that Cicero's eloquence affected the jurists in accord with the "regular mechanism" of such situations. Being human, they responded with resentment and indignation, not because Cicero lied or told the truth—not even because Verres was a bad man. Regardless of what idea they had of the matter beforehand, Cicero's eloquence "influenced" jurists to respond in the "regular" way.

With respect to the role "Of the Passions" in establishing a "human science," Hume's reference to Rochefoucauld suggests a stylistic aspect of Hume's rhetorical theory: "*Rochefoucault* has very well remarked, that absence destroys weak passions, but increases strong; as the wind extinguishes a candle, but blows up a fire" (*FD* 178). Like Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*, the prose of Hume's essay on "the Passions" tends toward the pithy, assertive sentence. Such and such is the case; and the corollary is also true. Consider the proposition that Hume employs, "Maxim 276": "Absence diminishes small loves and increases great ones, as the wind blows out the candle and blows up the bonfire" (Rochefoucauld 1957, 86).[7] *P* is the case, or as Hume puts it, the "regular mechanism," and the corollary (*Pp*) is also true. Thus, it is true that a zephyr might not put out a candle, and it would hardly perform the function of a bellows. But what Hume seems to emulate, beyond the genteel cynicism of Rochefoucauld, is, especially, the

succinct, pithy, axiomatic sentence typical of the Frenchman's prose: Such and such is the case, and therefore the following is also true. We think of another writer whom Hume admired, Francis Bacon, whose *Novum Organum* provides another example of the simple, axiomatic syntax, intended to advance the inductive, scientific perspective.

Now, Maclaurin's Mrs. Presbyter is hardly the person whom one would likely find in *salons* frequented by Rochefoucauld or Hume; the latter would soon be taken up by Parisian society. And yet, like them, she is somewhat feckless of the reputation that one might associate with her surname. First, she has all but forgotten her husband, Mr. Calvin, whose family name she has cast aside. She admits that he was a good man, but for all that, something of a prude. Second, she praises Mr. Genius for sponsoring her son's play. Indeed, she thanks the philosopher for his influence on her sons, exuding:

> But since they got into your good company, they have put off the old man entirely: they have acqwuired a jaunty air, a military swagger, and a G—d d—nn-me; they swear, they drink, they wore so handsomely. (Maclaurin 5)

The fictionalized Hume avers that he is undeserving of such praise, but his modesty proves to be misplaced. Satan (Mr. Bevil), whom his follower, Sulphureous, claims has been neglecting Scotland, claims that Scotland has sunk so low that it no longer requires much of his attention. But he admits that he would like to meet a certain Scottish philosopher, and perhaps a few members of his "small Select Society" (9). He may be the "only one author of note" the country has to offer: "*Mr. Genius* is his name. He is the best writer against Christianity in Britain; Nay, he gives very broad hints against the being of God" (12). When Satan claims to have read all of the philosopher's books "with great delight," Mr. Genius replies:

> Why, then, Sir, you are convinced, I suppose, that there is no God, no devil, no future state;—that there is no connection betwixt cause and effect—that suicide is a duty we owe to ourselves;—adultery a duty we owe to our neighbour; that the tragedy of *Douglas* is the best play ever was written; and that *Shakespear* and *Otway* were a couple of dunces.—This, I think, is the sum and substance of my writings. (12)

The point here, then, is that Maclaurin thinks of Hume's atheism as at one with his errant opinion of Shakespeare. In tandem, these two species of unbelief should persuade "impartial men of sense in both kingdoms" to disavow the play and, presumably, the false doctrine and false literary values of both men. Although the analogy might not be as clear to Scots today as then, Maclaurin sees Hume's skepticism in religion and in literary judgment as symptomatic of one and the same social malady: "If Shakespear and Otway are to be cried down, and the author of *Douglas* set up in their

stead, the taste of this country is at an end. Religion will (it is hoped) be the care of those who are paid to support it." No doubt Maclaurin's central concern is religious. Eventually, Home's dalliance with the theatre led to his dismissal from the clergy.[8] So Maclaurin's scattergun fire aims at Hume, of course, but also at the Select Society of the Scottish Enlightenment, whose members arrogated to themselves the prerogative of controlling thought and action in Scotland. Unfortunately, some of these men are learned, and some even decent, so, rightly or wrongly, they have exercised undue influence on popular culture:

> Hence it was that *Douglas* was acted here last winter thirteen times to a numerous audience; but Othello (which had not been played here for seven years) brought no house at all. This shews, that the run *Douglas* had here, was owing to the influence of a party; or else, that the people who generally compose the audience in our theatre, are no more judges of the merit of a play, than the chairmen who carry them to see it. It is certainly the duty of every man who regards the honour of his country, to make a stand against that unhappy barbarism which the cabal I have already mentioned is endeavouring to establish; and as certainly every man who has felt exquisite pleasure in reading the works of Shakespear and Otway, makes them but a very ungrateful return, if he tamely looks on while they are hunted down by a set of men who owe their title of geniuses to the courtesy of Scotland alone. (Maclaurin iv)

Of course, Maclaurin's view of Hume is, to use his term, "partial," but this is not to say that he fabricated his Mr. Genius out of whole cloth. Home had earned the reputation of the "Scottish Shakespeare" (Mossner 1943, 38), but then David Hume did not consider this a compliment. Before he had read *Douglas*, Hume wrote that his "namesake" had written a play which was "very likely to meet with success, and not to deserve it, for the author tells me, he is a great admirer of Shakespeare, and never read Racine" (*LDH* 1, 149–50). Clearly, his friend's admiration of Shakespeare, like his ignorance of the great French playwright, is evidence of his current handicap as a writer. After reading the play, Hume wrote:

> A young man called Hume, a clergyman of this country, discovers a fine genius for that species of composition [tragedy]. Some years ago, he wrote a tragedy called *Agis*, which some of the best judges . . . very much approved of. I own, though I could perceive fine strokes in that tragedy, I never could in general bring myself to like it: the author, I thought, had corrupted his taste by the imitation of Shakespeare, whom he ought only to have admired. But the same author has composed a new tragedy . . . and here he appears a true disciple of Sophocles and Racine. I hope in time he will vindicate the English stage from the reproach of barbarism. (*LDH* 1, 203–4)

Similarly, in a letter to Home on *Douglas*, Hume wrote, "For God's sake, read Shakespeare, but get Racine and Sophocles by heart. It is reserved to you, and you alone, to redeem our stage from the reproach of barbarism" (Home 3, 100). The inference seems to be: Read Shakespeare, if you must, but why must you? If a playwright reads Shakespeare, and then tries to emulate him, he runs the risk of staging the Elizabethan Englishman's "barbarism." But if Home will take the Greek and French masters as his models, he can "redeem" the fallen "stage from the reproach of barbarism."

Returning to the *The Philosopher's Opera*, in his prefatory remarks, Maclaurin explicitly states that only two of the characters in the play are "imaginary." This duo is made up of the author of *Douglas* and the infidel whose "falsehoods" about religion and Shakespeare Maclaurin means to expose through ridicule. That the two subjects should be linked with respect to matters of faith is interesting, if not, indeed quaint. For Hume's strictures on "miracles" could be, even today, looked upon as anything but not supportive of orthodox religious beliefs.

Although Maclaurin's perception of David Hume's heterodox opinion of Shakespeare may not be far off the mark, it is, nonetheless, not precisely on the mark either. For an understanding of Hume's view of Shakespeare, we must look beyond Maclaurin, beyond popular perception, and beyond the *Douglas* episode. For Hume's most extensive discussion of Shakespeare appears in his *History of England* (1754–62), which was his most commercially successful venture. It is here that we find Hume's direct comparison between the two great figures in British literary history, Shakespeare and Milton. When Hume discusses the prolonged and brutal struggle between Britons and Saxons during the period of the seven kingdoms, he thinks of Milton's "great learning and vigorous imagination" (*HE* 1, 122). As for Shakespeare, in a passage recalling that even members of his own party did not like Milton, Hume shifts the subject to rhyme (5, 529–30), comparing Shakespeare unfavorably with Cowley and Waller.

Again, in an Appendix on the subject of liberty, Hume turns to Shakespeare's *Richard II*, arguing that liberty, as an ideal, was of recent vintage in English political history. During the reign of Elizabeth, clergymen were given the most horrendous punishment for what seemed to Englishmen only a century later rather minor disagreements with the crown: "The homilies published for the use of the clergy, and which they were enjoined to read every Sunday in all the churches, inculcate every where a blind and unlimited passive obedience to the prince, which on no account, and under no pretence, is it ever lawful for subjects in the smallest article to depart from or infringe" (*HE* 4, 357). Only after another generation had passed from the scene, with Queen Elizabeth on the throne, did the idea of liberty take root on British soil. Nowhere in Shakespeare's saga of the Wars of the Roses, Hume insists, do we find a single trace of this uniquely Enlightenment ideal. This is so despite the view among historians that the cause of liberty lies beneath most of the monumental events in British history:

> It is remarkable, that in all the historical plays of Shakespeare, where the manners and characters, and even the transactions of the several reigns, are so exactly copied, there is scarcely any mention of civil liberty, which some pretended historians have imagined to be the object of all the ancient quarrels, insurrections, and civil wars. In the elaborate panegyric of England, contained in the tragedy of Richard II, and the detail of its advantages, not a word of its civil constitution, as anywise different from or superior to that of other European kingdoms; an omission which cannot be supposed in any English author that wrote since the restoration, at least since the revolution. (*HE* 4, 358)

"The elaborate panegyric of England" is, presumably, Gaunt's monologue on the "blessed plot," "the sceptred isle," "this fortress built by Nature for herself." The "advantages" that Hume recalls are physical, not political. England is the envy of the world because she is immune to attack by all but Englishmen: "That England, that was wont to conquer others, / Hath made a shameful conquest of itself" (2.1.65–66). Hume, then, remarks on what is missing in Gaunt's eulogy, and from Shakespeare's history plays in general. These plays simply do not touch on what an informed historian sees as the shaping aim of social movements in Britain. Nor was Shakespeare alone in this "omission." Hume insists that, not until the Restoration, does evidence appear of anything like the conviction that Britain's "constitution" was not only "different from," but "superior to," its continental counterparts. We must infer, then, that, from Hume's point of view, out of the nation's crucible of Civil War and the Interregnum emerged the uniquely British ideal of political "liberty."

For Hume, literary analysis provides a purchase for cultural investigation. In a similar addendum on the "Reign of James I," for instance, he sees Shakespeare's talent as well as his limitations as indications of a primitive past. That fact is that the Jacobean court was more interested—and more successful—in commerce than in "learning" (*HE* 4, 521), and this fact bears upon a proper literary history of "the most eminent" authors of the Stuart period, including Shakespeare:

> If Shakespeare be considered as a *man*, born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction either from the world or from books, he may be regarded as a prodigy: if represented as a *poet*, capable of furnishing a proper entertainment to a refined or intelligent audience, we must abate much of this eulogy. In his compositions, we regret that many irregularities, and even absurdities, should so frequently disfigure the animated and passionate scenes intermixed with them; and at the same time, we perhaps admire the more those beauties, on account of their being surrounded with such deformities. (*HE* 4, 523)

Not only do we detect echoes of Voltaire here, but also of Shaftesbury. Shakespeare is vulgar, but then, since he did not write for an "intelligent audience," it would be wrong to judge him too harshly. Refined writing would have been lost on the rabble in the pit. This explains why, among the grotesqueries in Shakespeare's plays, strikingly good passages stand out.

Hume may remind us of Shaftesbury and Voltaire here, but his diction resonates, too, with the likes of Montagu, Morgann, Addison, Richardson, and other literary critics of the time who focused on Shakespeare's characters. Like them, he thinks of Shakespeare's portrayals as epiphanies unmatched since Greek drama. Shakespeare "frequently hits as it were by inspiration." As for this unprecedented creative state of mind, unfortunately, "he cannot for any time uphold" it.

> Nervous and picturesque expressions, as well as descriptions, abound in him; but it is in vain we look either for purity or simplicity of diction. His total ignorance of all theatrical art and conduct, however material a defect, yet, as it affects the spectator rather than the reader, we can more easily excuse, than that want of taste which often prevails in his productions, and which gives way only by intervals to the irradiations of genius. (*HE* 4, 523)

Here, as we have seen, Hume reverts to the traditional vocabulary of literary criticism. With Edward Young, he affirms precisely what he elsewhere denies, namely, Shakespeare's achievement as a unique expression of "mighty genius" (Young 81). In one instance, Shakespeare is an expression of a particular time and place, exhibiting the particularities of a barbaric audience. In another, his original genius shines forth. Accordingly, unlike his journeyman contemporaries, "*Shakespeare* mingled no water with his wine, lower'd his genius by no vapid imitation" (Young 78). His creations were not tainted by imitation: "*Shakespeare* gave us a *Shakespeare*." Had Hume persevered in this established point of view, it seems unlikely that he would have received public ridicule for holding Shakespeare beneath the likes of John Home. Finally, Hume writes:

> A great and fertile genius he certainly possessed, and one enriched equally with a tragic and comic vein; but he ought to be cited as a proof, how dangerous it is to rely on these advantages alone for attaining an excellence in the finer arts. And there may even remain a suspicion, that we overrate, if possible, the greatness of his genius; in the same manner as bodies often appear more gigantic, on account of their being disproportioned and misshapen. (*HE* 4, 523)

I think we can say that Hume's judgment is a measured one, one that neither contradicts the sociological assumptions that he registers elsewhere, nor the ill-tempered resentment of Voltaire. Hume does suggest that the

English overrate Shakespeare; but then he makes clear that Shakespeare is, for better and worse, an English poet.

Whether or not Hume was an "infidel" seems to depend on one's sensibilities, and, perhaps, on how much Hume one has read. In any event, I am willing to take Richard Popkin's word for it that "in the mid-eighteenth century, Hume was the *only* living skeptic" (Popkin 1980, 58). And it seems to me that his skepticism applied to the norms of English taste as well as to those of epistemology. With respect to Hume's judgment of Shakespeare, we must remember that he was not only a skeptic, but also a Scot.

4 "Philosophy" in Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis* of Shakespeare

When William Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* first appeared in 1774, the author had only recently taken his post as Professor of Humanity at the University of Glasgow.[1] Described as "a man of some note in his day," Richardson specialized in Latin, but lectured also "on the principles of classical composition and on Roman antiquities" (Clarke 143). Over the next forty years, he revised his work on Shakespeare, sometimes in apparent response to books that had come out in the interim on Shakespeare. Richardson always had a mind to advance his "philosophical" project, which he considered different from, and even in opposition to, the mainstream views in literary criticism of the time. Indeed, for him, belletristic attitudes driving Shakespeare criticism of the period were at loggerheads with the aims of "philosophical analysis," which, Richardson believed, were meant to match "advances in other branches of science" (1774, 13).[2]

At the time, Richardson probably had no idea that some forty years later he would include two letters from Edmund Burke in an expanded edition more than three times the length of the original *Philosophical Analysis*, which appeared as the modest quarto publication. But at the outset, I want to point out that Richardson was keen to align his work with renowned Enlightenment figures, including (besides Edmund Burke) Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, Lord Kames, Francis Hutcheson, Joseph Butler, and David Hume. These are major thinkers in the history of ideas. By placing *Philosophical Analysis* within an array of major, contemporary philosophers, especially those associated with the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, Richardson implies that his treatise is part of the intellectual advancement evident in contemporary philosophy and science. For just as Richardson's title is reminiscent of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), so Burke's essay recalls Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, which echoes Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and so on back through Hobbes, Descartes, and Bacon, to Aristotle and Plato. Although Richardson revised his Shakespeare project over the decades, his "philosophical" program continued to focus on what he regarded as an "original," intellectually

respectable effort to establish literary study as one among many "branches of science." To accomplish this end, he aimed from the start to distinguish "philosophical analysis" from the established norms of literary criticism. Although not a major figure in Shakespeare studies in his time, Richardson did his best to set what he believed to be the shaky discipline of literary analysis on the firmer foundation of the natural sciences.

It is no secret that, in the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was the major topic of discussion among the most important figures on the literary scene. Editions of his works flourished, notably those by Nicholas Rowe, Alexander Pope, Lewis Theobald, Bishop William Warburton, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Hugh Blair, and Edmund Malone (Richardson took special note of the latter), and Shakespeare commentary crammed the pages of numerous books and periodicals. So saturated is the field of eighteenth-century criticism with Shakespeare commentary that one might easily suppose Richardson's *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* to be one of dozens of mercifully forgotten literary appreciations of Shakespeare's inimitable poetic genius.[3]

Such an inference would be mistaken, at least from Richardson's point of view, for he characterizes his work as "philosophical analysis" with a mind to differentiate his method from that of more traditional literary critics like Elizabeth Montagu, whose *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, although published only five years earlier, had, by the time Richardson's project first saw print, already gone through four editions, and been translated into German. Civil on its surface, Richardson's rejoinder to Montagu appears to give the popular author her due:

> It is obvious that my design by no means coincides with that of the ingenious author of the Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, whose success is in rescuing the fame of our poet from the attacks of partial criticism, and in drawing the attention of the public to various excellences in his works which might otherwise have escaped the notice they deserve, gives her a just title to the reputation she has acquired. My intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct. (1774, 42–43)

I quote at length from the 1774 edition[4] in order that the irony of Richardson's declaration might better come through. Here, Richardson's annoyance rises to the surface. For what is "just" about a reputation based on an argument for the existence of "excellence" that only a handful of "partial" malcontents would challenge? So along with obligatory generosity toward Montagu, Richardson registers indignation as well. He would "by no means" be thought to undertake the supererogatory task of saving Shakespeare from critical obloquy; the implication is that Montagu is wasting time and energy (and all the while receiving critical adulation). With respect to Montagu's pointless venture, "success" implies mere dubious

self-aggrandizement. Moreover, Richardson's play on words ("genius," "ingenious") suggests the repetitiousness, the triviality, the "partiality" of her belletristic approach. Worlds apart from "philosophical analysis," Montagu's *Essay* labors to elevate Shakespeare's reputation, while Richardson's *Analysis* seeks to advance the cause of philosophy. The Queen of the "blue stockings" purports to have rescued Shakespeare from the "partial" dislikes of Voltaire, regardless of whether his partiality was ever a serious threat to Shakespeare's reputation. For Richardson, the difference in intellectual weight is hard to miss. In Shakespeare investigations, either questions of "taste" or of "philosophy" must dominate or be "subservient to" the other. And Richardson emphatically asserts that his "philosophical analysis of Shakespeare's . . . characters" is, as Montagu's "*Essay*" is not, devoted to the supremacy of philosophy over literary appreciation. The latter depends, as the former does not, on the imponderable of individual preference.

Richardson includes this edgy reference to Montagu's *Essay* in his Introduction to the succeeding four editions of *Philosophical Analysis*. Then in the fourth edition, published a decade after the first, he (somewhat oddly perhaps) appropriates the generic sense of the title of Montagu's famous work in his *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*. But when, in 1797, Richardson adds seven essays, which appeared separately in 1784, 1785, and 1789, to the contents of *Philosophical Analysis*, he retains the original Introduction, while deleting all mention of Montagu or her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*. In effect, while eliminating reference to Montagu and her work, Richardson retains the Introduction as a statement of his critical focus on "philosophical" methodology rather than on Shakespeare's "writings and genius." It is not just that Richardson imputes value to the designation of his "analysis" as "philosophical," but also that he has in mind a powerful conception of philosophy, which, if extended to the study of literature, would make that field of inquiry amenable to the same advancement of knowledge enjoyed by "other branches of science." For as he argues in the Introduction, the subject of one's research is less important than the investigator's methodology:

> Many find amusement in searching into the constitution of the material world; and, with unwearied diligence, pursue the progress of nature in the growth of a plant, or the formation of an insect. They spare neither labour nor expense, to fill their cabinets with every curious production: they travel from climate to climate: they submit with cheerfulness to fatigue, and inclement seasons; and think their industry sufficiently compensated, by the discovery of some unusual phenomenon. Not a pebble that lies on the shore, not a leaf that waves in the forest, but attracts their notice, and stimulates their inquiry. Events, or incidents, that the vulgar regard with terror or indifference, afford them supreme delight:

> they rejoice at the return of a comet, and celebrate the blooming of an aloe, more than the birth of an emperor. (1774, 10)

Anything but dismissive of scientific researchers' unflagging energy, Richardson takes the scientists' method, with its presumed manner of exposition, as his model. Although the subject of their inquiry may at times seem trivial ("a pebble," "a leaf"), the perseverance and methodology driving scientific inquiry deserves admiration. With a flourish, Richardson catalogues a range of possible objects of scientific investigation, great and small, from the "pebble . . . on the shore" to "the return of a comet." From his point of view, scientific method is comprehensive; whatever the object of study might be, science brooks no hindrance to the most exhaustive inquiry. And what learned, reasonable mind would not admire the results?

Richardson knew that many readers would recall the recent—and perhaps the single most important—advance in the social prestige of science in history. Only a few years prior to publication of *Philosophical Analysis*, the event that scientists had long predicted—some in the period would say "prophesied"—occurred: the exact date in 1759 of the return of Halley's Comet.[5] As I suggested in Chapter 2, it would be hard to overstate the impact of this event, not only on science, but on humanists like William Richardson. Halley was off in his original calculations, estimating that the Great Comet of 1682 would return at the end of 1758. Here we may need to be reminded that, when he died in 1742, Halley's fanciful notion of predicting the date of the comet's return was all but forgotten in England.[6] But French mathematicians and astronomers, thanks especially to the indefatigable mathematical calculations of Nicole-Reine Etable de la Brière Lepaute, which took into account the effects of Jupiter and Saturn on the trajectory of Halley's Comet, calculated the exact date of the comet's parihelion passage in mid-April of 1759, from precisely "the sector of the sky that Halley had foretold" (Sagan 85). This breakthrough forever silenced critics of Newton's *Principia* (Tatgon 2, 438). Carl Sagan observes that "many soon recognized what Halley and his French successors had accomplished. They had established a program, a goal, an ideal for the future of all of science: 'the regularity which astronomy shows us in the movements of the comets,' Laplace concluded, 'doubtless exists also in all phenomena'" (Sagan 85). Hence, an emerging consensus affirming a mechanistic universe, governed by physical laws.

We should remember that it was largely owing to Halley that Newton undertook writing the *Principia* in the first place (Tatgon 2, 283). Because of a wager with another friend, Halley went to Newton with a problem: What would the effect be on the orbit of a planet if that orbit decreased by the square of the distance to the sun? Newton replied, without hesitation, that the orbit would be an ellipse. Halley saw at once the value of the inverse-square law.[7] Successful prediction of the return of Halley's Comet, compounded by the fascination of the public with the "transit of Venus"

two years later, enhanced the sense that science was the key to the future of the human race. It was not just that money and talent poured into improving the production of telescopes; that technological initiative continues to this day. Still, many literary historians point to publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, and more broadly to the late nineteenth century, as the time when science triumphed over all opposition in the popular imagination. It would be more accurate to say, I think, that the unchallenged triumph of science and technology took place a century earlier, in 1759, with the return of Halley's Comet. To humanists like Richardson, it was a dagger in the heart of metaphysical speculation. In response, thinkers like the "Professor of Humanity" at Glasgow, Richardson, were convinced that the only pathway to advance their discipline was to emulate the scientist, to practice the applied science of "philosophical analysis" of literature.[8] To accomplish this end, the advocate of "philosophical analysis" must do more than cast doubt on literary criticism as it was usually practiced. He must articulate a theory of literature as "experiment."

From the outset, then, Richardson thought of his Shakespeare project in "experimental" terms that fit right in with contemporary advances in science, where the focus was on cause and effect "systems." As I have suggested, by characterizing his "analysis" as "philosophical," he distinguished his purpose, method, and style from those of the literary *cognoscenti* who held sway in Shakespeare criticism at the time, and so aligned himself with major names of what we now call the Scottish Enlightenment. Here, Richardson thought, was the great tradition extending back to Socrates. "This great teacher of virtue," he wrote, "was so fully convinced of the advantages resulting from the connection of poetry with philosophy, that he assisted Euripides in composing his tragedies, and furnished him with many excellent sentiments and observations" (1774, 7). We may recall that, as the subtitle of her *Essay* indicated, Montagu wanted to exonerate Shakespeare of Voltaire's charge of vulgarity. This was for Richardson a supererogatory, but by no means an ignoble, intention. Still, he looked to Socrates, who collaborated with Euripides to undertake a greater task of determining the facts of human nature. Unlike Montagu and her kind, Richardson would elucidate "the *principles* [italics mine] of human conduct," and in this way join Newton, Halley, and the growing ranks of scientists, by establishing the mechanism—the origins, the cause and effect "system"—"of human conduct."

Accordingly, adjusting the well-known Horatian formula to his own purpose, Richardson proposes that amusement is but one aim, and by no means the only aim, of poetry. Advancement of human happiness is the other, which explains why philosophers have always recognized a connection between philosophy and poetry. As Cicero observed, the injunction to "Know thyself" was "so highly esteemed" that the "sages of antiquity . . . ascribed it to the Delphian oracle" (1774, 7).[9] This is not to say that such knowledge comes easily. Because individuals differ, self-reflection fails the

observer when it is needed most, namely, when great passion is involved. It is not surprising that "natural philosophers possess great advantages over moralists and metaphysicians, in so far as the subjects of their inquiries belong to the senses, are external, material, and often permanent" (1774, 18). In the natural sciences, the subject remains still, so investigators can concentrate on it when "they feel their minds vigorous, and disposed to philosophize" (19). On the other hand, "the abstracted philosopher" is not inclined to powerful emotion, and even if he were, he must perforce rely on vacillating recollection, for "in order to succeed in his researches, he must recall the idea of feelings perceived at some former period; or he must seize their impression, and mark their operations at the very moment they are accidentally excited" (20). Since passion and reflection are incompatible, self-knowledge based on recollection will always be "limited," and the "theory" derived from it "partial" (21).

Moreover, the fact that passions are compound rather than simple requires that observation take account of often subtle shadings and gradations. In this connection, Richardson thinks of Thomas Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764), which had been published a decade earlier. Here, Reid provided a philosophical "*analysis* of the human faculties" (Reid 15), arguing that the anatomy of the mind is more difficult to describe than that of the body. Even genius will not help; in fact it may hinder philosophical investigation. This is Richardson's most telling point, and it provides his reason for invoking the prestige of Reid's reputation. It is important to Richardson that introspection cannot lead to self-knowledge, for when it comes to judgment, there are as many variations as there are feelings, and feelings sway perceptions. In order to circumvent the partiality of self-reflection, it seems reasonable to observe the actions of others in society, and to consider inferences derived from such observations justified, because they seem to be unbiased. But this is a mistake, too. For not only do we encounter "the same difficulties" of memory that sully introspection, but, to make matters worse, we find that both we and our subject are concerned about our mutual reactions. Philosophical analysis requires objectivity, but humans are swayed by "affections," which inevitably mar the clarity of observation.

So in order "to extend the limits of human understanding," Richardson argues, we must look beyond the immediate and variable in human interaction, applying philosophical theory to particular cases (1774, 14). Hence, the value of "philosophical analysis and *illustration* of Shakespeare's characters." For it is a *non sequitur* to say that, because inquiry into human nature is difficult, therefore it "can never be the object of precise inquiry" (1774, 13). Such skepticism must not go unchallenged, for it implies that God abandoned "this wonderful machine" of the human mind "to be actuated by random impulses, misshapen, and imperfect" (17). Why should there be laws of winds, governance of raging tempests, but none for the most splendid of God's creations? It would be better to concede that

"perfect knowledge of the nature and faculties of the mind" is probably not attainable at the present time. But—and Richardson insists on this proposition—"neither can the contrary be affirmed of any subject of philosophical inquiry" (14). On the contrary, he states with Newtonian confidence, the fact is that "harmony and design pervade the universe" (16).

For Richardson, it is important to recognize that progress can be made, similar to "advances in other branches of science" (1774, 13), in the study of the human mind. One need only consider the hindrances to knowledge of the subject, and find means to get around them. For instance, in order to explain the mechanism here, one must expose "the nature of the ruling passion" involved (36). Macbeth provides just such a serviceable "instance." Until provoked, Macbeth's mind is in a "natural and unperturbed state," or so it seems, from a public point of view. He is "Brave Macbeth," whose loyalty none would question. But Lady Macbeth knows something about him that complicates this characterization; he is kind, gentle, mild, but ambitious, albeit "ambitious without guilt" (36). Richardson explains the relevant aspect of human nature: "All men . . . possess the seeds of violent passion" (1812, 38). Since humans are naturally inclined to "the desires of the heart" (39), they seek to satisfy their desires in ways conducive to happiness. The avaricious indulge in "reveries of ideal opulence" (39); the ambitious think of themselves feted in magnificence; the author who desires fame imagines himself crowned with laurel; the warrior envisions conquests in battle, and so on. If one would know oneself, one must be aware of what particular passion poses the greatest threat in the individual's case. Following Francis Hutcheson, Richardson lays out a theory of the mind, "regulated by moral considerations" (40). When perturbed by violent passion, the mind generates resistance in the form of thoughts, compounded by a mixture of countervailing native instinct and social pressure. One wants to get on in the world, and experience suggests that to do so one must trim one's aims of self-aggrandizement to fit the expectations of parents, teachers, and religious leaders. In effect, humans internalize the *sensus communis*.

With Hutcheson, Richardson believes in what today we call "psychology," which was at the time a newfangled "way of philosophising concerning the soul" (OED). Parasitic on the ancient term *psychomachia*, which dates from the fifth-century poem of that name by Prudentius, "psychology" was not yet in common use. And yet believing as he does in this new science of human faculties, Richardson wants to say something true—"precise," "scientific"—not only about Shakespeare's knowledge of the human mind, but *a fortieri* about "mind" in general. Thus, Richardson sees Macbeth as an example—the experimental evidence—of how the imagination works. To some extent, the principle that governs the imagination is "the probability of success" (1774, 52); but that practical concern is "also regulated by moral considerations." Richardson thinks of Macbeth—the character, not the play—as evidence supporting, in addition to the work

of Francis Hutcheson, that of Joseph Butler, one of whose hypotheses, laid out in *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* (1736), Richardson repeats: "The horror and aversion excited by enormous wickedness, unless we act in conformity to them, 'are mere passive impressions, which, by being repeated, grow weaker'" (1774, 62–63).

Richardson may have relied on his memory in misquoting Butler, but he does get the theory right. Butler insists that habits of the mind are like those of the body; in both external and internal operations, "practical principles" apply. Thus, the virtues of truthfulness and charity are not thrust upon one's character, any more than are the vices of arrogance and cruelty. So thinking virtuous thoughts, and wishing others to do the same, "contribute towards forming good habits," which, in action, are what we mean by virtue. There is a theory here that applies to Richardson's modification of Cicero's *nosce teipsum* motif. One cannot simply decide to "know oneself," at least not in the philosophical sense that Joseph Butler and Richardson think imperative. One must recognize the mechanism of the process involved, which requires distance, precisely what is lacking when one is in a state of mental agitation. One must learn the principle:

> But going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures, of it; this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form an habit of it, in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible, i.e. form an habit of insensibility, to all moral considerations. For, from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly: being accustomed to danger, begets intrepidity, i.e. lessens fear: to distress, lessens of passion of pity; to instances of others' mortality, lessens the sensible apprehension of our own. (Butler 92)

Here is the basic principle, or theory. And Richardson, patient observer of these changes in Macbeth's attitude and behavior, provides the evidence to support this theory of mental faculties. Accordingly, the protagonist's first treasonous thoughts on "The Prince of Cumberland" subside peacefully. Butler theorizes what the evidence "proves," namely, that inaction renders the thought passive, as if the individual were merely a witness, rather than a participant, in the imagined transgression.

Given the power of the concept of analogy at work in Butler's treatise, evidence in Shakespeare's play says something "true" about human nature. In just the same way, the argument of Hutcheson's *On the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Harmony*, which Richardson echoes, is amenable to literary "research." For since "Minds [are] differently fashioned" (1774, 53), they are driven by individual motives, regulated by both "the probability of success and "moral considerations" (52). Richardson revises

his remarks on Hamlet to demonstrate precisely this point, asserted previously by Adam Smith. At issue is Hamlet's brooding over the swiftness of his mother's resort "to incestuous sheets." Notice what Richardson deletes from his earlier remarks (in square brackets), but especially what he adds to his original observations (in bold face):

> Hamlet, in his retirement, expresses his agony without reserve, andby giving it utterance he receives relief. In public he restrains it, and welcomes his friends with that ease and affability which are the result of polished manners, good sense, and humanity. [His conversation, though familiar, is graceful:] **Influenced by an exquisite sense of propriety, he would do nothing unbecoming*: he therefore suppresses every emotion which others cannot easily enter into: he strives, as much as possible to bring the tone of his own mind into unison with theirs; he not only conceals his internal affliction, but would appear unconcerned: he would seem sprightly, or at least cheerful: he even jests with his friends; and would have his conversation, though graceful, appear easy and familiar.** Yet in his demeanour we discover a certain air of pensiveness and solemnity, arising naturall from his [internal trouble] **inward uneasiness.** (1812, 85–86)

With an asterisk and a footnote, Richardson refers to Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In effect, declaring the philosophical context of his additions to the paragraph, he emphasizes the genesis rather than the quality of behavior. Dropping a sentence which characterizes Hamlet's manner of speech ("familiar," "graceful"), he turns to internal motive. Hamlet's "sense of propriety" influences him to behave in a way attractive to others. This motive drives Hamlet to suppress "every emotion" that others "cannot easily enter into." Hamlet "strives" to hide anything, including his inner torment, that would separate him from others. Thus, he appears "easy and familiar" in manner, when in fact he is not so. Long before the players enter the action, and we learn how deeply conversant with dramatic literature Hamlet is, he has already, Richardson's revisions imply, revealed himself as a playwright and an actor, using skills of imagination and dissembling to appear as if he were as much like those around him as possible. Richardson may be thinking of Adam Smith's discussion of the amiable virtues in "Of the Sense of Propriety," in which he argues that, because an underlying sympathy binds men together, they are inclined, especially if informed by proper sensibility, to adjust their affections to fit the company and circumstance of the moment:

> What noble propriety and grace do we feel in the conduct of those who, in their own case, exert that recollection and self command which constitute the dignity of every passion, and which bring it down to what others can enter into! (Smith 24)[10]

In two ways, the revisions that Richardson makes through the years exhibit preoccupation with "principle," or "theory." We have just seen how he expands his remarks on Hamlet to emphasize his theoretical alignment with Hutcheson and Smith. Here and elsewhere, Richardson sharpens his focus on internal operations of the mind. He imposes these changes on discussions of the characters treated in *Philosophical Analysis*, and the reasoning behind these adjustments informs the compositions added to succeeding volumes. But Richardson's revisions also concern the more general problem of assuring a proper understanding of his theory and its application. To this challenge, Richardson addresses his most strenuous efforts.

For example, in the first major addition to his Shakespeare project, in 1784, Richardson introduces *Essays* on Richard III, Lear, Timon, "The Faults of Shakespeare," and "Additional Observations on Hamlet," with a new Preface, the most interesting aspect of which is that most of it is written, not by him, but—so Richardson claims—by an anonymous reviewer of the work. This critic introduces an important subject to the project in a paraphrase of Richardson's views on the difficulty of setting up "experiments" with the human mind. The problem for a science of human affections is that, while physical objects stay put, human actions, motives, and passions do not. Experience teaches that individual situations shift, and emotions vary with them, and so on. For this reason, it is not only convenient, but scientifically important, that drama provides the opportunity of "experiment" by combining evidence of passion with stability of example:

> The preliminary reflections shew the importance of experiment, in the philosophy of mind as of body; but they discover at the same time, how much more arduous and difficult it must prove, to pursue a course of mental, than of corporeal experiments. The qualities of bodies are fixed; the laws by which they operate, determined: so that in physical experiments, if the process be right, the result must be uniform. The operations of mind, however, are more complex; its motions are progressive its transitions abrupt and instantaneous; its attitudes uncertain and momentary. The passions pursue their course with celerity; their direction may be changed, or their impetuosity modified by a number of causes, which are far from being obvious and which frequently escape observation. (E, 1784, ii–iii)[11]

These observations follow the line of thought of the Introduction to *Philosophical Analysis*. The reviewer recognizes the place in philosophy of the proper sort of literary analysis:

> It would, therefore, be of great importance to philosophical scrutiny, if the position of the mind, and in any given circumstances, could be fixed till it was deliberately surveyed; if the causes, which alter its feelings and operations, could be accurately shewn, and their effects

> ascertained with precision. To accomplish these ends, according to our author, dramatic poetry may be of the greatest use. (iii–iv)

Now the critic comes to the crux of Richardson's "experimental" theory of the "philosophical analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic characters." Shakespeare meets the demands of "accuracy," of "precision." After all, science cannot proceed by guesswork or approximation. Proper analysis requires fixity of circumstances, followed by precise observation. Shakespeare provides the philosopher with just such an opportunity to observe a wide variety of characters, faithfully represented. For Richardson, by doing so, he achieves the literary equivalent of philosophical—that is, of scientific—"discovery":

> Among dramatic writers, none has more happily and successfully delineated the human character, in all its indefinite varieties, than Shakespeare. Our observer, therefore, proceeds to contemplate this faithful mirror, and to discover the various influences of external causes upon the images which it reflects. This gives him at once, an opportunity of shewing how true to nature the poet is in his conception; and of deducing such reflections from his discoveries, as may both enlighten the theory, and facilitate the practice of virtue. (iv–v)

Is it any wonder that Richardson included these remarks in the Preface his new *Essays* on Shakespeare's dramatic characters? Here, all at once, Richardson has the opportunity to authorize the proper understanding of *Philosophical Analysis*, right along with the approval of the anonymous critic's praise of his work.

Four years later, when Richardson brings out new essays on Falstaff and "On Shakespeare's Imitation of Female Characters," he drops this Preface. But—and this revision remains through all succeeding editions—he incorporates the critic's remarks on *Philosophical Investigations* in a "Conclusion: Containing Observations on the Chief Objects of Criticism in the Works of Shakespeare." This heady title indicates that the reviewer's understanding of *Philosophical Analysis* has now been canonized as part of the author's Shakespeare project. It is, in fact, the closing entry of the 1797, first composite edition, of Richardson's work. Moreover, this generous characterization goes hand in hand with the notable addition in the 1789 volume of the *Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*.

This title of the latter essay is probably aimed at Montagu's fellow dabbler in undisciplined impressions, Maurice Morgann, who, in 1777, allowed his ambling, undisciplined *Essay on the Dramatic Character of John Falstaff* into print, accompanied with an apology for the occasion of its composition and lightness of tone. Admitting that the *Essay* could be justly faulted for its "levity" (Morgann A4), Morgann argues that literary argument should be "subservient to Critical amusement" (A2). In what looks like an explicit

rejoinder, in the 1784 *Essays*, we read that the author "would render . . . poetry subservient to a higher end than mere amusement" (viii), a view consistent with Richardson's earlier statement in *Philosophical Analysis* that his "intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy." From Richardson's point of view, in lamentable contrast, Morgann argues that, not only should "levity" be forgiven, but it just might be that the subject itself renders a frivolous tone appropriate. Given Morgann's disclaimer of any serious intention (the essay took its rise from a friendly disagreement concerning Sir John's conduct as a soldier), it is not surprising that Morgann undermines all criticism by insisting that, although too long, his essay was put forward in such a lighthearted spirit that only the one charge of excess levity made any sense. I doubt that Richardson was much amused by such Morgannesque indulgences as this: "Poesy is *magic*, not *nature*; an effect from causes hidden or unknown" (71). To make matters worse, Morgann insists that he means "*magic* . . . in its strict and proper sense" (71n). No remark would be more likely to stir Richardson to a rejoinder. For Richardson, such a remark would appear antiphilosophical, and as such, lacking in intellectual rigor. Given such dilettantish views, is it any wonder that the whole of literary studies was in such bad odor? So it is not surprising that Richardson responds, first, by stating that he will write, not with the gentleman's expansive drollery, but "with as much brevity as possible." This claim might easily remind readers of Morgann's admitted windiness, and those interested in rhetoric might recall that, in *An Essay Towards a Real Chararacter and a Philosophical Language* (1668), John Wilkins insisted that "brevity" was a defining feature of "*Universal Philosophy*" (Vickers 1987, 184); "Equivocals" are a source of ambiguity, and, at their worst, "Canting forms of speech" (186). Rightly, philosophy contrives language in such a way as to describe the nature of things" (190), thus overcoming "the Curse of *Babel*" (185) by "reduction," that is, by shedding excess, or "ornament" (186). In a similar frame of mind, declaring brevity as his means, Richardson affirms that he will "then by a particular analysis of the character endeavour to establish [his] theory" (240), that is, his methodology, his science.

In 1784, Richardson expanded his Shakespeare project, reshuffling some of the entries previously published, and adding new material. He continued this process until 1812, when he added a new essay on Fluellen, plus an "Appendix," comprised of two commendatory letters from Edmund Burke, to the composite collection of 1797. These revisions, the last he would make, do more than expand the volume. In the comprehensive edition of 1812, "The Chief Object of Criticism," which had long served as a concluding, forceful restatement of the principles laid out from the start in the Introduction, no longer concludes the volume. Instead, that pride of place is occupied by two letters from his eminent colleague, Edmund Burke. Begun as a Preface indicating how an intelligent reader should understand his *Philosophical Analysis*, "The Chief Object of Criticism" concludes the final

version of the project, only to make way for letters from one of Scotland's, then, most famous minds. These letters make very clear, now, what readers should think of these essays.

By 1797, Richardson had identified Burke as the author of a remark published in "The Object of Criticism" (that quotation appeared without attribution in 1789). In the comprehensive edition of 1812, Richardson also added an essay entitled "Shakespeare's Imitation of Characteristical, and Particularly of National Manners, Illustrated in the Character of Fluellen." Arguing that literary criticism, by ignoring the "great number of diversities, apparent in human nature . . . occasioned by differences of external circumstance and situation" (1812, 366), more "than any other science," has worked "to retard the progress of critical knowledge" (364–65). Richardson undertakes his ethnographic study to correct this situation. Men, he insists, differ in manners and customs according to their geographic and historical placement (371). And, as Shakespeare's representation "from the Welchified English of Captain Fluellen" illustrates, they differ also in their "language and dialect" (379).

In his Introduction to *Philosophical Analysis*, and with each addition to his Shakespeare project up to and including the essay on Fluellen,[12] Richardson amplifies his "intention to make poetry subservient to philosophy." Nowadays, literary critics tend to shy away from the "T" word. Even critics whose work is informed by the language of anthropology and psychology may draw the line short of "truth claims." And yet, by appropriating the diction of anthropologists and psychologists, they, like Richardson, would borrow prestige, and even "validity," from disciplines imagined to enjoy those virtues lacking in literary studies. Richardson wrote in an age in which, largely because of the success, as we have already seen, of such exact predictions as the date of the return of Halley's Comet, science enjoyed a greatly enhanced reputation. Insofar as the analogy between fictive and actual characters held (and by "analogy," Richardson and his colleagues were thinking of a mathematical notion, like "ratio" [A is to B as B is to C]), the "philosophical analysis" of literary characters could be "scientific," that is "objective," which is to say "true."

We need not burden such locutions with a significance that would require us to remove them from our critical vocabulary. There is a sense that fictive characters—Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear—are "real," in the sense that they are invariably *not* interchangeable with (respectively) Banquo, Osric, or Lear's Fool. I want to say that "true" might be just the word that we are looking for to describe, say, a characterization or performance of Hamlet or Lear. Perhaps the philosopher is making a helpful statement when he states that literature conveys only the "truth" of consistency: "In a world in which all princes are dignified it is impossible for Hamlet to act like a clown; and if the Hamlet on the stage does behave like a clown he only irritates us by his failure to live in the world of our assumption" (Cohen 1961, 20). In this context, "Figurative Truth" involves "appreciation [of]

the intellectual or scientific function of metaphor" (95). This statement does not deny that, for many, the notion of "normative science" is an oxymoron, and would dispatch practitioners of such so-called science to the realm of art. But for others, logician Morris Cohen, for instance, "all science is, in a sense, an intellectual art—the art of building of a system of consistent judgments" (111). Consistency, regularity—these standards, and the fidelity to the real world that they require, have their uses in science, fiction, and everyday life:

> The map will never be a complete picture . . . , but it can be perfectly true on the scale indicated. Fictions, like maps and charts, are useful precisely because they do not copy the whole, but only significant relations. (112)

It is "true"—probably correct—to say that belief in the coherence of individuals—living or dead, fictive or real—is not universally held. Many literary critics think the concept of the unified self a "myth," which is to say that assertions of coherent "selfhood" are "false," because, as products of the imagination, all myths are so. It may be true that all myths are false, but it is possible that some—for instance, the myth that all myths are false—may be true. The point is that we do not escape questions of deciding such matters with standards for including and excluding statements from the canon of "reasonable assurance" and the like. It seems to me that an assertion of falsity here makes no sense if one of "true" is, with respect to the invoked criteria, not possible. Even if the sentiment today is overwhelming in one direction rather than the other, the serious question of validity—of "truth"—remains. Richardson imagined literary analysis as rigorous, and purpose-driven—the opposite of "play." He considered the Montagus and Morganns of his time bellestristic idlers, trivial effetes at "play," doing no useful intellectual work. We need not call our colleagues names to appreciate Richardson's wish to upgrade literary studies to respectable intellectual status. Even today, some literary critics sound like anthropologists or sociologists, as if the prestige of these related disciplines could be imported, along with appropriation of their "scientific" vocabulary, to the field of literary criticism.

Richardson longed for his literary work to be recognized as worthwhile. He lived at a time when what was intellectually respected depended on the evidence and reasoning behind the particular "theory," on how closely an argument adhered to the norms of scientific inquiry. Hence, for Richardson, it was a waste of time to argue for or against Voltaire's claim of Shakespeare's vulgarity. But to use Shakespeare's characters as test cases—experiments—in human passion enabled investigators to advance their knowledge of the human mind. Insofar as he succeeded in making literary "analysis" "philosophical," Richardson argued that he had made it also purposive, useful. Which, for him, was to say "scientific."

5 Enlightenment Shakespeare

In 1755, a printer, one Johann Friederich Petersen, went broke. Although at the time it hardly seemed like a world-shaking event, as a result of Petersen's financial problem, Immanuel Kant's *General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, which would have been his first published book, was stillborn at the press (*NHTH* 1). Nobody knows what the history of philosophy would look like today had this volume gone forward as planned. Kant (1724–1804), thirty-one at the time, had just finished his doctorate, and was ready to undertake his life's work, which would be spent with his first love, natural science "treated according to Newton's Principles." A year earlier, Kant had already stated his theory on the effect of the tides on the rotation of the Earth in a journal (xi). So, five years before the return of Halley's Comet (the momentous impact of which has been discussed in the two previous chapters), Kant had already turned his attention to deep space, comets, and the origins of the solar system. It seems clear that he retained this interest, for he included a section from this early work in "The Only Possible Argument in support of a demonstration of the existence of God" (1763). In *General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, Kant presents his thesis in accordance with the "laws of mechanics" according to "*Newton* and his followers" (*TP* 179). At the time, probably hoping for an invitation to the Berlin Academy of Science, Kant penned a florid dedication to Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. But Kant's entry into that august society was not to be, and it was not until a decade or so later that the *General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* would actually issue from the press (*NHTH* ix), by which time Kant had become a famous philosopher.

In his "Preface" to *General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, Kant concedes that some of his readers might find the work antagonistic to religion. Here, we should remember that Kant was trained for the clergy. Not surprisingly, he also points out that, more likely than not, these individuals would be uncomfortable with any discussion whatsoever of the origins of the solar system that did not presuppose the "immediate hand of the Supreme Being" (*NHTH* 5). To people who perceived their faith under attack, Kant's theory of continuous creation would appear to

be an "apology for atheism." Nor were their anxieties in the matter likely to be allayed by his suggestion that the so-called fixed stars were, in reality, "slowly moving" (19). In fact, Kant considered his remarks on the "infinitude of the whole creation" (24), on comets, and on God's "incessant creation" (139) reminiscent of the affirmation of lines from Alexander Pope:

> He (sic) sees with equal eye, as God of all
> A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
> Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
> And now a bubble burst, and now a world. (139)

Surely, Kant implies, no one would accuse Pope of atheism. The quatrain quoted here is from the section in *An Essay on Man* in which Pope emphatically affirms the all-pervasive, if enigmatic, nature of Providence. By hiding "the Book of Fate" from all creatures, God mercifully assures that life is endurable. It is because God denies man knowledge of the future that "Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

It is true that in *Paradise Lost,* under God's instruction, Michael provides Adam with what the Deity intends to be a consolatory narrative of the future; but it is offered only in a dream, and softened by forgetfulness. What is meant as consolation might overwhelm any father, who learns that one of his sons will kill the other, and that the entire race of descendants will die horrible deaths, likewise at the hands of brothers, or felled by diseases of every imaginable description. Mankind's victory over Satan does not definitively show itself in any epoch. Quite the contrary, history often seems like a repetitive tale of human corruption and failure. The triumph of the human race, and so the means to "justify the ways of God to men," requires the totality of history, which no single generation, much less any one individual from any one generation, could possibly know, much less represent. Were Adam, as a parent, to know that one of his sons would slay the other, Eve's suggestion that our first parents preemptively abort the human race would make "all too human" sense. For genocide is at least one answer to the problem of human suffering. But it is surely not the answer that Kant finds in Pope's *Essay on Man*. Rather, Kant's reflections on the "atoms or [solar] systems into ruin hurled" accord with the scriptural account of God's Providence, as recorded in the Gospel, and echoed in Pope: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will" (Matt. 10:29).

Kant's allusion to Pope's biblical echo may remind us that Newton, perhaps the most influential Enlightenment thinker, wrote extensively on the Apocalypse. "All during his adult life," Richard Popkin recounts, "Newton was writing definitive explications of Daniel and Revelation, building upon what scholars such as Joseph Mede, Isaac Barrow, and Henry More had written" (Popkin 2003, 113), demonstrating the way in which the Bible contained "God's historical plan" (114). There is little cause to doubt that

Newton perceived no inconsistency between science and biblical prophecy; indeed, as one scholar puts it, Newton resisted the emerging trend toward "Higher Criticism" of the Bible, which seemed to him to popularize the pernicious view of the Bible as myth. This attempt to analyze biblical texts according to historical and bibliographical principles was a far cry from Newton's perception that the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, embodied "scientific truth." "The scientists and divines in Newton's entourage," Frank Manuel writes, "were not troubled by a conflict of science and theology; in their various works, they made clear that the world was one creation and that all its parts bespoke the same providential order" (Manuel 139, 140). To this critic, then, Isaac Newton sounds very much like Alexander Pope: "Whatever is, is right."

In this connection, we might recall, too, that the Royal Society was established "to illustrate the providential glory of God manifested in the works of His creation,"[1] and that, a century earlier, Bacon distinguished the Book of God's Word from the Book of God's creatures. Moreover, and in the same vein, in his Preface to *The Great Instauration*, Bacon implored the Almighty to make sure that his scientific endeavor would strengthen rather than undermine religious faith:

> I humbly pray, that things human not interfere with things divine, and that from the opening of the ways of sense and the increase of natural light there may arise in our minds no incredulity or darkness with regard to the divine mysteries; but rather that the understanding being thereby purified and purged of fancies and vanity, and yet not the less subject and entirely submissive to the divine oracles, may give to faith that which is faiths. (*WFB* 4, 20)

Even more to the point of the emerging interest in eighteenth-century thought in a comprehensive science encompassing all of human knowledge, Giambattista Vico comments "On the Study Methods of Our Time" (1709), and he begins auspiciously by praising Bacon's "priceless treatise entitled *De dignitate et de augmentis scientiarum*" for projecting a new method, which would bring the sciences to "complete perfection" (Vico 1990, 4) by including cultural and literary history. For Vico, and, as we shall see, for Hamann and Herder, the problem confronting science at the time was due to its overemphasis on "natural sciences" at the expense of other disciplines, including ethics (33). Likewise, although Vico considered "poetical genius . . . a gift from heaven" (41), he perceived that philosophers had heretofore all but ignored it. There was a profound, intellectual impropriety here. For, Vico insists, poets seek truth no less than do philosophers. The difference that poets expose is the truth of "psychological traits" (42). In the last chapter, we saw how widespread preoccupation with the theory of human feelings was in eighteenth-century English thought. Later, in *The First New Science* (1725), Vico would argue that, in fact, without poets,

philosophy would never have evolved; but unfortunately, it had more or less stalled in its development. It is true that Bacon had promised a method for the study of culture, but he had not actually produced one. In truth, from Vico's point of view, Bacon moved in a more promising direction than that offered in *De Augmentis*—toward a new method of scientific truth—in his treatise on *The Wisdom of the Ancients*. Building on the insights of that work, and declaring the advent of *The First New Science*, Vico took the systematic analysis of language and myth as the proper "science" aimed at an understanding of human development:

> We observe that all nations, barbarous as well as civilized, though separately founded because remote from each other in time and space, keep these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, all bury their dead. And in no nation, however savage and crude, are any human actions performed with more elaborate ceremonies and more sacred solemnity than the rites of religion, marriage, and burial. For, by the axiom that "uniform ideas, born among peoples unknown to each other, must have a common ground of truth," it must have been dictated to all nations that from these three institutions humanity began among them . . . For this reason we have taken these three eternal and universal customs as three first principles of this Science. (Vico 2002, 53)

Vico's project, which was to describe the evolution of societies from their beginnings in the religious age, through the heroic, to the human age, is apposite to that of such thinkers as Hume and Condillac, who wanted to establish the study of human nature as a science. Insofar as he succeeded in this effort, Vico would establish the study of literature as a subspecies of science, generally considered. In this way, he was one of the earliest—perhaps the first—to advance a systematic theory of the history of ideas. Based on "the principles of humanity" (Vico 2002, xx), this new field of study explained the mechanism of social change, or evolution.[2] According to his analysis, all present systems are developments of earlier forms, and future ones are in the process of being shaped by current practices.

Clearly, Vico sought to impose the rigors of objective inquiry on what we now call the "humanities." In a somewhat similar way, although Kant recognized that a certain kind of religious reader would be offended by a purely scientific approach to the solar system, he insisted that natural law and the divine order of things were one and the same. We can see how Kant's view of the primacy of science in understanding the laws of nature explains the sense in which, in his thinking, "Shakespeare" was, or was not, a proper subject of philosophy. This is so, because it is not quite true that, as one biographer claims, "the name of Shakespeare does not occur in Kant's works" (Wallace 51). Kant knows Shakespeare, and he does talk about him, but in a Vicoesque—that is, in a historical—context. In his discussion

of harmless lies in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant examines the scene in *The First Part of Henry IV* in which Falstaff gives his account of the robbery at Gadshill, claiming that five men clad in buckram, rather than the two, whom we know to be Poins and Prince Hal, attacked him. Kant fleshes out this and similar examples to demonstrate his theory of the imagination, which represents an "intercourse with ourselves" (Kant 2006, 73). In the case of the Gadshill caper, Kant argues, no lasting harm is done by Falstaff's exaggeration. Like Hobbes, Kant thinks of the imagination as apposite to the dream-state. Up to a point, fanciful thinking—dreaming, in effect—does little harm, because, presumably, as Sidney held in his *Defence of Poesy*, imaginative constructs purport to say nothing about the world. But for Kant, the problem was that, over time, indulging the imagination weakened "mental powers" (74). In *Leviathan*, Hobbes implies much the same thing, characterizing the imagination as "decaying sense." By distorting sense through "decay," imagination—"fancy"—presents an unclear, and therefore false, picture of the world. Hence, the Enlightenment's distrust of "*unbridled* or entirely *ruleless*" imagination (74), which all-too-easily gave rise to what the Enlightenment regarded as a monster of individual presumption, "enthusiasm."

Since the current topic is "Enlightenment Shakespeare," we should probably ask, What does the term "Enlightenment" mean? Is the significance of this locution shaped by our Whiggish imagination in such a way that we use the term with perhaps a soupçon of self-satisfaction? In an essay entitled "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Kant's response is both subtle and cryptic: "If it is now asked whether we at present live in an *enlightened age*, the answer is: No, but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*" (Kant 1996, 21). If we take this remark in the context of his *General Natural Theory of the Heavens*, we would be right, I think, to suppose that Kant was responding to the irrational opposition of influential clerics to the rise of science. Despite the fact that they retained control of society's major institutions, many religious leaders perceived the march of science as a threat to their standing in the world. So Kant characterizes the "*age*" as a society that had not yet assimilated the advances in science into the way it conducts its affairs. For him, "*enlightenment*" would entail the integration of intellectual development into what Wittgenstein (not usually described as a Kantian) would call "a form of life," that is, the way people conduct business at a particular time in a particular place. Kant thought that an "enlightened" society would be shaped by intellectual and moral maturity. He implies that such a condition does not automatically develop with an individual's—or a society's—length of life. Nor, in the individual's case, can it be achieved by the mere granting of a degree in Divinity from a university, no matter how great the esteem in which that institution is held. Unfortunately, too often privileged individuals were content to pay others to think for them, to understand for them, to exercise conscience for them, and so on. Lazy and fearful, they chose to remain comfortably in moral

and intellectual minority, shrinking from the maturity that was so evident in the advancements of science. As a consequence, the culture as a whole remained much like its predecessor in intellectual and moral development. In other words, "Enlightenment" philosophy had not yet connected with the culture at large.

In this somewhat jaundiced social outlook, Kant parted company from his admirer Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), in many ways, otherwise, a kindred spirit. For instance, like Kant, Herder wrote on anthropology. But Herder's radical historical perspective on the field, compounded by what Kant took to be his wrongheaded view of the origin of language (Kant 1999, 143–44), drew the older man's ire, and, although he remained respectful of Herder's talent, Kant did not have a high opinion of his intellect. For instance, in 1768, he wrote a letter to suggest that Herder should consider becoming "a master of that sort of philosophical poetry in which Pope excels" (94). This was not encouragement that the recipient of the letter was glad to receive, for, as it happened, his poetic venture was a sore point with Herder, who had lived to regret that his name had become attached to a "youthful first step" (97). He had unfortunately, as it turned out, set to verse certain Kant lectures that he had heard. So Herder did not take kindly to Kant's suggestion, coming as it did with the statement of the philosopher's hope that he would someday achieve the serenity, opposite to that imagined by mystics, but familiar to original thinkers like Hume. So Herder was aware that Kant did not consider philosophy his *métier*. But the differences between the two philosophers did not end there. Kant was even more exercised by Herder's *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784), a topic on which Kant himself was soon to write what Lewis White Beck calls "one of the most unusual essays he ever wrote," "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" (Kant 1963, ix). In two lengthy reviews published in 1784, Kant took Herder to task, strenuously arguing against what he perceived to be the younger man's evolutionary thesis.

Kant's temper may have gotten the better of him here, but his instincts were unerring, for Herder's historical view of social change—his evolutionary theory—was central to his thought. As Gregory Moore writes in his "Introduction to Herder's *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, although Herder wrote extensively, "vainly seeking to refute Kant's ideas" (*SWA* 2), he was largely unsuccessful. The critical turn of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), which Herder vigorously resisted, proved to be the shaping influence, not only on philosophers of the period, but on Herder himself. And yet, even though his great mentor at Köningsberg taught Herder respect for reason, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) instilled in him a sense of faith's greater claim on the intellect. Herder spent most of his life trying to reconcile these contrarieties of the Enlightenment. One of the means of reconciliation between what appeared to some thinkers irreconcilable opposites was to reestablish poetry to its proper place in philosophical discourse. Shakespeare commentary was central to that project. Just

as Herder wanted to bridge the abyss between reason and faith—between Hamann and Kant—he sought to reconcile the mutually exclusive views of Lessing and Voltaire on Shakespeare. For Herder, the critical views of these two playwright-critics represented only apparently irreconcilable schools of thought. One held Shakespeare to be a genius entirely above and beyond explanatory rules; the other considered him an unruly barbarian.

In his eponymous essay on Shakespeare, Herder aimed, by employing a methodology wholly different from the devices of either Lessing or Voltaire, to show that both literary critics were wrong. By this means, Herder sought to rescue Shakespeare from what he regarded as erroneous extremes of heady praise and bitter calumny. He was determined not to add to an already extensive "library" on both sides of the argument, and in this way his philosophical stance harks back to Richardson's determined project of differentiating philosophical remarks from literary criticism. Richardson had his Montagu and Morgann, Herder his Lessing and Voltaire. Where the literary critic falters in his baleful repetitions of praise or blame, Herder, the philosopher, would succeed by an entirely new approach. He will neither praise nor blame, but clarify and explain:

> What a library has already been written about for and against him! And I have no mind to add to it in any way. It is my wish instead that no one in the small circle of those who read these pages would ever again think to write about for or against him, either to excuse or to slander him, but that they explain him, feel him as he is, use him, and—where possible—bring him to life for us Germans. (*SWA* 291)

So, bracing what he imagines to be a select audience, Herder shifts the focus of commentary from opinion to exposition. By emphasizing explanation based on factual observation, he will bring Shakespeare to life in Germany. While conceding that many critics have already addressed the subject of Shakespeare, Herder insists that he is not being presumptuous, because he is undertaking a project of an entirely different kind from that promulgated by these literary predecessors. Indeed, he can do this because he is not a literary critic. In fact, with their passionate declamations of praise or blame, literary critics were not discussing Shakespeare at all, but only "an illusion" of Shakespeare shaped by "*prejudice*" (291).

With his radically historical—this philosophical—method of explaining Shakespeare without "illusion," Herder is reminiscent of Vico. It is no happenstance that Herder was among the earliest to recognize the importance of Vico in the development of the science of human nature. In his "Letters for the Advancement of Humanity" (1793–97), Herder lists great British thinkers and poets who advanced the cause of science whom he has not offered praise, because they have already received due recognition. The same cannot be said of Vico's important, indeed formative, contribution:

> Let it be permitted to renew the rather forgotten remembrance of a man who in his town before others laid the foundation for a school of *human science* in the true sense of the word: *Giambattista Vico*. . . . In his *New Science* he sought the principle of the *humanity of peoples* . . . He located all the elements of the science of divine and human things in cognition, volition, capacity . . . illuminated by the light of eternal truth. He founded the chair of these sciences in Naples. . . . (Herder 2002, 393)

Like Vico, Herder insists that human events answer to the same laws of nature that govern the planets. For instance, Herder's point of departure for his innovative explanation of Shakespeare is the assertion that "the words *drama*, *tragedy*, and *comedy*" derive from ancient Greece. Typically, he argues that the origins of a tradition and the form of its expression are local and inseparable. Greek drama could never have developed in the frigid north: "Thus Sophocles' drama and Shakespeare's drama are two things that in a certain respect have scarcely their name in common" (292). Yes, the former provides the means of genesis of the later, but the two forms are quite distinct from each other. For instance, Greek tragedy developed from a single scene, a "mimed dance, the *chorus*." Then Aeschylus came along, adding a second actor, the "protagonist," while reducing the role of the chorus; and then Sophocles added a third actor and scenery. Because of its origins in the single choral presentation, Greek tragedy appears bound by simple rules of the unity of time and place. But in fact the chorus frames the drama as the husk embodies fruit: naturally, without effort or artifice.

It follows, then, that the rules that we extract from Aristotle were, for the Greeks, not rules at all. In Greek culture, religion and manners rendered the action represented all one. Greek dramatists did not simplify the material, but, on the contrary, elaborated upon a single action. Aristotle understood this, which is why, in his discussion of Sophocles, he praised the new playwright's innovations, even though Sophocles looked back with praise on lesser poets. In this way, Aristotle "philosophized in the grand style of his age" (*SWA* 294). If he were alive at the present time, he would know that attempts to emulate Sophocles only impose "restrictive and infantile follies," turning "him into the paper scaffolding of [the German] stage." This is so for the simple reason that, as Greek culture changed, the dramatic forms no longer fit the religion and manners of the nation, but became, instead, mere imitation and artifice. The Roman descendants of Greek culture, in turn, were too clever to adapt the old forms to their different time, with its different religion and manners. Herder's historical perspective explains why French moderns, such as Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, even as they perfected the rules which they extrapolated from Aristotle, have not fared well. For even if they were to adhere to their misunderstanding of Greek rules of drama (and Lessing provides room for doubt that they did), they could still not produce Greek drama, "because

nothing in their inner essence is the same—not action, manners, language, purpose, nothing" (295). So regardless of its splendor, the modern French stage presents only the "trappings" of Senecan heroes, for the heroes represented onstage do not even pretend to be French:

> And consequently (no matter how lovely and useful the name we give it) it is not Greek drama. It is not Sophoclean tragedy. It is an effigy outwardly resembling Greek drama, but the effigy lacks spirit, life, nature, truth—that is, all the elements that move us; that is, the tragic purpose and the accomplishment of that purpose. (296)

French imitation of Greek drama is lovely, sententious, dainty, and precious. But it is absolutely unable to capture the *zeitgeist* of the original. Reflecting the interests and tastes of a different time and place, it can never represent the national purpose of the originals imitated, and for that reason, French tragedy must remain inferior to its Greek models.

In marked contrast to eighteenth-century authors of French tragedy, Shakespeare did not seek to write an English *Oedipus*, but, instead, he shaped drama out of the substance of his nation's history, "out of the spirit of the age, manners, opinions, language, national prejudices, traditions, and pastimes, even out of carnival plays and puppet plays (just as the noble Greeks did from the chorus)" (*SWA* 297). Herder's point is, of course, that as a poet of a different time and place, reared with different religious practices and social manners, Shakespeare did not, and could not, write Sophoclean tragedy. His genius flourished in a different climate, out of different soil. Most obviously, Shakespeare did not find a culture with the tradition of a chorus: "He found nothing comparable to the simple character of the Greek people and their polity, but rather a rich variety of different estates, ways of life, convictions, peoples, and idioms—any nostalgia for the simplicity of former times would have been in vain" (298). So, in Herder's view, Shakespeare fashioned the gallimaufry of his thoroughly English surroundings into a "whole," but not, as had his Greek forebears did, into a unity of time, place, and manner.

In this historical perspective, Shakespeare's dramas take on, not the ancient single plot line, but rather a more complex, but equally significant, "*action* in the medieval sense." To understand this species of action, and therefore to deal justly with Shakespeare, one would need an Aristotle whose philosophy was attuned to this new, historical, "northern" phenomenon. Unfortunately, English criticism had not yet produced a thinker with a theoretical foundation—a philosophy—equal to the task:

> O Aristotle, if you were alive today, what comparisons you would draw between the modern Sophocles and Homer! You would devise a theory that would do justice to him, the like of which even his own countrymen Home and Hurd, Pope and Johnson have yet to come up with! You

> would be glad to trace the trajectory of *plot, character, thought, language, song making,* and *spectacle* from each of your plays, as though you were drawing lines from two points at the base of a triangle so that they converge at the point where they complete the figure, the point of *perfection*! You would say to Sophocles: "Paint the sacred panels of this altar! And you, O northern bard, cover every side and every well of this temple with your immortal fresco!" (*SWA* 298)

Although restrained in tone, Herder's philosophical answer to English literary critics, whose remarks on Shakespeare have been hallowed by repetition into the canonical view, is that they have done no more than establish a false standard. They err in their estimate of Shakespeare because they proceed on the basis of faulty assumptions. What they need is a philosopher with Aristotle's theoretical bearings, and one also equipped, as the Greek thinker was not, to understand Shakespeare in the context of his historical material, which is, for Herder, the only substance available to his genius.

I think we must infer that Herder supplies what English criticism lacks, namely, a philosophical perspective able to broaden the understanding of Shakespeare's works. In demonstrating the limitations of Aristotle's *Poetics*, when applied to tragedy written in Elizabethan England, Herder provides the ostensive definition of a theoretician who, unlike such contemporary literary critics as Home, Hurd, and Pope, can function in the manner of a modern Aristotle, "as interpreter and rhapsodist, for [he is] closer to Shakespeare than to the Greek" (*SWA* 298). Moreover, by exposing the faults of contemporary English critics, Herder advances the philosophical perspective of an epochal historian, that perspective which alone can establish a clear understanding of Shakespeare's literary world.

For Herder, the hard fact is that literary critics like Lord Kames, Bishop Hurd, and Alexander Pope miss the philosophical—the "pragmatic," scientific, historical—truth: Sophoclean unity was "true" only in the sense that the poet faithfully characterized the cultural and religious life of the Greeks. In *Against Pure Reason*, Herder argues that "Poetry is a Proteus among peoples: It changes its form in accordance with a people's language, morals, habits, temperament, climate, and even with their accent" (Herder 1993, 141). Languages and nations change in such a way that even the meaning of "poetry" was not the same for Homer as it was for Longinus. This being the case, it is not at all clear that the debate concerning the superiority of the ancients or the moderns makes any sense. Rather, from Herder's point of view, it is more reasonable to aim at understanding than there is in either praising or condemning Shakespeare. We can see why Herder admired Vico; his great predecessor recognized that epochal values are incommensurable. Unfortunately, too much energy has been aimed at assaulting or defending Shakespeare with respect to his adherence to or default from classical rules of tragedy (147). In fact, Shakespeare did not write like Sophocles or Euripides, nor even like Voltaire or Corneille.

Herder is convinced that, just as Greek culture and religion are concentrated in one, focused, intense unity of social being, Shakespeare's England was splendidly dispersed; it was a world of competing groups, interests, cultures, and religion. It was a world marked by anxiety, ambition, discord, and societal disarray:

> If in Sophocles *a single* refined and musical language resounds as if in some ethereal realm, then Shakespeare speaks the language of all ages, peoples, and races of men; he is the interpreter of Nature in all her tongues—and can both, though they travel so very different paths, be familiars of a single Divinity? (*SWA* 299)

Of course, as Herder sees it, the answer is a resounding "No." Different paths lead to different domains of different gods. Unlike Sophocles, Shakespeare lived in a vastly expanded world of communication and commerce. It was a world characterized by sudden change, surprising inventions, monstrous betrayals, wars, comets, declamations, prodigies, revolutions, reformations, counterreformations. Perhaps the new Copernican picture of the solar system stands out. "The sun is lost," the speaker complains in one of the few poems Donne published in his lifetime. In a similar vein, Herder's Shakespeare reflects a de-centered consciousness, which embodies a vast assemblage of seemingly unrelated events: "a world, blown by the storm of history; individual impressions of peoples, estates, souls, all the most various and independently acting machines, all the unwitting, blind instruments—which is precisely what we are in the hands of the Creator of the world—which come together to form a single, whole dramatic image, an event of singular grandeur that only the poet can survey. Who can conceive of a greater poet of northern man and of his age?" (299).

As Herder imagines Shakespeare's scope—its grandeur, its sweep of variegated scenes, perspectives, and destinies in their magnificent wholeness—he is sure that it comprises the modern counterpart of Greek unities of time, place, manner, and, above all, spirit. In its focus on sociological particularity, Herder's analysis reveals an underlying affinity with Kant, who perceived in the "incessant creation" and destruction of planets and systems, a divine order of things. Herder finds that the same is true in Shakespeare's created world:

> Scenes from nature come and go, each affecting the other, however disparate they appear to be; they are mutually creative and destructive, so that the intention of the creator, who seems to have combined them all according to a wanton and disordered, plan, may be realized—dark little symbols forming the silhouette of a divine theodicy. (*SWA* 299)

For Herder, then, Shakespeare envisions a social system constructed in much the same way as Newton's natural cosmos. The unified action of

Greek tragedy is apparent, while the seemingly "wanton and disordered" events of Shakespearean drama seem to fly off in unexpected and meaningless directions. And what work in Shakespeare's multifarious human landscapes stands out in Herder's mind as indicative of Newton's madcap, "incessant creation," hurtling through space in a seemingly random, but nonetheless divinely guided order? In a cascade of phrases summarizing the disparate actions in the play, Herder paints a verbal canvas of *King Lear*, with its extremes of landscape, rank, weather, and fortune. Herder's *Lear* presents a kaleidoscope of extreme settings and ranks and individuals combining in such a way as to render the end of the play like "the end of [the] world, as it were, as if the Day of Judgment had come, when everything, the Heavens included, collides and crashes, and the mountains fall; the measure of time is no more" (305).[3]

If Shakespeare had the knack of comprehending a divine order in the chaos of far-flung scenes and episodes, if he could exhibit the most disparate of characters and actions as a single great event, then quite naturally it was necessary for him to represent time and place ideally in each instance, so that each individual and each event contributed to the illusion:

> Is there indeed anyone in the world who is indifferent to the time and place of even the most trifling incidents of his life? And are they not especially important in those situations where the entire soul is agitated, formed, and transformed—in youth, in scenes of passion, in all the actions that shape our lives? Is it not precisely time and place and the fullness of external circumstances that necessarily lend the whole story *substance*, *duration*, and *existence*? . . . In this, Shakespeare is the greatest master, precisely because he is only and always the servant of Nature. When he conceived the events of his drama and revolved them in his mind, he also revolved times and places for each instance! Out of all the possible conjunctions of time and place, Shakespeare selected, as though by some law of fatality, the very ones that were the most powerful, the most appropriate for the feeling of the action; in which the strangest, boldest circumstances best supported the illusion of truth; where the changes of time and place, over which the poet is master, cried out the loudest: "This is no poet, but a creator! This is the history of the world!" (*SWA* 301)

With an overarching sense of decorum, Shakespeare adhered, as if to "some law of fatality," to the most appropriate setting in place and time to elicit the feel of particular characters in a changing world. Only this poet, who transcends the technical demands of writing poetry by bringing all apparently unrelated details into a believable order, so completely masters the material as to create, not the most commanding literary fiction, but "the history of the world."

It is no wonder, then, that for Herder, the French theatre had proved so unwieldy a vehicle for the production and imitation of Shakespearean drama.

With its contrived conventions, mannered displays, predictable situations, and staid diction, eighteenth-century French theatre could never accommodate "the history of the world." Unhappily, the same limitations applied to eighteenth-century English criticism, which failed to address what Herder regards as the essential question of Shakespeare's aims and accomplishments, namely, "How, by what art and manner of creation, was Shakespeare able to transform some worthless romance, tale, or fabulous history into such a living whole. What laws of *historical, philosophical,* or *dramatic art* are revealed in every step he takes, in every device he employs?" (*SWA* 305–6). Like modern French theatrical practices, conventional literary critics treat Shakespeare in much the same manner as Polonius does the traveling players, that is, with an abstract nomenclature already at hand: "Tragedy, Comedy, History, Pastoral, Tragical-Historical, Historical-Pastoral, Pastoral-Comical, and Comical-Historical-Pastoral" (306), and the list goes on. In his wry response ("O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!"), Hamlet does not complain that the old man has left something out. Herder's point is that, unlike Hamlet, who knows the theatrical canon, including a particular play that might not actually have been produced on a stage because it "pleas'd not the million," Polonius, "the poet's Aristotle," responds to drama only with the preconceptions and attitudes embodied in a memorized, if misunderstood, vocabulary. "Even Shakespeare's countrymen," including "the Aristotle of this British Sophocles, Lord Home" (306), resort to mistaken categories in their misguided criticism of Shakespeare.

Herder insists that it makes no more sense to apply Aristotle's rules to Shakespeare than it does to complain about historical inaccuracies in the Henriads. Historical anachronism matters in cases of historical analysis, but it does not in Shakespeare's imagined world. By failing to take historical circumstances into account, literary critics blind themselves to the sense in which Shakespeare is, in fact, the modern Sophocles. Memorizing Aristotle's rules, or comparing Shakespeare's work with Greek tragedy, does not help, because Aristotle's theory is relevant to, and explanatory of, only the social reality that he shared with Sophocles. So by designating proponents of mistaken categories, like Polonius, as "Aristotle," Herder implies that even the best of English literary critics—Lord Kames being the most prominent example—share with Polonius a method too obtuse, and a vocabulary too limited, to deal with the complex world around them. With respect to the traveling players visiting Elsinore, Polonius does no damage to Hamlet's plans for the production of "The Murder of Gonzago." So unlike his method of surveillance, the old man's dramatic criticism is harmless. But by failing to explicate and elucidate Shakespeare's works as artifacts of a particular time and place, Lord Kames and critics like him misdirect the entire enterprise of Shakespeare commentary:

> Each play is History in the broadest sense, which is of course tinged to a greater or lesser extent with tragedy, comedy, and so on, but the

> colors are so infinitely varied that in the end each play remains and must remain *what it is: History! A history play bringing to life the fortunes of the nation during the Middle Ages!* (*SWA* 306–7)

By imposing a standard of the "unities" on Shakespeare, critics did little more than exhibit their ignorance of the differences between Greek and Renaissance English societies. I think it is clear, then, that Herder's thought is closer to Vico's *First New Science* (1725), Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), and Kant's *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798)[4] than it is to that of his faith-mentor, Hamann. Herder believes that antagonists in debates about Shakespeare's achievement do little more than register local prejudice. The rules of Greek drama merely tell us what Greek children learned in "the divinity of examples and habits" (147). Nations are the soil from which such phenomena as drama grow. For this reason it is not a fault, but rather an indication of national mechanisms of education, that nations quite naturally applaud expressions of their own language. This fact explains why Herder is skeptical of evaluating poetry by genre or by feeling. For him, context is all, simply because, while the subject of poetry (human nature) remains the same, the world of which poetic expression is a part constantly changes. He would have agreed with one contributor to the Scottish Enlightenment, James Beattie, professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at Aberdeen, who wrote that, if the human race disappeared from the face of the Earth, "what man was" could still be known if only the works of Shakespeare survived, but Herder would have added, we would know "what man was" of a particular nationality, climate, and time (Beattie 4, 610).

It is evident, I think, that by claiming the soil of Shakespeare's time to be different from that of the great Greek poets, Herder sought to "present" Shakespeare to the German people as he really was (*SWA* 147). By amplifying the Greek dithyramb's one scene into a single heroic act with no parts, Sophocles simply fit his poetry into religious expressions already in place in Greek culture. Thus, in unpretentious cadences, the chorus recounts a tale familiar to all, of how, with divine blessing, the city's hero had survived many trials:

> A god is behind him,
> Forging these laws
> For a dragon-ridden land.
> Outrage mounting on outrage
> Always meets its retribution.
> All ends in the drift of time. (*Bacchylides* 59)

From Herder's point of view, then, tragedy originates in nature, not art, that is, in the ordinary cadences of Greek life. The Greeks gathered at a certain time and place to celebrate their experience of the world. One singer

held the stage, intoning a familiar story, of the Trojan War, for instance. Afterward, Aeschylus added one of the heroic characters from Greek history, who engaged the chorus, in an improvisation on the "mimetic dance" and song of the original performance (*SWA* 148). By the time Sophocles came along to build on the foundation that Aeschylus had established, Greek religion and social organization had changed. By the same historical reasoning, Voltaire, Racine, and Corneille may be great mimics of the Greeks, but as Lessing implies, they could not and did not really follow their ancient rules. By emulating the Greeks, even the best French poets render their works void of serious action. More Senecan than Greek in comparison to their supposed models, French heroes look ridiculous. This is not to deny that Voltaire's language is often beautiful, but the point is that it is not meant for the stage: "It is eternal deceit and nonsense for the action, language, customs, passions, and purpose of a drama other than the French: And what is the ultimate aim of it all? It is by no means a Greek or a tragic aim."

If there is anyone to conjure up in our minds that tremendous image of one "seated high on the craggy hilltop, storm, tempest, and the roaring sea at his feet, but with the radiance of the heavens about his head, that man is Shakespeare" (*SWA* 143). Far below, mere mortals—the masses—endlessly argue, pro or con, in empty speculation. In answer to all this nonsense, Herder wants only to bring Shakespeare to his fellow Germans. Greeks invented tragedy, beginning with the dithyramb, and adding the chorus. What strikes Herder's contemporaries as simplicity is in fact the natural scheme of all that is ancient Greece. Aristotle did not formulate, but only observed, regularities or "rules," which were integral to the nature of things in Greek society. Now, French playwrights ape the Greeks, and, although producing many fine, poetic lines, fail utterly in producing "theatrical" drama. For such an achievement, one must look to a "nation" that had no wish to produce Greek drama, namely, England, for the perfection of a drama that did not grow from the chorus. One must look to Shakespeare:

> Shakespeare's age offered him nothing of the simplicity of national customs, deeds, inclinations, and historical traditions that shaped Greek drama. Given the first maxim in metaphysics that nothing will come of nothing, if it were left to philosophers, there would there be no Greek drama to begin with; but since it is well known that genius is more than philosophy, and creation a very different thing from analysis and speculation, there came a mortal man, endowed with divine powers, who conjured out of utterly different material and with a wholly different approach the selfsame effect: fear and pity! And both to a degree that the earlier treatment and material could scarcely produce. How the gods favored his venture! It was the very freshness, innovation, and difference that demonstrated the primal power of his vocation. (150–51)

Although Shakespeare did not have the tradition of the chorus to draw on, he did have puppet plays and historical dramas to guide him. So, Herder argues, if Aristotle were to address Shakespeare's plays, he would need to create a language undreamed of by such literary critics as Pope, Johnson, Hurd, and Home. And Herder holds Warburton and Montagu in even lower esteem (159). Herder's point is that one must be a philosopher to recognize how limited even Shakespeare's "fellow countrymen" have been in their theoretical understanding of this great poet.

Johann Herder may have been Shakespeare's most ardent philosophical admirer, but probably the two most influential philosophers of the generation after Kant were Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and Shakespeare was just as important to their rather different schematics of human destiny as he was to Herder's social mechanism. Although both Hegel and Schopenhauer developed their thinking along Kantian lines, no two philosophers would use Shakespeare for less compatible ends. Despite their philosophical differences, Hegel and Schopenhauer share with Herder a keen admiration of Shakespeare; but unlike Herder, who, as we have seen, thought it made no sense to compare playwrights from different eras, they rank Shakespeare above all other poets, regardless of period or nationality. Hegel and Schopenhauer found Shakespeare's works as evidence of great genius, genius which they regarded as indicative of a mentality akin to their own.

In *Philosophy of Fine Art*, Hegel attempts to differentiate comedy from tragedy, and in the process to establish general principles of drama, which range in mode between the poles of these two forms. In tragedy, major characters carry within themselves their own justification. Their motives, to the exclusion of all other claims however worthy, usually concern filial affection or patriotism. Hegel's insistence on this single-mindedness of purpose explains why he thinks of tragic heroes as "godlike." What tragic heroes will and what they do is determined wholly by their individual selves. For Hegel, Shakespeare was the prime example of dramatic poetry dedicated to the revelation of "eternal justice," a notion anathema to Schopenhauer. Moreover, Hegel, like Herder, saw Shakespeare as very much a poet of his own time and of his own nation. In fact, Hegel credits Herder with drawing attention to folk songs and national, epochal styles. Most notably, Shakespeare often draws his dramatic material from the chronicles. This fact is important to Hegel's conception of the tragic hero's strength and freedom of action, because dependence on historical sources necessarily places limits on what a playwright can do with individuals, who, as history instructs, either were or were not in fact present in certain places at certain times (*ALFA* 1, 193).

For Hegel, the most important Shakespearean motif is individual volition. It is important to see that Shakespeare's characters, especially his tragic heroes, depend "on themselves alone" (*ALFA* 1, 577). Even in his strictly historical dramas, Shakespeare finds a way to make "*formal*

self-reliance" assert itself (1, 190). For instance, even though a plot might be set in historical times, Shakespeare will focus on civil war, when law and order hold less sway than they do in ordinary times, and characters are free to act independently (1, 190–91). More often than not, then, Shakespeare's major characters will exhibit "strength of will," a sense of themselves which drives their actions, independent of any moral or divine agent. As evidence of this dynamic, Hegel insists that Macbeth's ambition is internally derived (1, 580); it does not develop from the "frenzy of his wife." Nor is the "tasteless chatter" of modern critics to the point when it insists that Lady Macbeth is an "affectionate" wife. And it would not even matter if they were correct, and she was a loving spouse, because Macbeth's ambition exists entirely apart from her, just as it does from the world around him, including the influence of the witches. Witches and the like aside, the protagonists of modern drama retain their freedom. Indeed, it is their defining characteristic: "freedom and independence of decision are continually reserved for man" (1, 230–31), and we find the best example of this individual freedom in *Macbeth*. Far from determining Macbeth's fate, the witches only elicit from him his innermost thoughts.

Herder was drawn to *King Lear*, Hegel to *Macbeth*. For the latter, *Macbeth* is the most revealing example of Shakespeare's outlook on the world. During the Middle Ages, succession of the crown is a major, if not *the*, major concern. Hegel is interested in the way in which individual wills collide with the natural order, such as family structure. So, in a way, *Macbeth* is a retelling of the myth of Cain and Abel. Duncan is king, and Macbeth is his closest and eldest relative. As such, for Shakespeare had read the chronicles, Macbeth was "strictly heir to the throne" (*ALFA* 1, 208). But—and for Hegel this "but" is important—in one important detail, Shakespeare does not follow his historical source, presumably Holinshed. In Act 1, Shakespeare does have Duncan name his eldest son, Malcolm, his heir and "successor in the kingdome," but he omits mention of Macbeth's legitimate claim:

> Macbeth sore troubled herewith, for that he saw by this means his hope sore hindered (where, by the old lawes of the realme, the ordinance was, that if he that should succeed were not of able age to take the charge upon himself, he that was next of blood unto him should be admitted) he began to take counsell how he might usurpe the kingdome by force having a just quarrell so to doo (as he tooke the matter) for that Duncane did what in him lay to defraude him of all maner of title and claime, which he might in time come, pretend unto to the crowne. (Holinshed 211)

Hegel assumes that the historical Duncan wronged Macbeth by naming his son his successor. Holinshed's presumed justification of Macbeth is lodged squarely in the precedent of age compounded with nearness to the throne.[5]

Surely aware of this justification, Shakespeare chooses to ignore it, and by this means to criminalize Macbeth. Where Holinshed presents Macbeth as the victim of fraud, Shakespeare shows him to be a cruel ingrate. In Holinshed, Macbeth has a "just quarrel," in Shakespeare only three strong reasons why he should not lift his hand against his kinsman, sovereign, and guest. Now, Shakespeare may have criminalized Macbeth, as some critics think, to please King James. For Hegel, this is a matter of only incidental interest. The more important point is that what Hegel takes as history provides justification for Macbeth's action against Duncan. Although an elected king, he establishes a hereditary monarchy, bypassing Macbeth in the process. But in his dramatization of a matter of such great importance, Shakespeare omits reference to this innovation, thus depriving Macbeth of an ethical motive for his destructive actions. Indeed, any notion of moral justification on Macbeth's part is "altogether omitted by Shakespeare, because his only aim was to bring out the dreadfulness of Macbeth" (*ALFA* 1, 208) in order to exhibit his passion. So effective is Shakespeare in eliciting the depth of individual passion that he is liberated from the proprieties of representation. Usually, the suffering man screams. The nobler individual restrains expression, say, of grief, in order to "to occupy himself with some far-off idea in this remote object to express his own fate to himself in an image" (1, 418). For instance, in *2 Henry IV*, Northumberland asks Morton, who has run all the way from the battlefield at Shrewsbury, about his son, but then, before the messenger can fully answer, he exclaims:

> Thou tremblest; and the whiteness in thy cheek
> Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy arrand.
> Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
> So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,
> Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
> And would have told him half his Troy was burnt;
> But Priam found the fire ere he his tongue,
> And I my Percy's death ere thou report'st it. (1.1.68–75)

Hegel's point is that Northumberland's nobility lifts him above the immediate feeling of grief to a tableau very distant, "a cognate object," which is related in his agitated mind to the present situation. Personal grief and the conflagration of the world fuse, as Shakespeare reveals Northumberland's "greatness of soul."

Similarly, Richard II deals with the extremity of his grief by reflecting on the triviality of his actions. He intensifies—luxuriates—in his suffering, seeking extreme figures for comparison: "cousin" (kin), "seize" (betray), "golden crown" (wealth, power), "deep well" (untapped resource), buckets (empty, full), "drinking . . . griefs" (powerlessness), "mounting . . . high" (transcendent power). Richard's speech dramatizes his situation as well as Hegel's theory; for the fall of Richard is in process, at one with the rise of

Bolingbroke (*ALFA* 1, 419). Thus, with childlike naiveté, Richard, who once thought of himself as the lion who made leopards tame, imagines himself drinking from a bucket of his own tears. Elsewhere, with Wolsey and Macbeth, Shakespeare departs from the melodramatic French practice of having villains proclaim pernicious intentions all along to be villains. In *Henry VIII*, Wolsey sees himself as a tender plant, struck down, not by any action of his own, but by contingencies over which he had no control. Even more powerfully, with his own "force of imagination," Macbeth thinks of his life as a strange narrative:

> Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. (5.5.23–28)

For the Hegel of the *Aesthetics*, these lines are deservedly "famous" because they turn away from moral reflection on Macbeth's complicity in the deterioration of his "state," a term that Hegel replaces, in Wolsey's case, for "fate." Even more pathetically than Wolsey, who sees himself perishing a "good easy man," falling, like a thing of nature, in due season, Macbeth trivializes the entire episode of his life. He exempts himself from moral judgment, because "a tale / told by an idiot" cannot be expected to make sense. Empty of significance, it neither asks for nor permits final judgment. Life "struts and frets his hour upon the stage," but "strutting" and "fretting" are extreme figures that make Shakespeare's stunning point: Life is "nothing" else but a fabricated posturing and contriving. It is empty of meaning—it signifies "nothing"—because, now that the play is over, the actor recognizes himself as one who has only taken his turn, "strutting" and "fretting," according to a script written by someone else. Again, personal responsibility is cast aside. Macbeth is one player among many and a "poor" one at that, not "the" playwright, author of the victims and assailants who have spent their "hour upon the stage." So Shakespeare's similes powerfully set aside Macbeth's reflection on, and perhaps even regret for, the choices he has made, which established the necessary and sufficient conditions of the unfolding tragedy.

Hegel thinks of Shakespeare's characters as unique in their "completeness" (*ALFA* 2, 1188); in portraying passion, not even Goethe is Shakespeare's equal (2, 1228). So absolute was his command of human passion that when we think of jealousy, we naturally think of Othello (1, 212). Literary critics misunderstand the dramatic notion of "completeness," believing, for instance, that Hamlet hesitates because he is weak (1, 231). In fact, Hegel explains, Hamlet is every bit as consistent as Othello. He understands the spiritual transgression of his mother's immediate marriage to his

uncle, but he knows, too, that it is wrong to think that his father's murder does not justify revenge. If the Ghost speaks truly, the action of revenge comes with its own justification. The problem is that Hamlet cannot be sure that the Ghost is the "spirit" of his father:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be a [dev'l], and the [dev'l] hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
> More relative than this—the play's the thing,
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (2.2.598–605)

What we see here, Hegel insists, is not weakness, but thought. For him, it is important that Shakespeare does not judge, but rather creates Hamlet. He holds himself at a distance from the creature of his craft, thus allowing for and encouraging development of a more complicated being, irretrievably enmeshed in the crucible of "universal fate" (*ALFA* 1, 586), one who finds that he must cope with suffering entirely on his own (1, 190–91). In Hegel's mind, even a villain may engage the audience with his individual *agon*. We must understand, if only fleetingly, how Macbeth justifies his evil actions.

It is an old story: blood against blood. Agamemnon kills Iphigenia, whose mother kills him, and then the son kills the mother. Again, in *Hamlet,* brother kills brother, and wife betrays the spirit of her husband. In Shakespeare, the ethical hurls itself at the sacred; and in each case, values on each side are of ultimate importance (*ALFA* 1, 214). It would not overstate the case to say that this ultimate importance is the crux of Hegel's aesthetic theory of tragedy. In tragedy, only issues of ultimate concern matter: family, friendship, class, dignity, honor, love (1, 220). This is what makes for heroic drama; individuals or nations act with "essential justification." Two views of what is inherently, eternally good, act boldly against the other, as if against the agent or agents who oppose them were the enemies of all that is of value in the world. The example that Hegel brings to mind is Creon's decree in *Antigone* (1, 221), which pits Antigone's love for her traitor-brother, a loyalty instilled by the highest value of the family, against Creon's belief in law and order, without which life in the city would be impossible. So the state says that Polyneices' body cannot possibly be buried. But Antigone's loyalty to an irreplaceable family member must, without question, be saved from depredation by animals and birds of prey. In this way, the noble aims of tragedy are met. We see with great clarity the splendid love of Antigone and the noble integrity of Creon, because both characters act with self-abnegation, to preserve values which exercise an absolute ethical claim. Tragedy leaves no room for base motives on either side, which is why the independence with which the opposing characters

act is essential. Heroic action in the service of immutable values make the agents, on both sides of the conflict, appear godlike in their freedom; and, likewise, their demise seems tragic rather than merely sad (1, 226).

Hegel finds good examples of this godlike freedom of action in Shakespeare, and the most notable of these are in *Macbeth*. Critics may argue whether the witches "cause" or "influence" the dreadful course of Macbeth's actions, but Hegel insists that freedom of action is the *sine qua non* of Macbeth's decisions, as it is of all heroic characters. Further, independent volition is in fact the hallmark of what we mean by being human (*ALFA* 1, 231). Regardless of witches and the like, humans in modern drama retain their freedom. Accordingly, the witches in no way determine Macbeth's fate, but, much to the contrary, they provide the dramatic means by which Shakespeare reveals Macbeth's ambition But even more telling in this regard, says Hegel, is the case of Hamlet, because Hamlet does not believe in the Ghost. Hegel is adamant on this point; he means to prove it by quoting the closing lines of the "O, what a rogue" monologue, which Hamlet delivers after he has arranged for the players to perform, with his revisions, "The Murder of Gonzago." In Hegel's perspective on Hamlet's expression of doubt in that speech, as we have seen, Hegel advances a notion which separates him from his younger colleague, Schopenhauer. Hegel's Hamlet seeks absolute "certainty," without which he cannot act (*ALFA* 1, 231). The Greek term πάθος [pathos] conveys a sense of profound depth of feeling, which, for Hegel, construes as ethically driven passion, an "inherently justified power over the heart" (1, 232). Again, Hegel emphasizes Hamlet's "rationality and freedom of will" (1, 232), without which ethical considerations would have no purchase. Indeed, this infusion of "rational content" (1, 232) is "essential" to the tragic drama of Hamlet's "passionate absorption in fulfilling a one-sided ethical purpose" (1, 232n).

The point is that Hegel finds nobility, not in Hamlet's doubt, but in his passion. Hamlet is great only because of this emotional feature of his character. For this reason, literary critics are mistaken to fault him for his "multiplied and variegated comparisons" (*ALFA* 1, 417). They fail to see that Shakespeare's true subject matter, which is the noble passion with which Hamlet's soul transcends the boundaries of ordinary men, justifies what in other cases would be considered low or unworthy expression: "greatness of mind, force of spirit, lifts itself above such restrictedness" (1, 417). In other words, it is the power of the creative spirit that affirms the propriety of what would in other circumstances be strange, even absurd, comparisons. In Hegel's mind, Shakespeare is the very embodiment of this "liberation" (1, 418).

The "chief points" for Hegel concern the somatic level of communication, which is admirably represented in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies. We have already noted that Hegel cites the passions of Northumberland and Richard II. But again, in the terrible fight between Brutus and Cassius in Act 3 of *Julius Caesar*, when Brutus accuses Cassius of corrupt dealings and Cassius threatens him with a dagger, Brutus brushes him aside. Cassius

thinks Brutus is mocking him, but Hegel perceives intense, if repressed anger, in the simile that Shakespeare ascribes to Brutus. Only an extraordinary poet could make this kind of figure work in such a context:

> O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb
> That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
> Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark,
> And straight is cold again. (4.3.110–13)

I dwell on Hegel's interest in Shakespeare's diction because it comports well with his view that, in Shakespeare, the "Old Gods" reappear in symbolic form (*ALFA* 1, 469). For instance, the traditional virtue of fidelity is evident in unequal relationships, originally between servant and master, which, as the defining characteristic of the relationship between Kent and his master (1, 569), comes near "romantic fidelity" in *King Lear*. In its highest form, this species of loyalty expresses itself as independent of everything else, as in the search for the Holy Grail (1, 571). For Hegel, independence of action is what defines eternal, ethical justification, and hence the assertion of character (1, 577). As in *Antigone,* this "firmness and one-sidednesss . . . is supremely admirable," a passionate "unshakeable logic of passion (1, 578) pursued "for [its] own satisfaction." And it is just so with Macbeth. As he "storms away through every atrocity," nothing restrains him, "neither divine nor human law," and the same holds true for his wife. Hegel disdains the "tasteless chatter of modern critics," which holds that Lady Macbeth is "affectionate." Quite the contrary, she and all of Shakespeare's characters are always "self-consistent," true to "themselves and their passions" (1, 579). Even lapses in behavior confirm the consistency of character traits. Hamlet has a beautiful and noble heart; he is "not inwardly weak at all" (1, 583). Alone within himself, "he surmises the dreadful deed that has been done." But in the "beautiful uprightness of his heart," the matter is complicated. So he is compelled to look "for objective certainty" (1, 584). When in the heat of the moment, he strikes through the arras, killing Polonius, he departs from his true character, which inclines toward investigation, seeking as it does to establish the requisite "grounds / More relative": "objective certainty." So this striking through the arras is a mistake, uncharacteristic of Hamlet.

For the same reason, then, the witches in *Macbeth* are not agents of destiny, but "only the poetic reflection of [Macbeth's] own fixed will" (*ALFA* 1, 585). For Hegel, this fixedness of individuality extinguishes eccentricities within the characters, making them transcendent expressions of something "above themselves." We cannot say this about characters in French drama, who justify themselves:

> In Shakespeare we find no justification, no condemnation, but only an observation of the universal fate; individuals view its necessity without complaint or repentance, and from that standpoint they see everything

> perish, themselves included, as if they saw it all happening outside themselves. (1, 586)

So, Hegel insists, Shakespeare imposes national character on everything that he writes, turning Romans into Britons (1, 274–75). Moreover, this transformation explains why the French cut out the best parts of Shakespeare (1, 267), and why French drama seems more "mannered" than English drama, while Shakespeare's diction, at times—especially his humor (1, 295)—may seem trivial. For example, Shakespeare easily places comic and tragic characters side by side: Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, the Fool in *Lear*, the musicians' scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, just as, in religious art, Nativity and Adoration of the Kings tableaux, the painter juxtaposes oxen and asses, manger and straw, the humble family and nobility (2, 594). Again, in the same way, Hegel argues, Shakespeare has no particular "manner" at all, and for that reason, he, like Homer and Sophocles, is "original," in possessing "one grand manner" (1, 298).

Fleshed out, this capacity to reify ethical principles that are and always will be abstract, and therefore transcendent, is that something, also finally abstract, at the heart of Hegel's theory of tragedy. For Hegel, the true content of tragic action concerns the aims of individuals, which usually show themselves in the most powerfully emotional areas of life: love of family and nation. In the particular individual, matters of abstract good and evil are represented in "actual interests and circumstances" (*ALFA* 2, 1194) of individuals, within whom "*one* power" dominates whatever they do. In the particulars of action, accidents of individuality fall away, and, like a piece of sculpture, tragic heroes become, "on the strength of their free self-reliance" (2, 1195), the true expression of an abstract ethical principle—"the one power dominating their own specific character." In this way, these figures shadow forth the divine themes at the core of tragedy from its inception, "not, however, the Divine as the object of the religious consciousness as such, but as it enters the world and individual action":

> The original essence of tragedy consists then in the fact that within such a conflict each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has *justification*; while each can establish the true and positive contents of its own aim and denying and infringing the equally justified power of the other. The consequence is that in its moral life, and because of it, each is nevertheless involved in guilt. (2, 1196)

So tragic characters like Antigone and Creon collide personally, but each acts out of an ultimate sense of rectitude. They are absolutely convinced of the rightness of their cause. In their determined actions, they bring to absolute contradiction the equally valid claims of two diametrically opposed ethical views of the world. It is sadly true that, in their one-sidedness, tragic heroes destroy themselves. But to their glory, they leave a residue in the

world in a sense of "the eternal substance of things," a "glimpse of eternal justice" (2, 1198). This is Hegel's most emphatic statement about tragedy: Eternal justice cannot be limited to specific laws or historical practices. For Hegel, it is essential to see that a dramatic poet with the power of Shakespeare has "the most profound insight into the essence of human action and Divine Providence, as well as [the ability of] clearly and vividly revealing this eternal substance of all human characters, passions, and fates" (2, 1179). Such revelation cannot be reduced to any sectarian point of view or practice. As Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) demonstrated in his great play, *Nathan, the Wise*, the principles of dramatic art and truth transcend all narrow religious boundaries (2, 1180).

Returning, then, to Hamlet, Hegel sees, in his dedication to value beyond mere existence, something godlike. Hamlet is absolutely alone (*ALFA* 2, 1225). His father, has been slain, and his mother has married the murderer. But it appears that she is guiltless of the crime, which means that Hamlet must act alone in setting things right. Because of his own determination to reshape the world of Elsinore, Hamlet perishes, because, in fact, "justified revenge" will never accord with "the ethical order" (2, 1227). The two, while eternally justified, are also eternally in conflict. In Hamlet's imagination, these eternally conflicting ideas collide, but his noble character is shaped in such a way that indecision between colliding ethical claims meets circumstances over which he has no control. Absolute certainty is not attainable, so ethical justification of revenge is not possible, which is to say that Hamlet is godlike, not God. And yet no modern poet has more ably represented such "greatness of soul" (2, 1228). Hamlet is not like Lear. In the course of the later play, Lear becomes more and more like himself; he is not immobilized and destroyed by inner conflict. It is the "inevitability of [his] personality" that brings Lear to ruin (2, 1230). In contrast, it is "the strength of [Hamlet's] will" that destroys him.

Along with the adulation of Hegel came an equal and opposite reaction against him, and Arthur Schopenhauer's rise in influence went hand in hand with that negative, opposing reaction. Probably no thinker was more motivated to thwart the seemingly inevitable ascent of Hegelianism than Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). Schopenhauer thought of himself as the true inheritor of Kant, and he may very well have been Kant's most ardent admirer. Although he considered Kant "that great mind which nature succeeded in producing but once" (*OWN* 24), and so, presumably, the most brilliant man who ever lived, as it happened, Schopenhauer's own work may have exercised an even greater influence than Kant's on shaping such figures in philosophy as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein. We have seen that Kant began his intellectual life writing on astronomy. And in his essay "On Human Nature," we find that Schopenhauer was particularly intrigued by Kant's recognition that the order of nature did not decree such ideal structures as Time and Space. Schopenhauer understood Kant to be saying that "matter subsists only through the antagonism of the

powers of expansion and contraction, so human society subsists only by the antagonism of hatred, or anger, and fear" (*EPP* pt. 6, 19). The mechanistic feature here is critical. In Schopenhauer's thought, the world was only the flickering appearance of "now" and "then." Man, as Schopenhauer's Kant understood him, was only one of imponderably many forms of matter, acting and acted upon, in a universe of aimless energy. Since each expression of energy existed in an individual relation to all else that was, it followed that every man was constrained in a particular way by unique circumstances and pressures of birth, education, economic status, and so on.

Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory, of which unqualified admiration of Shakespeare is very much a part, reflects the same mechanistic perspective that put Schopenhauer on a collision course with Hegel, author of what he perceived to be a too well-ordered system. In fact, Hegel's thinking so incensed Schopenhauer that he insisted on offering his course at the University of Berlin in the same time slot as Hegel's. (Unfortunately, when no students signed up, Schopenhauer's class was cancelled, and his teaching career ended soon afterward [Magee 20].) Schopenhauer considered Hegel's philosophy to be "absolute nonsense (three-quarters cash and one-quarter crazy notions)" that somehow passed in academia "for unfathomably profound wisdom," but was in fact "new systems made up of nothing but words and phrases for the use of universities, along with a learned jargon, in which one can talk for days and days without ever saying anything . . ." (*OWN* 24). A line from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* would make the perfect motto for Hegel's philosophy: "'Such stuff as madmen tongue and brain not.'" From Schopenhauer's point of view, Hegel had, through his influence on the field, succeeded in overturning "the freedom of thought gained by *Kant*" (*PEFW* 76).

We should not be surprised, then, that Schopenhauer's Shakespeare bears little resemblance to Hegel's. For that matter, it would not be wrong to say that Schopenhauer's perception of Shakespeare is part and parcel of his strictures on Hegel. We have seen that Hegel rests his view of modern tragedy entirely on the strength of will in individual characters. Even in such tragedies as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, works in which, clearly, circumstance diminishes the horizon of personal actions, free choice rather than circumstance determines the final outcome, Such a view presupposes freedom of the will, a notion anathema to Schopenhauer. His *Prize Essay on Freedom of the Will* aims to demonstrate once and for all the utter nonsense of the proposition that human actions are, at bottom, anything other than in accord with the natural order of things. In *The World as Will and Representation*, the work that Schopenhauer thought of as his *magnum opus*, "will" is the "ruling passion" in humans (*WWR* 2, 235). It is evident in infants, without their choice, without any experience that could possibly shape even the mildest preference. Will is like the dumb show in *Hamlet*, a "foretelling" of what is inevitably the case with this or that character. Since for Schopenhauer, "Shakespeare stands at the head" (2, 298) in showing

how characters behave "strictly in accordance with the laws of nature," it follows that the world is the representation of the will, and art the elucidation of that manifestation (1, 266–67).

As far as Schopenhauer was concerned, Hegel ignored the compelling truth of human existence: Will is a function of "the whole man, according to his being and inner nature" (*WWR* 2, 233). Accordingly, man is not the voluntary agent of his actions, but an involuntary organism of matter reacting against opposing matter. Schopenhauer's Shakespeare understood this better than anyone. As we read in his essay on "Art and Literature," the agents of conduct are "character and motive," which move in the same determined manner described by Kant as "the course of a planet" (*EPP* pt. 6, 52). Again, men's actions are "bound by a train of causes" in such a way that "the future is already ordained with absolute certainty and can undergo as little alteration as the past" (pt. 6, 57). In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer insists that Shakespeare makes his knowledge of this most basic, somatic level of human experience absolutely clear:

> But *anatomy* and *physiology* enable us to see how the will behaves, in order to bring about the phenomenon of life and maintain it for a while. Finally, the *poet* shows us how the will conducts itself under the influence of motives and of reflection. . . . The more correct, the more strictly in accordance with the laws of nature, the presentation of his characters proves to be, the greater is his fame; hence Shakespeare stands at the head. (*WWR* 2, 298)

Shakespeare, then, is the best example of the underlying principle that individuals cannot wish away what they are. For Schopenhauer, Shakespeare's plays "in every way" demonstrate an awareness of a natural, deterministic process, and in so doing his works are imbued with the truth of nature "on every page" (*EPP* pt. 6, 54). Humans move like a clock (pt. 6, 56), a fact of nature that the great poet recognized, but which academics—"shallow fellows in Germany"—see only as "moral commonplaces."

In *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Bryan Magee claims that Shakespeare is more important than is usually recognized in this philosopher's thinking (Magee 265). Schopenhauer considered Shakespeare "the greatest genius there had ever been outside philosophy" (the greatest genius, overall, being the giant intellect within philosophy, naturally, Immanuel Kant). Magee points out that Schopenhauer thinks of Shakespeare as a dramatic poet who, with flawless fidelity, elicited a sense of one's own nonbeing (179). He offers as the best evidence of this that moment in *Hamlet* when, in his most famous monologue, the protagonist shares his thoughts on suicide with the audience. For that great soliloquy in Act 3 suggests that "absolute annihilation" would be "be chosen unconditionally" were it not for the fact that Hamlet suspects that death may not be the "absolute," "devoutly to be wish'd," end of everything (*WWR* 1, 324).

Schopenhauer has been called a pessimist. For him, tragedy was "the summit of poetic art" (*WWR* 1, 252), in the power of its effect on audiences, and in the difficulties encountered in bringing that effect about, namely, through exposure of "the terrible side of life[:] The unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind, the triumph of wickedness, the scornful mastery of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent . . ." (1, 252–53), all of which compound to provide "a significant hint as to the nature of the world of existence" (1, 253). It is the will in each individual, which is one and the same in all, which shatters the peace of mind in most men, although in some men it is somewhat quieted by knowledge. In these few individuals, knowledge resolves itself into resignation, which enables the individual to surrender the "will-to-live." Hamlet is one of very few examples in tragedy of a hero who renounces the pleasures of life, and even life itself, one who is, by suffering that renunciation, purified. Literary critics like Dr. Johnson entirely miss this, the most important, aspect of Shakespeare's achievement in tragedy. Dr. Johnson laments Shakespeare's failure to meet the demand of tragedy for "poetic justice," asking inappropriately, "What harm have Ophelia, Desdemona, or Cordelia done?" "But," Schopenhauer answers, "only a dull, insipid, optimistic, Protestant-rationalistic, or really Jewish view of the world will make the demand for poetic justice, and find its own satisfaction in that of the demand" (1, 254). In fact, what the tragedy registers is "the deeper insight" that the hero atones, not for his any "particular sin," but for "original sin," which is existence itself. Shakespeare recognized that destruction comes to man through wickedness (Iago, Richard III, Shylock) no more than "through blind fate, i.e., chance or error." The best example of the latter is probably Oedipus, but the same is true of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. This recognition is what is so compellingly terrible about tragedy; it tells us of the pointlessness of suffering:

> We see the greatest suffering brought about by entanglements whose essence could be assumed even by our own fate, and by actions that perhaps even we might be capable of committing, and so we cannot complain of injustice. Then, shuddering, we feel ourselves already in the midst of hell. (1, 255)

In this vein, Hamlet's relationship with Laertes and Ophelia is an entanglement not of his making; but it provides the necessary and sufficient conditions (in the murder of Polonius) for much of the anguish in the play. This may seem like a very particular anguish, and yet what is more shared than the human destiny of birth into one rather than another family?

Shakespeare's tragedies are greater than those of Sophocles, Schopenhauer explains, for the simple reason that, compared to paganism, Christianity is capable of a greater sense of resignation toward the world (*WWR* 2, 434). Indeed, because of Christian culture, Shakespeare is able to produce,

even in comedy, a character like Jacques, who prefers the somber reflections of "convertites" to the frivolous distractions of a wedding celebration (2, 632). Jacques expects no satisfactions from life; he can, he affirms, "suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs." Schopenhauer loves this Stoic avoidance of joyful experience, which is predicated on disciplined acceptance of the emptiness of life. Of course, one could object that Schopenhauer ignores Rosalind's lighthearted rejoinder to Jacques later on: "A traveler! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's." Rosalind recognizes that Jacques is the victim of an irremediable wish to be elsewhere. The good news for Schopenhauer is that Jacques's antisocial attitude is also Shakespeare's. And in the same way, as we have seen, Schopenhauer attributes Hamlet's suicidal impulse to Shakespeare as well. Like Socrates, Shakespeare sees that death is not to be feared, but embraced, which attitude explains why, in *2 Henry VI*, he portrays the stubborn will of Cardinal Beaufort as an obstacle; Beaufort reaches out to death, but with too much feeling: "Give me some drink, and bid the apothecary / Bring the strong poison that I bought of him" (3.3.17–18). Unfortunately for Beaufort, as the king observes, the Cardinal "dies, and makes no sign" (line 29), suggesting not only that he despairs, but in a more devastating way, in a foretaste of Schopenhauerian insight, that he suffers in direct proportion of his will to live, which in his case reaches the point of wickedness (1, 395).

Not surprisingly, then, Schopenhauer's Shakespeare admires Horatio for placing no value on life, rather, accepting it in the Stoic manner, as it is. Schopenhauer quotes from *2 Henry IV* to register the same sense of resignation, as proof that Shakespeare held death to be the *sumum bonum*:

> O God, that one might read the book of fate,
> And see the revolution of the times
> . . . how chance's mocks,
> And changes fill the cup of alteration
> With divers liquors! O, if this were seen,
> The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
> What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
> Would shut the book, and sit him down and die. (3.1.45–56)

Kant enlisted the law of causality to discriminate between life and the dream state (*WWR* 1, 17). But separating himself from the "genius" whom he so admired, Schopenhauer insists that Prospero's famous lines from the *Tempest* are more compellingly true: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on / And all our life is bounded by a dream."

6 Shakespeare and Subjectivity
Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

As the nineteenth century unfolded, Hegel and Schopenhauer, considered by many the two most intriguing thinkers of the post-Kantian generation, exercised formative influences on two very different minds, which, in turn, were imposing influences on two very different philosophical schools of thought. Early on, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) struggled to adapt Hegel's system to his own aims. From the outset, that project moved with some awkwardness. Kierkegaard's dissertation, submitted to the University of Copenhagen in 1841, was steeped in Hegel's antithesis between growth and resistance, as Kierkegaard struggled mightily to fit his theory of irony into Hegel's theory of a synthesis between antitheses. So, in *The Concept of Irony,* he praises Shakespeare in Hegelian terms, as if to say that Shakespeare's genius embodied the synthesis between the opposites of Being and Nothing. Hegel's insistence on Christian rectitude attracted him, of course, but it was Hegel's voluntarism that conformed to young Kierkegaard's philosophical presentiments, as it would to the aging still-Christian apologist.

For precisely the opposite reason, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was drawn to Schopenhauer. He reveled in Schopenhauer's energetic notion of Will: pure, energetic, unpredictable, and—best of all—uncontrolled by human reason. As part of nature, man's Will was not free of natural law, but, on the contrary, an expression of its power. Schopenhauer glumly imagined a cosmos of onrushing, aimless energy; Nietzsche exulted in that endless motion of birth and destruction. Nietzsche may be closer to Schopenhauer than Kierkegaard is to Hegel, and he seems to point in a different philosophical direction from Kierkegaard. Surely the two thinkers present very different views of Shakespeare in the service of very different ideas about the purpose of philosophy. This is not to deny that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche shared serious doubts about the impact of science and the Enlightenment on the human race. Both thinkers configured man's spiritual development in subjective terms. And for all their differences, Kierkegaard's "true knight of faith" and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* are kindred spirits, because they come into being, not through recognition by any corporate body, surely not by the state, but by purely subjective assertion of

inner energy, whether that is configured as "faith" or as "inscription" of a higher law than applies in society upon tablets of the individual's own making. Accordingly, the views of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on Shakespeare were not only different, but they were also integral to, and exemplary of, their more general philosophical outlook.

Kierkegaard was some thirty years older than Nietzsche. When we think of the latter, with his strong, personal feelings, we probably remember his adulation of Richard Wagner. In the same connection, with Kierkegaard, what comes to mind is probably his life-long affection for Regine Olsen. Even so, when great love affairs in literature come to mind, it is not likely that we think of Kierkegaard's Johannes and Cordelia. There are many ways in which lovers have been tragically thrust apart, and deprived of romantic satisfaction forever. But the lovers in *Either/Or* are unfortunate in such a strange way that we just don't consider them in the same way as we do, say, Eloise and Abelard, Tristan and Iseult, Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, or Othello and Desdemona. Novelist John Updike remarks on the this strange, now famous, relationship: "In the vast literature of love, 'The Seducer's Diary' is a curiosity—a feverishly intellectual attempt to reconstruct an erotic failure as a pedagogic success, a wound masked as a boast, a breast blackened to aid a weaning" (Updike xiv). This description goes a long way toward characterizing a love affair marred by mental pathology, perhaps even masochism.

Updike comments also on the play of voices within the structure of *Either/Or*, a work which "made a significant stir" when it appeared in 1843. Instead of the single voice of Kierkegaard, the book presents a chorus of voices, none of them Kierkegaard's. First we have the voice of Victor Eremita, discoverer and editor of papers found in a drawer of a second-hand writing desk. Later, Kierkegaard would claim that this pseudonym "concealed" the reality that he was "religiously . . . already in the monastery" (Kierkegaard 1998, 35). Then there are the voices of the authors of the various parts of those papers, including a scholar of theatre history, a playwright (author of a comedy), Johannes (narrator of "The Seducer's Diary"), the young lady who writes to him, and William, once a judge, who writes from a more mature point of view to the seducer on the subject of marriage and related ethical and aesthetic topics. Then, too, Updike notes that Kierkegaard, whose name appears nowhere in the book, considered adding a postscript, retracting the book. But, as he points out, since part of the deception was the device of anonymous authorship, Kierkegaard observes that the book needed no retraction. So later editions of *Either/Or* emerged from the press without a disclaimer. Updike observes:

> In dealing with an author so deceptive, so manifoldly removed in name from his own words, we need to insist that there were events of a sore personal nature behind so prodigiously luxuriant a smokescreen. (Updike viii)

In connection with *King Lear*, we are, first of all, concerned with "The Seducer's Diary." The strange love affair behind what Updike calls the "smokescreen" of this fiction involved twenty-seven-year-old Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen, daughter of a well-to-do statesman, Terkild Olsen. Critics, including John Updike, agree that this narrative, the concluding section of Part 1 of *Either/Or*, springs from Kierkegaard's relationship with this woman, ten years his junior, with whom the young philosopher, still intellectually enamored of Hegel, had fallen in love. The story of that relationship begins in a rather ordinary way. Having completed his theological studies in 1840, Kierkegaard traveled to Jutland to visit the birthplace of his father, who had died two years earlier. This sojourn seems to have moved him greatly. On his return to Copenhagen, Kierkegaard impulsively proposed to Regine. In spite of a certain awkwardness at the start, Regine returned his affection, and since her father consented, Regine accepted Kierkegaard's proposal, and it looked as if, in the ordinary scheme of things, the lovers would marry. But, as Kierkegaard records in his journal, events would not unfold in the ordinary way. Kierkegaard recalls: "inwardly; the next day I saw that I had made a false step. A penitent such as I was my *vita ante acta*, my melancholy, that was enough. I suffered unspeakably at that time" (*JSK* 92).

Here is the mystery. Why, with Regine's acceptance of his suit for her hand, did Kierkegaard feel that he had made a terrible mistake? What connection was there between his melancholy and his sense that he "had made a false step"? A little over a year later, for no apparent reason (hence, the mystery), Kierkegaard broke off the engagement to Regine (Hannay 154). Although Regine begged him to take her back (156), instead, he rejected her in a manner calculated to make her despise him. But just what motivated Kierkegaard to throw his chance at happiness away? As, years later, Kierkegaard awaited death in Frederik's Hospital, his friend Emil Boesen visited him, taking notes on their conversation. Then at the end of his life, Kierkegaard's thoughts were still on Regine Olsen. And it seems that he hinted at an answer to this puzzling question. "I am depressed," he said:

> Like Paul, I had my "thorn in the flesh"; so that I was unable to enter into the usual relations of life and I therefore concluded that my task was extra-ordinary; and I tried to carry it out as best I could; I was the toy of providence which produced me and I was to be used; and then crash! and providence stretched out its hand and takes me into the ark; that is always the life and fate of the extraordinary messenger. That was also what stood in the way of my marriage with Regine. I did think that it could be changed, but it could not, so I broke off my engagement. (*JSK* 548–49)

Again, the answer seems to be that this "thorn in the flesh," which had something to do with melancholy, prompted Kierkegaard's realization, the

day after the engagement to Regine, that he "had made a false step." So about a year later, he broke off the engagement.

As John Updike suggests, Kierkegaard critics are divided on whether Kierkegaard's sense of an impediment to marriage, his "thorn in the flesh," was mental or physical (Updike xi). Literally on his deathbed, Kierkegaard said to Emil Boesen, "The doctors do not understand my illness; it is psychic, and they want to treat it in the ordinary medical way" (*JSK* 549). But perhaps because of Kierkegaard's allegiance to "indirect communication," Kierkegaardians are left to proffer a wide range of speculations. Perhaps Kierkegaard feared madness, which he might have inherited from the profligacy, real or imagined, of his father. Then there was his own experience with extramarital sex, namely, a visit which he did nor did not make to a bordello, where he did or did not get his money's worth, did or did not contract syphilis, and did or did not father a child, depending on whether he had, or did not have, a capable or curved penis (Garff 104–5). We should recall that most of these speculations are based on the fact that certain entries in Kierkegaard's journal are either missing or torn and therefore hard to read.

Still, the critical consensus seems to be that Kierkegaard broke off the engagement, and then, in *Fear and Trembling*, sublimated his feelings for Regine into an imagined eternal affection:

> . . . to change the leap into life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian—only that knight can do it—and this is the one and only marvel. . . . A young lad falls in love with a princess, and this love is the entire substance of his life, and yet the relation is such that it cannot possibly be realized, cannot possibly be translated from ideality into reality. (*FT* 41)

Only in this sublimated way can "will these two in all eternity be compatible" (45). For the problem is that consummation of love in the here and now leads to disappointment; lovers know that they must grow old, and that love cannot therefore be sustained. Hence, the sublimation of desire into art:

> These two will in all eternity be compatible, with such a rhythmical *harmonia prœstabilita* that if the moment ever came—a moment, however, that does not concern them finitely, for then they would grow old—if the moment ever came that allowed them to give love its expression in time. . . . (45)

There is some evidence that Kierkegaard doubted that Regine would ever be able to "withdraw into significance and steer out into reality and Christian suffering, where there is neither honour nor respect to be won" (*JSK* 275). If I understand correctly, he did not think that Regine could

ever be, as he so intensely desired to be, a "true knight of faith," that is, a true Christian.

And yet, the breach with Regine affected Kierkegaard profoundly. In his imagination, the sublimated Regine became his literary inspiration. A flood of volumes, beginning with *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, followed and were, at least in part, shaped by the failed love affair, as Kierkegaard sought to set right, in literary form, what he felt was the mistake in his attempted relationship with Regine. From a literary point of view, it was that doomed relationship which taught him the method of "indirect communication." "The Seducer's Diary" in *Either/Or* is Kierkegaard's most transparent attempt to portray himself as a scoundrel and thus make the break easier for the object of his affection. More important for our purpose, "The Seducer's Diary" is also a key text in Kierkegaard's critique of *King Lear*, a work that, for him, held great, even theological, significance. Moreover, this narrative is also indicative of his lofty opinion of Shakespeare as a tragic poet. From Kierkegaard's point of view, Shakespeare's tragic vision concerned, not the death of his heroes, but the poet's inability to envision the transcendent realm of religious experience.

In "The Seducer's Diary," the narrator, Johannes, claims that the "girl" he wants to seduce "was very correctly named Cordelia" (*E/O* 1, 305). We soon learn that her name bears philosophical significance. Johannes first hears that name when one of the girls she is with, and from whom she has become momentarily separated, calls out: "Cordelia! Cordelia!" (1, 336). The girls confer quietly, frustrating his effort to eavesdrop. Since he has pursued (today we would say "stalked") her in secret, Johannes is left to ponder the significance of what he has heard: "Cordelia, then, is her name!" Almost at once the name takes on a sense of familiarity: "Cordelia! It is a beautiful name!" For, somehow, the name fits the girl, but, to Johannes, its propriety suggests a kinship of spirit that goes deeper than physical beauty. It is a name with a literary history; and it also brings with it an important character trait: "Cordelia! Cordelia! . . . Cordelia! That is really a splendid name—indeed, the same name as that of King Lear's third daughter, that remarkable girl whose heart did not dwell on her lips, whose lips were mute when her heart was full" (1, 336).

Johannes is convinced that the two Cordelias share more than a name. Cordelia even looks like her Shakespearean namesake: "She resembles her, of that I am certain" (*E/O* 1, 336). So the physical resemblance is important. But, of course, it is in their inner composure that the young women most resemble each other. Indeed, by comparing his young lady with Shakespeare's Cordelia, the seducer provides a hint of Kierkegaard's reverence for silence, which goes hand in hand with his disdain for idle talk. Cordelia is a model of composure, closed within herself:

> She herself was hidden in herself; she herself rose up out of herself; there was a recumbent pride in her like the spruce's bold escape—although

> it is riveted to the earth. A sadness surrounded her, like the cooing of the wood dove, a deep longing that was lacking nothing. She was an enigma that enigmatically possessed its own solution, a secret, and what are all the secrets of the diplomats compared with this, a riddle, and what in all the world is as beautiful as the word that solves it? How suggestive, how pregnant, the language is: to solve [*at løse*]—what ambiguity there is in it, with what beauty and with what strength it pervades all the combinations in which this word appears! Just as the soul's wealth is a riddle as long as the cord of the tongue is not loosened [*løst*] and thereby the riddle is solved [*løst*], so also a young girl is a riddle. (1, 330)

As we can see, the passage turns on a pun, which does not come across in translation. Here, Kierkegaard affirms the mystery of Cordelia's silence; she remains a mystery only as long as her innermost self remains in silent repose, which is its true nature. It is in her serene silence that Cordelia imparts the paradoxical sense of a mystery that is, in essence, also the solution to the mystery. This paradox brings longing and satisfaction together in one existence. But there is this one proviso. The tongue, often purposeless speech—the chatter of the empty, everyday world—is "*løst*"—loosened, resolved—revealing what is, though mysterious, nonetheless true and beautiful. And all of this is evident in Cordelia's Christian name.

Here, in the inner thoughts of his narrator on first hearing his beloved's name, Kierkegaard registers a theme indicative of his ethical perspective on *King Lear*. I use the word "ethical" deliberately, because Kierkegaard insists on the boundaries separating the aesthetic, ethical, and religious domains. Much of *Either/Or* aims at discriminating these boundaries; but perhaps Kierkegaard's most extensive discussion distinguishing the latter two is in *Fear and Trembling*, which he began writing the year of his breakup with Regine (Garff 232). Under the pseudonym of Johannes de Silentio, Kierkegaard declares Abraham to be the second father of the human race, the Patriarch of Patriarchs, affirming that Abraham's faith was for this world. But just as Abraham loved this world, he also loved his son:

> In fact, if his faith had been only for a life to come, he certainly would have more readily discarded everything in order to rush out of a world to which he did not belong. But Abraham's faith was not of this sort, if there is such a faith at all, for actually it is not faith but the most remote possibility of faith that faintly sees its object on the most distant horizon but is separated from it by a chasmal abyss in which doubt plays its tricks. But Abraham had faith specifically for this life—faith that he would grow old in this country, be honored among the people, blessed by posterity, and unforgettable in Isaac, the most precious thing in his life, whom he embraced with a love that is inadequately described by saying he faithfully fulfilled the father's duty to love the son, which

> is indeed stated in the command: the son, whom you love. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom he loved; Abraham had but one, whom he loved. (*FT* 20)

So Abraham loved Isaac; all of his hopes for posterity were in his love for this one son. This singularity sets Abraham, as a parent, at the far pole from Lear. Lear loves Cordelia in a special way, too, but not for his posterity, nor even *for* this world, but *as* a "nursery" in his old age.

Given the way in which Kierkegaard perceives the episode on Mount Moriah, Abraham's faith, tested by God, is exponentially more compelling and more terrible than it would be if Abraham, like Jacob, had other sons to make good on God's promise that his offspring would outnumber the sands of the sea. And yet when Abraham sets off for Mount Moriah, bearing the instruction that God has spoken to his heart, he keeps silent. He says not a word to his wife, Sarah, who had waited so many years to bear a child. On its face, Abraham's silence might seem to be a moral affront, for it was Sarah whose aging womb gave life to Isaac. Furthermore, when Abraham binds Isaac, cuts the wood, prepares the fire, and raises the knife to plunge into Isaac's breast, he is, by human standards, a moral monster. Indeed, Johannes de Silentio (note that the authors of *Fear and Trembling* and "The Seducer's Diary" bear the same Christian name) imagines Abraham saying, before plunging the knife into Isaac's breast, that a father must love his son more than himself. Indeed, from a moral point of view, Abraham is an outlaw from human society. But for Kierkegaard, the religious domain transcends the ethical. Were this not so, the world would forever condemn Abraham. Since the demands of the ethical and religious domains conflict, Abraham cannot be understood as "a tragic hero": "He gets Isaac back again by virtue of the absurd. Therefore, Abraham is at no time a tragic hero but is something entirely different, either a murderer or a man of faith" (*FT* 57). If the analogy between Regine, Isaac, and the princess holds, despite Kierkegaard's reprehensible treatment of Regine, he imagines that they will end up together:

> By my own strength I can give up the princess, and I will not sulk about it but find joy and peace and rest in my pain, but by my own strength I cannot get her back again, for I use all my strength in resigning. On the other hand, by faith, says that marvelous knight, by faith you will get her by virtue of the absurd. (49–50)

It appears, then, that Johannes shares with Abraham a suffering which goes beyond heroism and tragedy. In elucidating this point, the tragic example that comes to Kierkegaard's mind is from Greek drama. Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to propitiate the goddess, Artemis, who has deprived his ships of wind for their sails. But in Euripides, Agamemnon turns his eyes away as the priest raises the knife for

the sacrifice. Kierkegaard insists that, although "he must nobly conceal his agony" (*FT* 57), the true hero, Abraham, the "true knight of faith," "must raise the knife" himself. Here, the key term is "public." It is important to see that Agamemnon suffers for his nation, to gain the help of Artemis in the Greeks' stalled military campaign. Agamemnon's action is taken in public, and for the public interest. This is what Kierkegaard means by "ethical"; the action answers to "immanent" concerns of this world. In the keenest contrast, Abraham acts alone, in defiance of social values:

> Abraham's situation is different. By his act he transgressed the ethical altogether and had a higher τέλος outside it, in relation to which he suspended it. For I certainly would like to know how Abraham's act can be related to the universal, whether any point of contact between what Abraham did and the universal can be found other than that Abraham transgressed it. It is not to save a nation, not to uphold the idea of the state that Abraham does it; it is not to appease the angry gods. If it were a matter of the deity's being angry, then he was, after all, angry only with Abraham, and Abraham's act is totally unrelated to the universal, is a purely private endeavor. Therefore, while the tragic hero is great because of his moral virtue, Abraham is great because of a purely personal virtue. (*FT* 59)

In the ethical realm, there can be no higher demand than that the father love his son, and, if necessary, place his son's life before his own. It follows, then, that from an ethical standpoint, the world cries out against Abraham, as if from "Isaac's loins," saying "Do not do this, you are destroying everything" (59). In this moment, Abraham's isolation from all the comforts of the world transcends all human suffering. As such, it is at the farthest possible remove from Agamemnon's plight. Agamemnon is not alone; in open view to all, he carries the burden of his people. Yes, Agamemnon loves his daughter, just as Abraham loves his son. But because he places the welfare of his nation above his daughter's life, Agamemnon is a tragic hero.

We are in a position now to see how, for Kierkegaard, Abraham's agony is in even sharper contrast to Lear's suffering than to Agememnon's. It may even be doubtful that, from Kierkegaard's point of view, Lear's actions measure up even to those of a tragic hero. Lear's first cries of anguish ring out in the halls of power, and they echo through one castle after another. But his aims are not, in the heroic manner of Agememnon, self-abnegating. Lear does not divide his kingdom, and "sacrifice" his throne, for the good of England. It is true that he claims such a patriotic motive, as if he divides his kingdom in order "that future strife / May be prevented now" (1.1.44–45),[1] but his subsequent actions make clear that he means to surrender only the duties, not the perquisites, of kingship. He wants to keep a hundred knights, with squires, horses, attendants, and what is more, the deference owed to a proper king. Lear is more believable when he admits that he

favored Cordelia ("I loved her most") above her older sisters, and that he planned to cast off "all cares and business" (39) of state, in order "to set [his] rest / On her kind nursery" (123–24) than when he claims to have the interests of the state in mind. And more to the ethical point for Kierkegaard, Lear's demand that he retain his entourage does not exhibit paternal love for any of his daughters. Rather, it reiterates the self-centeredness of the test that he proposes at the opening of the play. Not only is Lear enthralled by the rhetorical devices of flattery, which he believes is owed to him by his rank, but he is also a parent who dispenses his affections unfairly. He admits that, had Cordelia said anything other than "Nothing," he would have given her "a third" of the country larger ("more opulent" [86]) than the "ample third" apportioned to her sisters.

So it is that, while Lear acts for his own sake rather than for England's, Abraham acts for God's sake, to prove his faith, *and* for his own sake, in order to prove it. For Kierkegaard, the difference here is significant. Why, one might ask, if neither man's suffering is borne in the nation's interest, are the two, then, not the same? We have already seen that, unlike Abraham, Lear does not love Cordelia more than himself; and he does not love her sisters as much as he loves her. So he is not even the moral equal of Agamemnon. But neither is the Greek hero Abraham's equal. We weep for the former, but not for the latter. In the episode of his great trial on Mount Moriah, we sense the horror—the "divine madness"—of the moment, as Abraham raises the knife above Isaac, knowing that, if God wills, he must plunge it into Isaac's breast. Agamemnon, the tragic hero, does what he must do for the good of the many, whose tears uphold him in his suffering. In contrast, Abraham suffers alone, and in silence. What if, in his solitariness, he has made a mistake? It is no wonder that we do not uphold him with our tears:

> One cannot weep over Abraham. One approaches him with a *horror religiosus*, as Israel approached Mount Sinai. What if he himself is distraught, what if he had made a mistake, this lonely man who climbs Mount Moriah . . . what if he is not a sleepwalker safely crossing the abyss while the one standing at the foot of the mountain looks up, shakes with anxiety, and then in his deference and horror does not even dare to call to him? (*FT* 61)

Kierkegaard once suggested that there is sound theology in *King Lear*. But when his niece expressed astonishment at her response to *Hamlet*, she struggled to understand his reaction:

> I tried to make him take part in the matter by asking him whether he was not enthralled by that extraordinary drama, whether it did not move him in the same way. 'Of course, but with me it is quite a different thing,' and when I looked enquiringly at him, he added as a kind of

> explanation 'You cannot understand that now—perhaps one day you will understand it.' (*JSK* 560)

Kierkegaard regarded Hamlet as quite the opposite of Lear. Rather than make a public display, Hamlet was more likely in fact to disguise his true feelings. Hamlet was, as Lear was decidedly not, like that paragon of human strength in Sonnet 94, one of the world's "lords and owners of their faces," and, as such, a master of "indirect communication." Specifically, he was never in love with Ophelia, but only used "his relationship to Ophelia to take the attention away from what he actually [was] keeping hidden" (*JP* 2, 206). This means that Hamlet's "reflection," the cause of his much disputed refusal to take action against Claudius, must be construed as evidence of his religious belief. What he hid from others, namely his private convictions and longings, was what was most important to him, namely, his love and fear of God. In this way, he was, as his niece might someday appreciate, like her uncle Søren, who said in retrospect:

> I could have looked for a living and as a theological student could have had one, but I could not accept it (my thorn in the flesh stood in the way), so it was decided; I understood it quite suddenly. The thing was to approach as nearly as possible to God. (*JSK* 549)

Thus, in Kierkegaard's eyes, "Hamlet had the disease of reflection but still had not even reached the point of doubting everything" (*JP* 2, 61). In this underlying but all-important belief and longing for truth lies the similarity between Hamlet and himself that Kierkegaard perceived, but refused to explain to his niece, who had become enamored of the play. Since his response to her enthusiasm for the work seemed equivocal, she inferred that he might not like it. Quite the opposite, he said, he had a high opinion of *Hamlet*, but with him it was "a quite a different thing." When she pressed him for an explanation, he said: "'You cannot understand that now—perhaps one day you will understand it'" (*JSK* 560).

Kierkegaard's perception of Hamlet went to the core of his own spiritual struggle. For him, Hamlet went beyond Hegel in confronting the "*immortal* dilemma through all eternity: to be or not to be, that is the question (*Hamlet*)" (*JSK* 74). Like Kierkegaard, Hamlet suffered because he experienced "the truth of the foreboding," which entailed the "all-consuming power of original sin" to "grow into despair" (*JSK* 40). This does not mean that, in Kierkegaard's mind, Hamlet ever doubted, in the religious sense. If he entertained such doubt, even for a moment, then the play, which depends on his "reflection," makes no sense. With Hamlet, it is what he does not say—what he hides even from Horatio—that counts. In contrast, with Lear, the totality of his being is thoroughly exhausted by explanation and action (today we might say by his "acting out"). Hamlet, Kierkegaard observed, feels that no one understands his life. This is why, in the end, his wish is

that Horatio, his most trusted friend, delay the solace of death, so that the world will know the truth about him: "Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied" (5.2.339–40). When Horatio remonstrates, Hamlet insists: "Absent thee from felicity a while, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story" (347–49). On his deathbed, Kierkegaard registers something of the same concern with his good friend, Emil Boesen: "It all looked like pride and vanity, but it was not" (*JSK* 550).

For Kierkegaard, then, Lear's suffering is palpably different from Hamlet's, as it is from Abraham's, in that it is so accessible to everyone around. Even Kent, who disagrees with Lear, can sympathize with the old king. But in his suffering, Lear demeans himself, inviting pity, as if it were an anodyne to his pain. Then and afterwards, principals from far-flung counties in England and France witness his extreme passions. Lear reviles Kent and his daughters in overblown, rhetorical figures, always with someone standing in witness. He longs for understanding, and for others to affirm his actions. And when they refuse, Lear lashes out again and again, until the only audience left to hear him is comprised of fellow exiles, fugitives, a lunatic, and a fool. And even then he rages on, begging for pity:

> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children;
> You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man;
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul. (3.2.14–24)

Or fantasizing revenge:

> It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe
> A troop of horse with felt. I'll put't in proof,
> And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
> Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! (4.6.184–87)

Most readers and spectators know, of course, that there is a vast chasm between Lear's words and the imagined rectitude and violence of his words. Even when the harsh reality of prison at Edmund's disposal is upon him and Cordelia, Lear imagines the two of them, alone, enjoying an uninterrupted life of "chatter":

> . . . Come let's away to prison:

> We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage;
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
> And take upon 's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
> That ebb and flow by th' moon. (5.3.8–19)

In his declining mental state, Lear unwittingly trivializes the actuality of his relinquished power, transforming his and Cordelia's arrest into a shared opportunity for a life of uninterrupted gossip. It is as if, Kierkegaard muses in *Stages on Life's Way*, Lear would distract his daughter with banter concerning "the royal household and ask news from it" (*SLW* 264).

Here, Kierkegaard is trying to rationalize the suffering that he both inflicted and endured in the breakup with Regine:

> That is how things stand. With all the heroes who hover in my imagination, it is indeed more or less the case that they carry a deep and secret sorrow that they are unable or unwilling to confide to anyone. I do not marry to have another person slave under my depression. It is my pride, my honor, my inspiration to keep in inclosing reserve what must be locked up, to reduce it to the scantiest rations possible; my joy, my bliss, my first and my only wish is to belong to her whom I would purchase at any price with my life and blood, but whom I still refuse to weaken and destroy by initiating her into my sufferings. (*SLW* 197)

Kierkegaard sees himself, as he sees Hamlet, in essentially religious terms. *Hamlet* "is a Christian drama" in the sense that it is "a 'religious' drama" (453). Kierkegaard is like Hamlet because, in the conflict of motives within him, he transcends "purely esthetic categories" (453). In this way, his religious presentiments make him heroic: "If he is religiously oriented, his misgivings are extremely interesting, because they give assurance that he is a religious hero" (453–54). In Shakespeare, religious belief has replaced what was, in the Roman world, national allegiance:

> If Hamlet is to be interpreted religiously, one must either allow him to have conceived the plan, and then the religious doubts divest him of it, or do what to my mind better illuminates the religious (for in the first case there could possibly be some doubt as to whether he actually was capable of carrying out his plan)—give him the demonic

> power resolutely and masterfully to carry out his plan and then let him collapse into himself and into the religious until he finds peace there. (454)

Kierkegaard's point applies to Lear, whose suffering never rises to heroic, self-abnegating proportions. With Kierkegaard and Hamlet, "the religious is in the interior being, and therefore misgivings have their essential significance" (*SLW* 454). In contrast, Lear's suffering overflows with exterior display. It is Cordelia whose inner agony is never shared. When Edmund orders father and daughter taken away, Lear reverts to violent figures of revenge, while Cordelia keeps a resolute, serene silence. This, for Kierkegaard, is the true sign of love.

From the outset "in the division of the kingdom," Lear overvalues what Kierkegaard considers the major symptom of social decline: meaningless social conversation, "talkativeness," "chatter."[2] Unwisely, Lear reacts with childlike credulity to what people say. Given the fact that court behavior, in particular the level of its speech, is contrived to advance the cause of diplomacy, Lear's naiveté, evident when Kent truthfully declares that Lear's "youngest daughter does not love [him] least" (1.1.152), is not only deeply ironic, but dangerous to the state. Kent's faithful analysis goes hand in hand with his advice to Lear that he "reserve [his] state" (149), along with his family and his peace of mind. But Lear spurns the injunction—so important in Renaissance thought—of the Oracle of Delphi: "*Nosce teipsum*." Regan, whose paean to her father mimics her older sister's hyperbole, understands her father's weakness very well: "'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.292–93). And it happens that Kierkegaard's judgment of Lear is not far from Regan's:

> King Lear's fate can be accounted for as Nemesis. His fault is the madness with which the play begins, of summarily requiring his children to declare the depth of their love for him. Children's love for their parents is a bottomless mystery, rooted as well in a natural relationship. An event can therefore be the occasion which reveals its depth, but it is unseemly, impious, and culpable to wish curiously and selfishly to dissect it, as it were, for the sake of one's own satisfaction. Such a thing is tolerable in an erotic relationship (when the lover asks the beloved how much she loves him), although even here it is pandering. (*JP* 2, 9)

Notice the level of reprehension here. Kierkegaard is indignant, because Lear fails to grasp what most people take for granted, namely, that children love their parents. It is a fact of nature, not amenable to rational explanation. In fact, any attempt to put such a deeply rooted attachment into words would amount to a superfluity of extraneous expression. Articulation—"chatter"—is a major problem of modern life, because it misleads the credulous into believing that something of consequence is afoot. Intuitively,

ordinary people understand that the feelings a child has for the parent cannot be captured by public expression, no matter how hyperbolic. And, of course, with Lear, litotes presents an even greater opportunity to misunderstand. After hearing Kent's wise counsel on the love his daughters truly bear him, Lear attaches his fate, and the fate of his kingdom, to the older daughters' public, hyperbolic flourishes.

As we read in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard insists that a parent's love for the child is self-abnegating; Lear's affections are not even self-effacing. While it may be harmless, on ceremonial occasions such as Lear's retirement from kingship's responsibilities, to engage in hyperbolic expressions of love, it is reprehensible for a parent to examine their content with a mind to self-gratification. Lear's insistence that his daughters articulate their love is not just "unseemly," it is "impious," pernicious, despicable. Even a lover's insistence on the beloved's verbal reassurance is a mistake, albeit one more easily forgiven than a parent's. For lovers move "unnaturally"—that is, sometimes deceptively, sometimes awkwardly, but always over a course of time—from being strangers into lovers. But children love their parents mysteriously—"naturally"—from the beginning. And that is why the parent–child relationship is "impermeable by verbal characterization." That is why Lear's trust in talk proves self-defeating. Even his verbal decree of exile or death for Kent holds for less than a fortnight.

For Kierkegaard, "talkativeness" is no mere solecism, like using the wrong fork at a formal dinner. More tellingly, it exhibits an enervation at the core of modern society:

> What is it *talkativeness*? It is the result of doing away with the vital distinction between talking and keeping silent. Only some one who knows how to remain essentially silent can really talk—and act essentially. Silence is the essence of inwardness, of the inner life. (*PA* 78)

Chatter fears silence, simply because it "reveals its emptiness" (79). We might expect, then, that Kierkegaard disdains the cultured conversation of the salon. Polite conversation is, in the biblical sense, "lukewarm." It is too careful, too sophisticated, too knowing, too burdened by unimportant detail. We have the sense that, from Kierkegaard's point of view, Shakespeare's Burgundy has spoken well—too well, perhaps—in Lear's court. He has performed all the niceties of diplomatic "chatter," and met every expectation of the successful suitor for Cordelia's hand. So he has every reason to suppose that he has struck a deal with the English court. If Cordelia had done as well, we would not be dealing with tragedy. All she needs to do is meet the minimal demands of polite "chatter" on the occasion of her father's retirement from public life. Her older, married sisters have shown the easy, if empty, way of talkativeness. It might be an easy way, but for Cordelia it is impossible. She cannot mimic her sisters; and it is this incapacity to perform a small imitation of speech that explains Kierkegaard's admiration of her. Indeed, to

the speaker of "The Seducer's Diary," the very name, "Cordelia," suggests a rapture of silence. His Cordelia exists in a dimension beyond everyday talk. So it is that Johannes recalls how Goneril and Regan—one could easily add Lear and his Fool—characterize themselves by their public display of garrulity. First, there is Goneril, perhaps the most egregious example. We should remember that, for all her faults, the one that most galls her husband is her obnoxious carping. When Edgar in disguise fells Edmund, and everything that Goneril yearns for is at stake, she holds forth on a particular article in "th' law of war," even at the risk of revealing her treachery. Gloucester, she insists, is not obliged to answer an anonymous challenger. In fact, Albany does not even bother to refute her claim. He pays no attention to the law: "Shut your mouth, dame," he orders, "Or with this paper shall I [stopple] it" (5.3.44–46). Like Kent, Albany understands the vacuity of his wife's "chatter," which, from the beginning in "the division of the kingdom," aims to bring people and events into line with her desires.

It would be no exaggeration to say that, for Kierkegaard, Lear's indignant reaction to Cordelia's refusal to engage the ceremonial occasion with speech, however formulaic, in the manner of her sisters, exhibits his limited spiritual understanding. Lear does not grasp how much his world is shaped by empty talk. Given the occasion, Cordelia's "Nothing, my lord" is the public equivalent of silence. It enrages Lear because it threatens his world, which depends on the formulae of court speech, geared as they are to social rank. But, for Kierkegaard, this is precisely the existential matter exposed by Cordelia's answer, for the elder sisters' overblown sentiments are the opposite of true speech, which we hear in Kent's cryptic judgments no less than in Cordelia's stoic, near- silence. For Kierkegaard, inwardness is the essence of love, and reticence is its human expression. Thus, Kierkegaard argues that all that is good in a person is silent:

> From the very start, everything that is good in a person is silent, and just as it is essentially God's nature to live in secret, so also the good in a person lives in secret. Every resolution that is fundamentally good is silent, because it has God as its confidant and went to him in private; every holy feeling that is fundamentally good is silent . . . every emotion of the heart is silent, since the lips are sealed and only the heart is expanded. (*EUD* 370)

For Kierkegaard, noise is a symptom of a profound disorder in the human soul. Indeed, for him, the first problem of modern society is that it lacks silence. The turbulence of life—its unrelenting noise—sweeps a person along with the multitude away from God, into the maelstrom of the superfluous world:

> Ah, everything is noisy; and just as a strong drink is said to stir the blood, so everything in our day, even the most insignificant project, even

> the most empty communication, is designed merely to jolt the senses or to stir up the masses, the crowd, the public, noise! (*SE* 47–48)

Accordingly, Cordelia is the example that comes most readily to his mind. She loves her father in the appropriate and sacred way required of a daughter. Her silence is the outward sign of her humility, of her virtue: "Nothing my Lord." Her natural feelings do not lend themselves to public expression.

Again, when Edmund orders Cordelia and her father taken away, she says nothing. Cordelia bears the knowledge of their situation alone, in secret. In this way, in Kierkegaard's mind, Shakespeare's Cordelia is, at the core of her being, very much like the modern version of the "tragic heroine," Antigone (*E/O* 1,153). As the modern counterpart of her Sophoclean predecessor, Antigone exists in a world compounded of noisy, empty conversation and banal "reflection" on trivial concerns. In all other respects, the story of modern Antigone's life in the family of Oedipus and Jocasta is a repetition of the Greek tale, with this one exception:

> Everyone knows that [Oedipus] has killed the sphinx and freed Thebes, and Oedipus is hailed and admired and is happy in his marriage with Jocasta. The rest is hidden from the people's eyes, and no suspicion has ever brought this horrible dream into the world of actuality. Only Antigone knows it. (1, 154)

As a young girl, Antigone learns—it doesn't matter how—this terrible secret, and, instead of the ancient, immediate, and therefore passing sorrow of her Greek antecedent, Antigone reflects upon the horror, and experiences anxiety, which, unlike the ancient sorrow, does not pass. In this way, modern tragedy has a double-edge, for the two—sorrow and anxiety—exist in an inevitable dyad of the present and the not-present. In Greek tragedy, Antigone is unconcerned about her father's fate, for it is shared by the community, and understood to be an unchangeable fact, which envelops the family, but the family no more than anyone else. But now, the modern Antigone shares her sorrow with no one. She reflects upon it inwardly, for the stage of this drama is not public, but spiritual:

> Perhaps nothing ennobles a person so much as keeping a secret. It gives a person's whole life a significance, which it has, of course, only for himself; it saves a person from all futile consideration of the surrounding world. Sufficient unto himself, he rests blissful in his secret; this might be said even though his secret is a most baleful one. (1, 157)

So as the world praises Oedipus as a hero, Antigone suffers apart from the world, nourishing her secret of the truth in her heart. Kierkegaard's Antigone and Kierkegaard's Cordelia bear their suffering and their love alone and in silence.

As we know, for Kierkegaard, secrecy is a site of silence, and so of holiness. But because it exists outside the public domain of ethics, it is also, potentially, "the demon's trap" (*FT* 88). As for the demoniacal, because he did not shrink from acquaintance with despair, Shakespeare, "the poet's poet" (*SUD* 38), "is and remains a hero" (*FT* 105). But although he leaves the reason for this strange anomaly a mystery, Kierkegaard insists that even the greatest poet who ever lived was unable to speak of this horror. As for Lear's misery, Kierkegaard thinks the explanation is obvious. Lear is forever exposing his motives, and these might arouse pity in a compassionate audience, which might even weep with him. For the drama portrays the world of words that he so loves stripping him of all his accustomed, external signs of his identity. But nowhere does Shakespeare touch on anything unworldly, on what Kierkegaard calls "*horror religiosus*":

> —Thanks, once again thanks, to a man who, to a person overwhelmed by life's sorrows and left behind naked, reaches out the words, the leafage of language by which he can conceal his misery. Thanks to you, great Shakespeare, you who can say everything, everything, everything just as it is—and yet, why did you never articulate this torment? Did you perhaps reserve it for yourself, like the beloved's name that one cannot bear to have the world utter, for with his little secret that he cannot divulge the poet buys this power of the word to tell everybody's else's dark secrets. A poet is not an apostle; he drives out devils only by the power of the devil. (*FT* 61)

In this mix of praise and blame, Kierkegaard questions the range, not of Shakespeare's talent, but of his vision. Shakespeare expresses "everything, everything, everything," that is, "everything" except what is most important. Indeed, Kierkegaard implies that perhaps Shakespeare used his literary gift to cover up the "misery" that he may have known of this "*horror religiosus*." Unlike Keats, whose view of Shakespeare's "negative capability" pragmatist John Dewey would mark out as his own, Kierkegaard regards a literary talent with an evenhanded perspective on terrestrial suffering as something like "a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed" in the rare atmosphere of man alone in the awful presence of God. Insofar as the author of *King Lear* exorcized demons, he did so by the material power of Satan.

As we have seen by now, it is one of the defining characteristics of philosophical discussions of Shakespeare—that is, discussions of those thinkers whom librarians and professors of philosophy regard as philosophers—that they cluster around certain plays. Shaftesbury thought that, of all Shakespearean plays, *Othello*, by reflecting the sexual barbarism of English women, was the one that best explained Shakespeare's unique place in the canon. William Richardson was especially intrigued by the characters of Falstaff and Macbeth. Søren Kierkegaard was drawn to Shakespearean

comedies and history plays, but especially to his tragedies. Kierkegaard's niece thought that her uncle was like Hamlet, whose situation he believed much like his own (Lowrie 1, 209). She took that to mean that Kierkegaard was haunted by the ghost of his father; it does appear that his father's reputed cursing of God had a lasting effect on him. Be that as it may, surely for Kierkegaard, Shakespeare stood alone in his capacity to represent opposing impulses within a single character:

> The art of writing lines, replies, that with full tone and all imaginative intensity sound out of one passion and in which there is nevertheless the resonance of the opposite—this art no poet has practiced except the one and only: Shakespeare. (*SUD* 157)

Indeed, in *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard's Victor Eremita virtually equates Shakespeare with Holy Writ in his capacity to imbue existence with the vitality sadly absent from the modern world:

> Let others complain that the times are evil. I complain that they are wretched, for they are without passion. People's thoughts are as thin and fragile as lace, and they themselves as pitiable as lace-making girls. The thoughts of their hearts are too wretched to be sinful. It is perhaps possible to regard it as sin for a worm to nourish such thoughts, but not for a human being, who is created in the image of God. Their desires are staid and dull, their passions drowsy. . . . Fie on them! That is why my soul always turns back to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. There one still feels that those who speak are human beings; there they hate, there they love, there they murder the enemy, curse his descendants through all generations—there they sin. (*E/O* 1, 27–28)

It is no wonder that Kierkegaard thinks of Richard III and Macbeth as the telling figures in the Shakespeare canon, for their sins rise to a level of grandeur. It is as if Kierkegaard recalls a passage, not from Shakespeare or the Old Testament, but from the New Testament, which, for him, distinguishes "an essential sin-consciousness" from the "triviality and silly aping of 'the others' that . . . can hardly be called sin, a life that is too spiritless to be called sin and is worthy only, as Scripture says, of being 'spewed out'" (*SUD* 101). Again, as I suggested earlier, he is thinking of St. John's Apocalypse: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3.15–16). The lukewarm spirit cannot be loyal to either spouse or king (*SLW* 175); nor, to Kierkegaard's way of thinking, is it possible for the true Christian to be lukewarm (*PC* 256). Kierkegaard admires decisiveness. In Shakespeare, as in St. John at Patmos, commitment, which is at the far pole from that bane of modernity,

reflection, is what matters. This is why Kierkegaard regarded lines that Shakespeare gave Macbeth a "psychologically masterful" characterization of the way in which the works of evil "gain strength and power only through sin" (*SUD* 106). Shakespeare does not leave Macbeth's villainy in doubt. And it is Hamlet's religious presentiments that drive him to divest himself of his plan for vengeance (*SLW* 454).

I think Kierkegaard's interest in *King Lear* is especially revealing with respect to his admiration of Shakespeare. From Kierkegaard's point of view, in *Lear*, Shakespeare offers "everything, everything, everything" about human suffering, and all of it with a magisterial, diagnostic clarity. And yet, despite this "everything," Shakespeare's vision is lacking. Why? Because there is chicanery here. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare's view of human suffering makes no moral sense. Edmund's rescission of his death warrant arrives too late; it does no more for Lear and Cordelia than it does for Edmund. Shakespeare lets the world lie as it is, with Kent willing to follow his master in a Roman death, and Edgar left to govern a world in which all of the women have either been murdered or committed suicide. It is a bleak world ("Howl, howl, howl"), but it is decidedly not one in which God decrees that Edmund murder Cordelia. Further, even Lear's cruelties toward her and Kent are his own, as the means of reconciliation are not. Similarly, Gloucester's suffering, however unjust, separates him from his household, but reunites him with his legitimate son. Like Lear, Gloucester is no Abraham on a mountaintop, ready to bear the knife to his beloved son's breast. Although he attempts to sacrifice himself, the attempt is comic. He only imagines himself at the top of a Dover cliff.

St. Paul may not have been a genius, but what he experienced, and what he said of his experience, was and would always be, in all circumstances, true. He did not proffer an unbiased perspective on the world, to be considered and evaluated even-handedly, among a legion of alternative points of view. God spoke through him; Paul listened and obeyed, and in those moments of obedience, he existed apart from society, exceeding the boundaries of human law. If this analysis is correct, then Nahum Tate's revision of Shakespeare's *Lear* is, from Kierkegaard's point of view, right on target. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare's view of human suffering makes no moral sense. Cordelia does not deserve what happens to her. By setting the action of the play in pre-Christian England, Shakespeare is saying, with all of his "negative capability" in play, not that "th' gods . . . kill us for their sport," but that the world would not change its appearance if that were the case. Christianizers of *Lear* point to Edmund's repentance just before death, but this pointless resolution demonstrates the very Kierkegaardian point, which aims in the opposite direction. With Shakespeare, it is as if, like the professional magician, the poet, has purchased a device, which, in turn, fabricates an illusion. So it is by a secret that the poet is able to tell secrets. The mere poet "casts out devils only by the power of the devil,"

and for this reason cannot be compared with prophets and apostles. As we read in *On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle* (1847), Kierkegaard vigorously distinguishes between Shakespeare and St. Paul. His aim is not to deny that St. Paul could be eloquent, but only that the matter of eloquence is beside the point. It is a mistake to compare St. Paul with the likes of Shakespeare, because, when we do so, we introduce extraneous stylistic standards of comparison. St. Paul was a tentmaker, but we do not praise his accomplishments as an upholsterer on the grounds that he was a saint:

> As a genius St. Paul cannot be compared with either Plato or Shakespeare, as a coiner of beautiful similes he comes pretty low down in the scale, as a stylist his name is quite obscure—and as an upholsterer: well, I frankly admit I have no idea how to place him. (*DBGA* 104–5)

Kierkegaard's point is that the comparison is silly. We can only make a serious comparison when we recognize the juxtaposition as a joke:

> As an Apostle St Paul has no connexion whatsoever with Plato or Shakespeare, with stylists or upholsterers, and none of them (Plato no more than Shakespeare or Harrison, the upholsterer) can possibly be compared with him. (105)

The genius is bound to "*the sphere of immanence*," while the apostle belongs to "*the sphere of transcendence*" (105). With genius, even with one who is ahead of his time, there is never a serious problem—no paradox. The genius is born. If born out of his time, he may not fit in, and may even seem like a prophet. But history overtakes the genius, and society assimilates the work to which the genius was born, and to which he gives birth.

But here is the secret that either Shakespeare did not know or refused to share: "It is otherwise with an Apostle" (*DBGA* 107). As the designation indicates, the "Apostle is not born; an Apostle is a man called and appointed by God, receiving a mission from him." The genius might develop, nurture his talent; and that talent might have a life-altering sense of self. This is not so with an Apostle:

> Apostolic calling is a paradoxical factor, which from first to last in his life stands paradoxically outside his personal identity with himself as the definite person he is. A man may perhaps have reached years of discretion long ago, when suddenly he is called to be an Apostle. As a result of this call he does not become more intelligent, does not receive more imagination, a greater acuteness of mind and so on; on the contrary, he remains himself and by that paradoxical fact he is sent on a particular mission by God. (107–8)

The point here is that the ornaments of language—and the contingencies of historical context—play no part in the apostle's life. He does not develop a sense of God's will; it is given and obeyed, all in the same moment. In this way, the apostle is unlike the genius, who is not only born with inward capabilities different from those of others, but who is also able to develop those capabilities throughout a lifetime.

For Kierkegaard, this is an all-important distinction. The genius—and Shakespeare was surely one—expresses himself on the "aesthetic" level, and must therefore be judged "purely aesthetically" (*DBGA* 108). Critics might argue about the particulars of that expression, its eloquence, its cleverness, its style. But the apostle speaks with "divine authority" (109), and cannot therefore demand a hearing on aesthetic grounds:

> St. Paul must not appeal to his cleverness, for in that case he is a fool; he must not enter into a purely aesthetic or philosophical discussion of the content of the doctrine, for in that case he is side-tracked. No, he must appeal to his divine authority and, while willing to lay down his life and everything, by that very means *prevent* any aesthetic impertinence and any direct philosophical approach to the form and content of the doctrine. (109)

It follows from this comparison that Shakespeare is no more responsible for the adulation heaped on him than he is for his blindness to "*horror religiosus*." The problem with modern life is that it leaves no place for this distinction. Because of the prevailing skepticism in society, aesthetic and authoritative utterances are often judged by the same criteria. If a genius said it, then God said it. The error of such skepticism is that it effectively reduces the divine to aesthetic form. Just as Lear's suffering is different in quality from Agamemnon's noble agony, so Shakespeare's tragic vision includes "everything, everything, everything" that is in the "immanent" aesthetic and ethical domains. But Shakespeare's "everything," while assimilable by society, includes "everything" except the "transcendent."

In *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, Walter Kaufmann sees Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche as the two major progenitors of "existentialism." Nietzsche was Kierkegaard's junior by about thirty years, and, like Kierkegaard, he struggled against the overwhelming influence in the period of Kant and Hegel. In 1888, a friend drew Nietzsche's attention to Kierkegaard as "one of the most profound psychologists of all time" (*WP* 52n), but although Nietzsche expressed interest in "the psychological problem of Kierkegaard," according to Kaufmann, "he never got around to reading" him. In addition to their shared interest in psychology, both thinkers were disenchanted with what passed for "Christianity" in their time. On the other hand, the two philosophers were poles apart in the style of their resistance to the established ecclesiastical order. Kaufmann insists

that Nietzsche was the greater of the two minds, presumably because he thinks of philosophy as an instrument of human liberation, and sees Kierkegaard as more authoritarian than Luther or Calvin, and exponentially more so than Nietzsche. For Kaufmann, all that mattered to the Danish philosopher of "existence" was obedience to the will of God. It was his authoritarianism that drove Kierkegaard to view the clergy of his time as too passive, too bland, too egalitarian. Kierkegaard's idea of spiritual authenticity left no room for the level of social and political concern that was emerging, especially among young Hegelians, as the dominant strain of modern thought, whether religious or secular. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche dramatized their literary talents, which they in turn completely submerged in the service of their philosophical projects. But I can think of no one who would characterize Nietzsche as "sanctimonious" (Kaufmann 183), a term that Kaufmann applies (perhaps uncharitably) to Kierkegaard. While Kierkegaard claimed to know "what Christianity is" (184), Nietzsche wryly observed that the last Christian died on Golgotha. Both writers represented their thinking as oracular perceptions unique in their time, as if it were akin to holy writ; and, significantly, both advanced their perceptions as extensions of, and perhaps even advancements upon, the insights found in Shakespeare. For instance, Kaufmann points out that, in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's self-centeredness is at the core of his philosophy of "existence," which finds its most typical expression in these lines—"worth more than all the moral systems which have no inkling of the terrors of existence"—from Shakespeare's *Richard III*:

> I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
> To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—(1.1.16–23)

We see here, too, that Nietzsche shared Kierkegaard's fascination with Shakespeare's portraiture of historical figures. This was by no means his exclusive interest. Early in his career, Nietzsche considered Hamlet, not as a historical figure in the same sense as Richard III, but as *the* Shakespearean tragic hero, *par excellence*. When he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), a work that one critic has called "practically the hinge between Romanticism and everything that is post-Romantic" (Staten 187), Nietzsche idolized Richard Wagner, to whom he dedicated the work. It may be worth noting that the first edition of that work bore the title *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. Nietzsche later relegated this programmatic flourish to a second title page, placing it after his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," a

forward in which he claims that the youthful work, for all its faults, was a noble attempt to come to terms, for the first time, with "science" as a "problem." And while conceding that, at the time, he lacked the courage to reach beyond the vocabulary of Kant and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche also acknowledges that he was mistaken to think of German music, the compositions of Richard Wagner in particular, as a resurgence of Greek culture, for, in its unbridled Romanticism, it was quite the opposite. By 1886, when *Beyond Good and Evil* was published and the two editions of *The Birth of Tragedy* brought together with both title pages, Nietzsche was writing, publishing parts of, and looking forward to the world-historical appearance in its entirety, of his *magnum opus*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1891).

Returning to *The Birth of Tragedy*, in this work, at the outset of his creative career, Nietzsche sought to explain the source, the origin, the wellspring as it were, of this, the apex, of human development, namely, "the spirit of music," which, he argued, was the true source of Greek tragedy. Central to the form of Greek tragedy, the Chorus captured the expression of the organic wholeness of Greek culture in a "Dionysian ecstasy." Embodying "the eternal lust and delight of existence" (*BT* 80), this essentially religious phenomenon conjoined all segments of the community in a joyful frenzy of being alive. This dramatic form encompassed and surpassed what even the greatest of Greek poets could put into words:

> The structure of the scenes and the vivid images reveal a deeper wisdom than the poet himself can put into words and concepts; the same thing can be seen in Shakespeare, whose Hamlet, for example, similarly speaks more superficially than he acts, so that the aforementioned lesson of *Hamlet* cannot be drawn from the words of the play, but from intense contemplation of, and reflection on, the whole. (*BT* 81)

With *Hamlet*, Shakespeare achieved the transcendent spirit akin to that of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*; and in so doing, like Wagner, he joined the greatest of the Greek dramatists, tapping into the very source of music. Similarly, and alone among modern tragedians, Shakespeare captured "the spirit of music," which is the stuff of myth.

So at last, writes Nietzsche, Western culture had produced Richard Wagner, an artist who, like the Greek dramatists, had overcome the stultifying effects of his society's dying way of life. Wagner brought to the stage, not the enervation of a decadent Christianity, but the powerful, nonlinguistic, Teutonic roots of German myth. He accomplished what the Greek playwright had achieved to perfection, fusing religion and theatre, and by that means achieving the "highest spiritualization and idealization of myth" (*BT* 81), as if he were "a creative musician." It looks as if Nietzsche is close to asserting something like the Pateresque view that "*all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music*" (Pater 158), that is, toward an improved mode, in which the creator, the poet, for instance, transcends

the conceptual limits of "the word-poet," to achieve the superior mode of "Dionysian ecstasy."[3]

In support of his argument, Nietzsche claims that the underlying function of Greek myth is nothing less than to answer the ultimate question, posed by King Midas: What is best for man? The answer is revealed to him by Silenus, the wood-god and friend of Dionysius; and that answer hints at the ultimate balance of power between two opposing gods, Apollo and Dionysus, between the godlike individuality of absolute control, and its opposite, the sylvan abandonment of all restraints on individual impulse. The former produces mastery and art, the latter the undoing of all restraint and self-control. Under pressure, Silenus says:

> "Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you *not* to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon." (BT 23)

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, this is the juncture at which Shakespeare enters the conversation. Perhaps surprisingly, Nietzsche sees Hamlet as a "Dionysian man," and so it follows that Shakespeare wrote under the sway of the "spirit of music." Since the Greeks, only a rare few, Goethe, Beethoven, and Shakespeare, were endowed with a truly "Dionysian" spirit (*WP* 541). Being possessed with that spirit, Shakespeare embodied all "the greatest multiplicity of drives" (*WP* 507). We may recall that in Kierkegaard Abraham transcended the limits of ethical conduct by conforming himself wholly to the will of God. In Nietzsche, the "Dionysian man" overcomes the limits of the merely human by transgressing the spurious boundary between good and evil. The terrifying effects of "true tragedy" emanate from this horrific, even if only fleeting, transgression, which opens the way for a glimpse of the cosmos as it really is: an unending conjunction of creation and destruction.

Nietzsche argues that, regrettably, modern scholarship employs tools of inquiry and inference that are completely inadequate to the task of reconstructing Shakespeare's cultural perspective; plying traditional scholarly skills, traditional academics invoke evidence and logic, when the only proper equipment is the imagination. In truth, with their relentless, stultifying methodology, Hegelians in particular render historical understanding impossible. Because of them, the academic world is possessed of as narrow a view of history as it is of music. Here, there is a noticeable edge to Nietzsche's remarks on one of the most visible of Hegel's many followers, Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805–1871). Nietzsche is responding, I think, to this well-regarded scholar's two-volume study of Shakespeare, which, for Nietzsche, was a perfect example of the lifeless, scientific, logical, system of literary and historical study entrenched in the universities. Moreover,

Gervinus, a professor of history and literature at Göttingen, was active for years in the sort of liberal politics that Nietzsche could not stand. Specifically, Gervinus was associated with the movement of "Young Germans" like David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach, all Hegelians, who aligned themselves against the rising tide of German Romanticism. In his essay on "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer," Nietzsche shows a particular disdain for Gervinus:

> All this is certainly new and striking, even if it does not strike us very pleasantly; and, as surely as it is new, just as surely it will never grow old, for it was never young: it came into the world already old. What ideas the new-style blessed come across in their aesthetic Heaven! And why have they not forgotten at any rate some of them, especially when they are as unaesthetic and earthly-ephemeral and bear the stamp of stupidity as visibly as, for example, some of the opinions of Gervinus! (*UM* 20)

Comparing "the modest greatness" of Strauss with the "immodest minimality" of Gervinus, Nietzsche proceeds to ridicule the more traditional scholar's aesthetic judgment.[4]

By the time Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, Gervinus had achieved quite a reputation, writing on Handel and Shakespeare as well as on history. It would not be wrong to say that the triads, Gervinus–Handel–Shakespeare and Nietzsche–Wagner–Shakespeare, might easily have been associated in a contemporary German reader's mind. Nietzsche's theory of tragic drama was predicated, after all, on the "spirit of music," and Nietzsche was convinced that Gervinus was misinformed in both historical categories, being as he was "unconscious [to] musical relationships" (*BT* 100), such as those splendidly evident in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (and just as splendidly elucidated in *The Birth of Tragedy*).

Gervinus's massive study of Shakespeare appeared in 1849–50, about a decade before *The Birth of Tragedy*. In his Preface to that work, Gervinus praises the "archeological research and investigation" behind the British success in establishing the text of Shakespeare. Now it is up to the Germans to illuminate the moral significance of these magnificent works, for in fact Shakespeare's plays were properly understood as more the product of a "moralist, a thinker, a master of human nature, and a poet of all places and of all time, than as those of an English writer of a certain epoch" (Gervinus 1, 5). From Nietzsche's point of view, Gervinus adds insult to injury, insisting that, by his "splendid moral grandeur," Shakespeare had become a German poet (1, 15). Indeed, Gervinus writes, Shakespeare's "works have been often called a secular Bible" (1, 2). Generously referring to a host of British, American, French, and German scholars, Gervinus insists that it was George Lessing who, for the first time, truly appreciated "the innermost nature" of a play like *Romeo and Juliet* (1, 18); and it was Goethe's

Wilhelm Meister (1821–29) that first showed the way to a proper analysis of an individual play, namely, *Hamlet*. Implicitly, these great scholars and critics had prepared the way for a definitive extension, in this study, of Goethe's method to every play in the Shakespeare canon.

It is not the authoritative claim of Gervinus, but the historical reductionism of his method, that annoys Nietzsche. For instance, when he turns to *Hamlet*, Gervinus proposes that the play was meant as the "living counterpart" of the murder of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, and subsequent marriage of Mary Stuart to the Fourth Earl of Bothwell (Gervinus 2, 197). Gervinus insists that this firm setting of the play in the moral climate of specific historical events provided the "readiest key to the idea of the entire work" (2, 109). It was, quite literally, "a book with seven seals, as Goethe had shown." According to Nietzsche's lights, Gervinus's historical method imposes a dual disservice to Shakespeare's work: Hamlet is "unlawfully supplanted" (2, 112), as well as burdened with "pious scruples":

> The truth-loving moral hero stands in the midst of those who wander on none but crooked ways in hypocrisy, dissimulation, and untruths; his sensible, conscientious, circumspect nature is opposed in strong contrast to the unprincipled conduct of all the others. (2, 123)

To the young author of *The Birth of Tragedy*, no perspective on Hamlet could be more askew of the mark. At pains to refute Gervinus's remarks affirming Hamlet's supposed moral rectitude, Nietzsche imputes to them nothing but "that cheap wisdom about Jack the Dreamer who does not get around to acting because he reflects too much" (*BT* 40). More than just false, this "cheap wisdom" is canonized claptrap. The truth is that Hamlet is the very opposite of the benign, moral creature described by Gervinus. Hamlet is more like Nietzsche's "Dionysiac man," in that he has "gazed into the true essence of things." Gervinus does not appreciate how knowledge produces disdain for action, something like a Schopenhauerian lethargy. It is silly and shameful to think that anyone can alter the dreadful course of human destiny. Hamlet does not reflect too much because he is so moral; he knows, and for that reason withholds himself from meaningless intervention in the unfolding of events: "No, it is not reflection, it is true knowledge, insight into the terrible truth, which outweighs every motive for action, both in the case of Hamlet and in that of Dionysiac man" (*BT* 40).

Hamlet grasps the horrible truth of the wood-god, Silenus, who understands the pointlessness of existence, of Ophelia's death and, worse, of the pointlessness of his own—and everyone's—life. In Gervinus's simple-minded system, it is impossible to think of Hamlet's "oaths to Ophelia . . . as incipient deception" (Gervinus 2, 151). Because his Hamlet is unquestionably moral, then, of course, he must love Ophelia. For Gervinus, then, Shakespeare's dramatic conflict concerns only the fact that Hamlet is, in some very limited way, morally flawed. And since Shakespeare is a paladin

of moral virtue, he rightly punishes Hamlet for his one, minor, moral failing. Shakespeare puts right what Hamlet puts wrong: "This is it then, that the conscientiousness, foresight, and consideration, which restrain Hamlet from the murder, from the just punishment of a single man, bury at last the guilty and the guiltless in one common ruin" (2, 154). Because Hamlet lacked the moral "courage to shed necessary blood," in the words of the Prince near the close of *Romeo and Juliet*, "All are punished" in what Nietzsche sees as the "cheap wisdom " of Georg Gervinus, in his "assiduous search for 'poetic justice'" (*BT* 106).

Nietzsche aims his spirited rejoinder at the more traditional thinker's assumption that Shakespeare's "fundamental opinion concerning the things of life" is moral in nature (Gervinus 2, 617). Although Shakespeare does not exactly preach, he understands that "morality is consequently utterly inseparable from true poetry" (2, 590):

> Shakespeare's poetry is moral, his poetic impulse therefore is inseparably interwoven with his ethic feelings, because he took life as a whole and was himself a whole man, in whom the moral, aesthetic, and intellectual qualities were separated by no speculative analysis; and his art is therefore so great, because out of this whole, he absorbed *himself* more of the moral element of life, than any other has done, not even excepting the ancients. (2, 591)

From Nietzsche's point of view, moral fervor drives Gervinus to miss the point of *Hamlet* entirely. His faulty moral assumptions compel Gervinus to believe that he can construct "a complete system of morals" on what he wrongly perceives to be—"indisputably"—Shakespeare's "consciousness" (2, 618). The catalogue of virtues that Gervinus imputes to Shakespeare is, for Nietzsche, nothing but "cheap wisdom," for it discovers in Shakespeare the very repository of all that is admirable in human conduct: love of humanity (2, 619), a Christian moral system (2, 620), a sense of retributive justice (Hamlet pays for his moral failing: 2, 621), the "great truth" of moderation (2, 627), the tragic consequences of "overgrowing passion." This German Shakespeare propounds the wisdom of Aristotle's *Ethics*; Hamlet's conscientiousness was not a crime, but a moral fault, a failure to find that mean between "defect" and "excess" (2, 632).

It is easy to see how the impatient young Schopenhauerian Nietzsche would find serious fault with the pieties of Gervinus's *Shakespeare Commentaries*, especially in its reduction of *Hamlet* to historical reiteration of Aristotelian platitudes. But as the years passed, Nietzsche's attitude toward *Hamlet* changed. How could the creator of *Zarathustra* have failed to recognize Hamlet's lassitude for what it truly was: an "all-too-human" "resignation," to be overcome? In *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* (1888),[5] Nietzsche writes that, by 1876, he had separated himself from Wagner, on the grounds that the great musician "had condescended step by step to everything"

(*NCW* 676) that he hated, especially Christianity. Nietzsche was talking, of course, about the religiosity of Wagner's *Parsifal*; and in the same context, he registers a change in attitude toward Hamlet. The Prince of Denmark is no longer a "Dionysian man," but one of those "impudent spirits who would like to conceal and deny that at bottom they are broken, incurable hearts" (*NCW* 680). Such a Hamlet would scarcely meet the requirements of Nietzschean "overmen," who "live dangerously," and "wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences" (*GS* 228). Nietzsche goes on to explain that he had misunderstood "the philosophical pessimism of the nineteenth century as a symptom of a higher force of thought" (271), which he linked with Wagner and Schopenhauer: "You see what I misjudged, you also see what I *gave* to Wagner and Schopenhauer—myself"—and, we might add, Hamlet as well.

Although Nietzsche places his break from Wagner and Schopenhauer in 1876, the first published sign of Nietzsche's change in attitude toward Hamlet appeared six years later, a decade after *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche's most concentrated attempt to formulate an aesthetic theory. Walter Kaufmann, translator of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, considered "joyful" and "cheerful" as the modifier of "science." Mindful of the advent of the "Gay Liberation" movement, he was also aware of the first English translation of the work as *The Joyful Wisdom*. This translation of *Wissenschaft* omitted what Kaufmann took to be Nietzsche's clear intention to designate the subject under consideration as "science," not wisdom; and further, Kaufmann was sure that Nietzsche wanted to impart the historical significance of "*gai saber*: the art of poetry" (*GS* 6). The work is, Kaufmann insists, a treatise on aesthetics. Hence Nietzsche, an admirer of Emerson, follows the New Englander, who referred to himself as "'a professor of the Joyous Science'" (8), which he linked to Zoroaster (Zarathustra). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche not only articulates his idea of "the eternal recurrence of the same" for the first time, but he spells out, also for the first time, why Shakespeare is so important to the human race, that is, why he is the prototype *par excellence*, of himself. He writes:

> *In praise of Shakespeare*.—I could not say anything more beautiful in praise of Shakespeare *as a human being* than this: he believed in Brutus and did not cast one speck of suspicion upon this type of virtue. (*GS* 150)

This is a serious departure from the adulation of Hamlet expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Brutus is much more clearly familiar as a historical figure than Hamlet; and Nietzsche, the philologist, surely knew that, along with Judas, Brutus was firmly ensconced in the deepest circle of Dante's Hell. We might say that Nietzsche's Shakespeare admires Brutus because he transcends the conventional distinction between good and evil:

> It was to him that he devoted his best tragedy—it is still called by the wrong name—to him and to the most awesome quintessence of a lofty morality. Independence of soul!—that is at stake here. No sacrifice can be too great for that: one must be capable of sacrificing one's dearest friend for it, even if he should also be the most glorious human being, an ornament of the world, a genius without peer—if one loves freedom as the freedom of great souls and he threatens this kind of freedom. That is what Shakespeare must have felt. The height at which he places Caesar is the finest honor that he could bestow on Brutus: that is how he raises beyond measure Brutus's inner problem as well as the spiritual strength that was able to cut *this knot*.

Forget Hamlet as the prototype of Dionysiac man. *Julius Caesar* is Shakespeare's "best tragedy," because it sets forward the opposite of the inane pieties of Gervinus, affirming in their place "the most awesome quintessence of a lofty morality," which is answerable to nothing outside the will of Brutus. He is the true hero of Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, the title of which should bear his name. For Brutus is Shakespeare's *Übermensch*, a proto-Nietzschean hero, who courageously inscribes his own law on tablets of his own making. Now Nietzsche asks whether perhaps some dark experience in Shakespeare's "own soul" is the real subject of the "sign" set forward in *Julius Caesar*. For the agony here exceeds Hamlet's: "And perhaps Shakespeare knew both from first hand experience. Perhaps he, too, had his gloomy hour and his evil angel, like Brutus" (151). Here is the "lofty" moral point, which goes beyond good and evil, and which, unlike the "moment" that Abraham experienced on Kierkegaard's Mount Moriah, has nothing to do with the Deity.

Nietzsche has in mind, I think, the great monologue that Brutus delivers just before the conspirators arrive. This solitary reflection is as important to Nietzsche as Abraham's silence toward Sarah is to Kierkegaard. For Shakespeare's "lofty morality" is all within the protagonist's mind. Abraham has his God; Brutus has only himself. He has sent Lucius to fetch a candle, and the conspirators have yet to arrive. In fact, they do not matter in Nietzsche's moral scheme of things. Just as Abraham loved Isaac, Brutus loves Caesar. Just as Abraham would, had the Deity not intervened, sacrifice his beloved son, Brutus does, in fact, sacrifice Caesar. What matters for Nietzsche is that Caesar is the tragic hero's "dearest friend," as well as "the most glorious human being, an ornament of the world, a genius without peer." Brutus is making a great personal sacrifice here, and he does so, not because God demands it, nor even because Roman law and human instinct affirm the action to be prudent. What makes Brutus a tragic hero is that he acts in defiance even of his own experience: "I know no personal cause to spurn at him" (2.1.11). Noble Caesar has done nothing to deserve opprobrium, much less execution. In his solitude, Brutus can ponder one "general" as distinct from "personal cause" or reason or consideration, and

that is only a possibility: Caesar "would be crown'd." But even this possibility is based on a narrative that is not his, but Casca's, since Brutus was not present when Caesar declined Antony's offer of the crown—not once, but three times. Besides which the crown "'twas not a crown neither," but "'twas one of those coronets" made of laurel, placed on the heads of triumphant competitors.

Cassius thinks that Brutus "may be wrought," but Nietzsche's Shakespeare makes clear that Cassius is wrong about the noble Roman's pliability, as he unwittingly recognizes when he speaks the truth "That noble minds keep ever with their likes" (1.2.311). Cassius thinks that he will influence Brutus with fabricated notes expressing the outrage of Roman citizens, but Brutus makes up his mind before Lucius brings those "exhalations whizzing in the air" (2.1.44) to his attention. Nietzsche's Brutus is a tragic hero precisely because he alone shapes his destiny, and the destiny of Rome, and so, as far as he is concerned, of the whole world, solely from within. Brutus is not "wrought" by Cassius. Rather, he shapes the event of Caesar's death, working not only on, but against Cassius, whose instruction to Brutus is unequivocal: "Do not consent / That Antony speak in his funeral" (3.1.232–33). By acting contrary to the explicit direction of Cassius, Brutus allows Antony to "Cry 'Havoc!" and so "let slip the dogs of war" (273). This is not the stuff of Schopenhauerian resignation, but of Nietzschean "will to power." In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche praises, not pessimistic withdrawal from, but rather courageous attack upon, the world. Builders of the new "more virile, warlike age . . . will restore honor to courage above all," and that courage is "to *live dangerously*": "Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves!" (*GS* 228).

So Brutus is not pliant material "wrought" by the political artisan, Cassius, who lays out a rational scheme to eliminate Antony along with Caesar. His would be the wise course of action, but not the "*courageous*" one. "Let's be sacrificers," says Brutus, "but not butchers" (166). Here, we must return to the moment when Brutus decides to preserve freedom, along with Caesar's nobility, for that is the moment when the conspirators, including Cassius, become incidental players in the war to guarantee "independence of soul." If Brutus were to fail to negate the possibility that Caesar might, by gaining power, become other than he is, then he would be responsible for putting "a sting in him / That at his will he may do danger with" (16–17). This is the nettlesome "knot" that Brutus must untie:

> . . . to speak truth of Caesar,
> I have not known when his affections sway'd
> More than his reason. (19–21)

The truth is that Brutus has no basis in experience to believe that Caesar would behave in any way other than he has. And yet Brutus determines to

act, not on the basis of experience, but on the basis of a possibility: Caesar might become other than he is:

> So Caesar may;
> Then lest he may, prevent. . . .
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
> Which, hatch'd, would as his kind grow mischievous,
> And kill him in the shell. (27–34)

The preemptive strike against Caesar is the only way to assure that the great man will not change. If there is pessimism here, it is in the comparison between species. Humans, like serpents, naturally behave in a certain way. Hence, "lest" this particular member of the species "may, prevent."

Within himself, Brutus overcomes reason, Roman law, and himself. He acknowledges that Caesar, the most noble of human beings, has done nothing to deserve opprobrium, much less assassination. But "independence of soul"—the ultimate assertion of Brutus's individual will—trumps all other values. Kierkegaard characterized the "moment" in which Abraham stood outside of human society, alone with God. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche envisions a scene of similar isolation from the ordinary world:

> *The greatest weight*.—What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!" (*GS* 273)

Nietzsche's speaker propounds this question in the entry preceding his introduction of Zarathustra: "*Incipit tragoedia*" (274). For Nietzsche, the "moment" which produces "the greatest stress" or "weight" is that of "loneliest loneliness," when the man who overcomes the "all-too-human" propensity to wish that life were otherwise than it is, lives "*courageously*," separating himself from:

> undermen, dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils [as] the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignty of the individual: the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods. (192)

Brutus is just such a man, one who grants to himself a godlike "relation to laws, customs, and neighbors." The point is that when Brutus decides to act, he does so all by himself, in defiance of law, logic, and experience, and in so doing, he leaves all "undermen" behind, becoming a prototype of the "overman" (191). He lives "*courageously*"; he lets "slip the dogs of war" without scruple, because "independence of soul" requires the sacrifice of family, friends, and even Rome.

Nietzsche understands that, since Shakespeare becomes the accomplice of Brutus and the conspirators in a despicable, public act of treachery, his remarks might seem to advance a political motif. Since such an interpretation would degrade Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, Nietzsche is swift to suggest an alternative, poetic interpretation: "Or was political freedom only a symbol for something inexpressible?" (*GS* 151). As we have seen, for Nietzsche, the great poet, like the great musical composer, transcends the mundane limits of the mere "word-poet." So we must, finally, compare Brutus with Hamlet:

> There are free, impudent spirits who would like to conceal and deny that at bottom they are broken, incurable hearts—the case of Hamlet: and then even foolishness can be the mask for an unblessed all-too-certain certainty. (*NCW* 680)

And we must recall that, for the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*, it was certainty—absolute knowledge—that motivated Hamlet toward the defining characteristic of his being and behavior: Schopenhauerian "lethargy." In sharp contrast, Brutus is anything but certain. He cannot possibly know what Caesar will do in the future, but he overcomes his "all-too-human" dependence on knowledge and reason, placing all values on his "will" to affirm, as if for all time, "independence of soul." In a world of infinite possibilities, it does not matter if such an imagined "eternal recurrence of the same" is spatial or temporal.[6]

Just as Nietzsche first mentions "the eternal recurrence of the same" in *The Gay Science*, so he also first introduces himself as the creator of Zarathustra. Schopenhauer understood the importance of aesthetic expression, but he was not himself, in the sense that properly applies to Shakespeare and Nietzsche, a poet. In *Ecce Homo* (1888), Nietzsche discusses creative greatness. "Germans," he writes, "are *incapable* of any concept of greatness: Schumann is proof of this" (*EH* 91). Pondering this thought of the limitations of the German *cogniscenti*, Nietzsche thinks of Shakespeare's great tragedy, just as he does of his own *Zarathustra*:

> Whenever I glance through my *Zarathustra*, I walk around the room for half an hour, sobbing uncontrollably.—When I look for the highest formula for Shakespeare, the only thing I can find is the fact that he conceived the type of Caesar. You cannot guess at this sort of

> thing,—either you are it or you are not. Great poets create only from their own reality—to the point where they cannot stand their work any more afterwards. (*EH* 91)

The truth is—and Shakespeare's Brutus proves this—that, in order to peer into the abyss in this way, a writer must be a philosopher as well as a poet. The reason this is so is simple: "We are all *afraid* of the truth" (92). As we learned in *The Birth of Tragedy*, even the elemental aspects of Shakespeare escape the likes of Georg Gervinus. Here we should recall that Gervinus noted similarities between William Shakespeare and Francis Bacon. Nietzsche concedes, then, that the well-trained academic recognized certain superficial similarities between Shakespeare and Bacon. But from Nietzsche's point of view, Gervinus failed to recognize an even more important fact, which Nietzsche is prepared, now, to confess, namely, a truth only hinted at in *The Birth of Tragedy:*

> And just to confess, I have an instinctive certainty that Lord Bacon was the author, the self-torturer of animals, who is behind the uncanniest type of literature: what do *I* care about the pathetic drivel of American idiots and asses? But the strength for the most powerful reality of vision is not just compatible with the most powerful strength for action, for monstrosities of actions, for crimes—*it even presupposes it*. (*EH* 92)

The truth is, then, that Shakespeare and the "first realist in every great sense of the term" approximate the identical prototype of Nietzsche, because "Shakespeare" is the sobriquet of Francis Bacon. As Nietzsche wrote in his *Nachlass*, Bacon was, along with Aristotle, Descartes, and Comte, one of the four "great methodologists" in the history of science, which Comte considered nothing less than "virtually philosophy itself" (*WP* 261). From Nietzsche's point of view, science suffered under different challenges during the nineteenth century than were faced by Bacon: "All the methods, all the presuppositions of our contemporary science were for millennia regarded with the profoundest contempt." They were enemies of God. But by the mid-nineteenth century, science had risen, as Nietzsche proclaimed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, high enough to become a problem. Bacon overcame the limits of science by writing great poetry. Nietzsche overcomes his predecessor by assuming a prophetic voice in *Zarathustra*.

In his admiration of Bacon/Shakespeare, Nietzsche goes even further in *Twilight of the Idols*, by testing "Idols" that survived the scientific revolution, offering in the process an improvement on Bacon's "Four Idols of the Mind." Here, in his "Four Great Errors," Nietzsche addresses a world in which Bacon's attack on the "Four Idols of the Mind" has succeeded, perhaps too well: "It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science" (*WP* 261). Shakespeare was not a "methodologist," so, by writing great poetry,

Bacon overcame the limits of his inductive project. In creating such characters as Hamlet and Brutus, Shakespeare–Bacon delved into the depths of his own soul. This sort of experience does not answer to the demands of knowledge laid out in Bacon's *De Instauratio Magna*. In Book I of *Novum Organum* (The New Instrument), Bacon is concerned only with the proper scientific methodology. *Novum Organum* is part of *De Instauratio Magna* (The Great Restoration, or Renewal), a seven-part project to revamp all of the sciences. Bacon would call up "notions and axioms by true *Induction*" as the "sovereign remedy for restraining the *Idols* and driving them off" (*NO* 79). His attack on the "false notions," then, is not only to free up empiricism, but the end is also the means of doing so: "For the doctrine of *Idols* stands in a similar relationship to the *Interpretation of Nature*, as the doctrine of Sophistical Refutation does to ordinary dialectic" (79). Hence, Bacon's attack on the four "Idols of the Mind" is part of a programmatic effort to change the way knowledge is acquired and promulgated in the European citadels of learning.

So the function of the "new instrument," then, is simply to "forewarn" and "arm" proponents of science, as Bacon would have it developed. Hence, the "*Idols of the Tribe*," which Bacon considers first are "rooted in human nature itself." The mind functions in such a way, regardless of where one was born or what customs one follows; certain erroneous impressions naturally occur. From this fact the "false notion" emerges that "man is the measure of all things." But the fact is that man's organs of reception are scaled to human activities, not the cosmos. So men only imagine an order in nature, in the solar system, for instance, that accords with human activities; the universe is shaped in "*perfect circles*" (*NO* 83). We have something like the predecessor of Richard Rorty's view, in at least one perhaps uncharitable characterization, "that truth is what one can get away with saying" (Detmer 265), or as Bacon puts it, in "general acceptance" (*NO* 83). Here, David Detmer is referring to a passage in *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (to which we will be returning in the following chapter) in which Rorty elaborates on Sartre's assertion that, depending on historical development, possibly "fascism will be the truth of man." Rorty writes:

> This hard saying brings out what ties Dewey and Foucault, James and Nietzsche, together—the sense that there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions. (Rorty 1982, xlii)

Long before Nietzsche, Bacon recognized that "conventions," combined with the overvaluing of positive instances in experimentation, were linked by adamantine mental chains. Unfortunately for science, although "the negative instance" is more powerful than the positive, the positive carries

the day, just as, for instance, the more striking image is the one that captures one's attention. Humans hanker after causes, even though they might not be known, which leads them to focus on "final causes" (*NO* 87), which come from man, not nature. In this way, the most available object in nature is not accessible to our system of thought, deemed as it is "subordinate" in importance. Science becomes "*As-you-like-it*," and the mind quickly resorts to fantasy, supporting a too-rapid movement to abstraction, rather than to dissection. So these notions "originate from the unevenness of the substance of the human spirit, from its preconceptions, its narrowness, its restlessness, contaminated by the affections, the inadequacy of the senses, or mode of impression" (89).

Let us look, then, at Nietzsche's "Four Great Errors." First, the section is part of *Twilight of the Idols*, which is anything but a plea to further the cause of science, as it had developed from the Enlightenment. Compare, for instance, Nietzsche's "First Great Error" with Bacon's "*Idols of the Tribe*." In his reinscription of Bacon's first "Idol," Nietzsche addresses "*The error of confusing cause and effect*" (*TI* 176). Clearly, Nietzsche is not considering the matter of "cause and effect" in the way that Hume, one of Bacon's more influential philosophical descendants, thought of it. I think it is safe to say that, as a thinker, Hume was closer to Bacon than to Nietzsche. Indeed, in a certain way, Nietzsche's anodyne to the "The First Great Error" is at one with his overall aim in *Twilight of the Idols*, which is to test, as with a tuning fork, the "Idol" that the method of induction has left untouched. So Nietzsche considers "The First" to be the most dangerous of "The Four Great Errors," because it amounts to "the genuine destruction of all reason" (126). Unlike Bacon, Hume, and Kant, however, Nietzsche does not take aim at entrenched practices in the transmission of knowledge. The advancement of science is not at issue here. Nietzsche is talking about religion and morality; and the example that comes to his mind is not Sir Isaac Newton, but "the famous [Luigi] Cornaro," whose *Discoursi della vita sobria* had enjoyed great popularity since its publication in translation in the late sixteenth century, being translated and republished often. George Herbert's translation, *A Treatise of Temperance and Sobriety* (1634) went through four printings during the seventeenth century, and the work seemed only to gain in popularity. Much to Nietzsche's chagrin, "several thousand copies were still being printed in England every year" (*TI* 176). As far as Nietzsche was concerned, no book except the Bible had done greater harm.

Cornaro recommended a "meagre diet" as the key recipe for long life. Since most people enjoy eating, obviously, for Nietzsche, Cornaro was no Dionysiac. But it was not Cornaro's self-denial, with its implied accompanying piety, that annoyed Nietzsche. The real harm of his book came from Cornaro's confusion of cause with effect. Cornaro thought that his long life came from his diet, when precisely the opposite was the case. It was not self-denial, but physiology—that is, Cornaro's "slow metabolism and minimal level of consumption—that caused his meagre diet; he was not

free to eat *either* a little *or* a lot; his frugality was *not* 'freely willed': he got sick when he ate more" (*TI* 176). In the time that has elapsed since Cornaro wrote his misguided book, the world has changed. Modern scholars work at too fast a pace to survive on Cornaro's "regimen." Thus, Nietzsche lodges the "will" at the somatic level; what Cornaro and his pious followers think of as "virtue is really just the way some bodies function." The pernicious effect of this confusion between cause and effect comes about when they would foist their ascetic misperception as a behavioral norm on bodies, regardless of their physiological dispositions. By that act of intellectual legerdemain, a simple fact of individual physiology is transformed into a moral imperative. For the likes of Cornaro, it seems reasonable to say that, if you abstain from eating an ample diet, you will live a long and happy life. Nietzsche aims to replace Cornaro's faulty method with a more reasoned understanding of cause and effect: "My *restored* reason says: when a people is destroyed and becomes physiologically degenerate, this *leads* to vice and luxury" (177). When a young man is pale and wrinkled, friends say that some illness has struck him down. This is the unreason that has given religion a stranglehold on the human race: "I say: *the fact that* he became sick, *the fact that* he could not fight the illness off, this was already the effect of an impoverished life, a hereditary exhaustion." There is no point in looking for a moral explanation for what is built into a particular body. By irrationally confusing cause with effect, "*Cornarism.*—Church and morality" would turn one's physiology into a reason—that is, a justification—for punishment.

Emanating from the particular life of an individual, who is reared in a certain way by certain people in a certain country, and so on, the "*Idols of the Cave*" also undermine Bacon's scientific project. Specialization comes into play here: the alchemists, William Gilbert, for instance. Gilbert was a little like "the pack of chemists," who "founded a fantastic philosophy on a few furnace experiments" (*NO* 89): "After expending vast intellectual labour on the loadstone," Gilbert "immediately fabricated a philosophy conforming to this his mastering passion" (89–91). If one has a particular interest, this should occasion a special skepticism, as that interest might skew the experimenter's judgment. Again, Bacon is concerned with the effect of an individual's desires on the scientific project. In science, skepticism encourages dispassionate observation. Similarly, just as Bacon pressed on with his scientific project, with the second of "The Four Great Errors," the "*Error of false causation*" (*TI* 177), Nietzsche moves on with the matter of morality. We say that acts are caused by an agent's "free" will, for if that were not so, we could hold no one responsible for any action: "*will as causal agent*" (178). But we no longer lend credence to such notions as "motive" or "subject," as if the term, "I," were self-explanatory. Such arrogance leads to the belief that "the error of thinking that the mind caused reality! And to make it the measure of reality! And to call it *God*."

Bacon's *Idols of the Market* derive from "words and names," and "are the greatest nuisances of the lot" (*NO* 93). Here, a method of careful definitions, in the manner of mathematicians, will lessen the damage of words that have no specific meaning, such as "element of fire," words which refer to things that do not exist in nature. Unless this restrained step is taken in the process, truthful argument is impossible. Here, perhaps, Bacon's third "*Idol*" is most like Nietzsche's third "Great Error, which is the error of "*imaginary causes*" (*TI* 179). In a dream, Nietzsche writes, we hear "the sound of cannon fire in the distance" and immediately supply an explanatory narrative. This is, of course, a normal and harmless functioning of the imagination. The problem is that, in fact, we do the same thing when we are awake. We try to explain our feelings, as if they had a cause; we naively think that, if we can explain the cause, we can control the effect. Unfortunately, our narrative method, whether right or wrong, becomes habitual. But it is based on an understandable, but nonetheless irrational, desire to "get rid of unpleasant thoughts" (179). That is, we have the comforting end of the narrative in mind all along, which is shaped by our "all-too-human" need. Morality and religion depend entirely on this function of "imaginary causes": sin, God, and the entire system of punishments for imaginary misdeeds.

Finally, Bacon's "*Idols of the Theatre*" emanate from philosophical books, which affect the mind as if they were written for the stage, and for that reason, they deserve to be understood in the same way. Just as there are different kinds of entertainment in the theatre, there are different kinds of "false philosophy," three kinds, in fact: sophistical, empirical, and superstitious. The best example of sophistical philosophy is Aristotle, who, because his mind was already made up, fashioned the world in categories, which he contrived before any experiments. It is important to Bacon that statements advanced by empirical philosophy can be false, when, unguided by "common notions" (*NO* 101) and based on too few experiments, they fly off to generalizations. Finally, superstitious philosophy, being an "admixture of theology," makes for "fantastic philosophy" as well as "heretical religion" (103).

Here we have, I think, Nietzsche's sharpest divergence from his philosophical predecessor, for his "Fourth Great Error" has nothing to do with science, and so, we might say, goes beyond any issues raised by his precursor, Bacon. Rather, it involves a return to the subject of morality, namely, to the "*Error of free will*" (*TI* 181). This error is not so much an "*Idol*," in the Baconian sense, as it is a subterfuge: "the shadiest trick theologians have up their sleeves for making humanity 'responsible' in their sense of the term, which is to say *dependent on them*" (181). The priestly class wants to "*assign guilt*," and no device better fits that aim than the concept of "free will." "Immoralists" like Nietzsche are their enemies, because they want to "cleanse" the world of guilt, which means getting rid of its progenitor, religion, in the process. "Christianity," Nietzsche writes, "is a hangman's

metaphysics" (182). In this connection between "free will" and liberation, even the great Immanuel Kant has to go, for he sponsored that "bit of non-sense" of "'intelligible freedom.'" Quite late in his career, then, Nietzsche still follows Schopenhauer. Humans are just part of a mindless unfolding of natural processes: "The fatality of human existence cannot be extricated from the fatality of everything that was and will be" (182). There is no purpose in nature that humans have not invented; individuals are "just a piece of fate," a tiny part of the cosmos. To judge a part is to judge the whole, which would require being outside the whole, "an immaculate perception," as Zarathustra would put it. Man needs to be redeemed from "The Fourth Great Error," and to advance that redemption, Nietzsche affirms, "we reject God, we reject the responsibility in God," we as humans reject what both mean as "*causa prima*." Where Bacon would turn to "second causes" to enable the study of natural phenomena, on the assumption that this will provide for "new mercies to the human family" (*NO* 47), Nietzsche aims to free the human family of guilt, so that it may "restore the *innocence* of becoming" (*TI* 182).

As we have seen, then, Nietzsche "overgoes" his predecessor, Bacon/Shakespeare, by supplanting the paladin of induction, just as the great philosopher of science had triumphed over Aristotle and scholasticism. Although that triumph was admirable, as a philosopher, Bacon refused to rise above his obsession with a "new instauration," which he thought he could accomplish by exposing the four "*Idols of the Mind*." With those idols swept away, he could demonstrate that God works in the world only "by second causes." From Nietzsche's point of view, this enthusiasm for "second causes" was a great mistake, for it was based on the unwarranted assumption that God worked in nature at all. The whole scheme of cause and effect, Fall and Redemption, had mercifully "gone to the devil." So, for Nietzsche, there can be no scientific project for "new mercies for the human family," no *Novum Organum*," no "New Atlantis." Until Bacon overcame the scientist within, he could not become the creator of Hamlet or Brutus, much less a prophet like Zarathustra. But the point is that, as in *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*, Bacon *did* overcome himself, becoming the creator of values. In so doing, Bacon/Shakespeare was one of the great pathfinders, who blazed a pathway for "Everyone and No-one" to Zarathustra's world-historical "revaluation of all values."

7 Pragmatism's Shakespeare

About the time Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were attracting attention in Europe, the Americans, who had already fostered a literary Renaissance with the Mathers, Hawthorne, Dickenson, Melville, Whitman, and Jewett, were venturing into philosophy. Under the editorship of Hegelian William Torrey Harris (1855–1909), the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* first appeared in 1867. While discussion of German philosophers dominated in the academy, any mention of "American philosophy" today would likely suggest the school of philosophy called "pragmatism." In an essay entitled "Pragmatic American," which appeared in *New Republic* in 1922, John Dewey, probably the foremost exponent of that school of thought, does concede that "pragmatism was born upon American soil" (*MW* 13, 307), implying that it is the only school of philosophy with specifically American roots. The seemingly defensive tone of the essay may owe something to what Dewey perceived to be Bertrand Russell's condescending "suggestion that pragmatism is the intellectual equivalent of commercialism," which Dewey did not take lightly. Russell's diatribe, Dewey responded, was the intellectual equivalent of saying "that English neo-realism is a reflection of the aristocratic snobbery of the English." Russell should have known that the founders of the movement, Charles Peirce and William James, for instance, were by no means "conspicuous for conformity to commercial standards." In fact, the opposite was probably the case.

While Dewey's statement about the American origin of the movement may not often be challenged, the locution itself—"pragmatism"—is notoriously ambiguous. In fact, thinkers usually called pragmatists argue among themselves as to which philosophers deserve the appellation, and even whether the term itself is useful. And the passage of time has not done much to sort the matter out. Not long ago, in his "Introduction" to Dewey's *Art as Experience*, Abraham Kaplan observed that the fact "that pragmatism *has* been widely misunderstood is by now . . . an indisputable dictum of intellectual history" (*LW* 10, vii–viii). Even William James admitted that it might not be an unjustifiable slander to claim "that [pragmatists] are persons who think that by saying whatever you find is pleasant to say and calling it truth you fulfil every pragmatistic requirement" (viii). So when one

pragmatist finds that another is saying unpleasant things, then the accusation must be that at least one "pragmatistic requirement goes unmet." That scruple was probably applied as often to James as to any pragmatist. For instance, in *Scientific Metaphysics*, uneasy with "the word 'God,'" Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), whom many historians of the movement consider the originator of pragmatism, coined the term "pragmaticism," presumably in an effort to distance himself from William James. At the time, Peirce was concerned about what he perceived to be the unfortunate religiosity of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which became quite popular with the reading public.

Based on the Gifford Lectures that James delivered in Edinburgh in 1901–2, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* went against the grain of early pragmatist thought, which was closely aligned with scientific empiricism. This is not to say that James saw the current situation in philosophy that way. He thought that he was extending "Peirce's principle of practicalism to the realm of religion" (*VRE* xiii). James's editor, John E. Smith, reminds us that, in "The Will to Believe," James accords religious belief "a prominent place" in the intellectual scheme of things. In fact, at least insofar as the scientific bent of philosophical thought of the time is concerned, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* has something of an anti-Establishment edge to it. The subtitle of James's controversial book, *A Study in Human Nature*, is instructive here, not only in suggesting James's broad aim in the work, but also in what it says about objections that thinkers like Peirce and Royce registered to what they perceived to be an untoward connection that James was establishing between religion and pragmatism. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James implied, for instance, that if the established ways of science were imported to philosophy to the exclusion of all else, they would infuse philosophy with its own brand of jingoism:

> Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow "scientific" bounds. Assuredly, the real world is of a different temperament—more intricately built than physical science allows. (*VRE* 408)

To a certain extent, the controversy surrounding *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is important in the development of Jamesian pragmatism, in that it exhibits one of the ways in which pragmatists differ from their utilitarian forebears, as well as from each other. In *Studies in Humanism* (1907), Ferdinand Canning Schiller, the best-known British exponent of pragmatism, put the matter dividing them bluntly: "The fact remains that if the religions are to stand, *they must contend that phenomena which would ordinarily be classified as unreal may, properly, belong to a world of higher reality*" (Schiller 479). In other words, if James's project holds, then

science must surrender its monopoly on knowledge, and philosophy must acknowledge the claim of the "ordinary man" to the reality of his experiences. Consider this, says Schiller: When Hamlet discusses "The Murder of Gonzago," does this prove that Shakespeare was not the author of both *Hamlet* and the play within the play?

In defense of James, then, Schiller insists that human interests are "vital to the existence of truth" (Schiller 5). In the same vein, elucidating his pluralistic view of religious experience, James likewise turns to Shakespeare, to the final play of the second Henriad. On the eve of the momentous Battle of Agincourt, Henry V, in disguise, engages foot soldier Michael Williams in a debate. At issue is the nature of kingship, one aspect of which concerns the duty a subject owes, in time of war, to God and to the Crown. Now, Henry assumes that the sovereign's cause is "just and his quarrel honorable" (*H5* 4.1.128), which is, of course, precisely the matter under debate. How does the warrior, who only follows orders, know whether the king's cause is "just"? Williams' comrade in arms, John Bates, points out that soldiers like him are never in a position to know such a thing. And since that is so, it follows that the foot soldier bears no personal responsibility whatever for his actions in war, even if the king's cause is unjust, for his actions are on a battlefield through no fault of his own. Likewise, Williams insists that, since soldiers only follow orders, moral responsibility for any "black matter" that befalls warriors in battle rests on the king.

It is at this juncture that Henry delivers his famous disquisition on the Deity and history. He concedes that there are evil kings as well as evil warriors; but it is nevertheless true that history unfolds under the sway of Providence:

> Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God. War is his beadle, war is his vengeance; so that here men are punish'd for before-breach of the King's laws in now the King's quarrel. . . . Every subject's duty is the King's but every subject's soul is his own. (4.1.166–77)

History is a narrative in which God functions as an active judge, meting out punishment to individual soldiers as well as to kings.

Here we find firm corroboration of what James holds to be "the will to believe," and it fits conveniently into this particular pragmatist's pluralistic view of both morality and religion:

> The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions. Each attitude being a syllable in human nature's total message, it takes the whole of us to spell the meaning out completely. So a "god of battles" must be allowed to be the god for one kind

> of person, a god of peace and heaven and home, the god for another. We must frankly recognize the fact that we live in partial systems, and that parts are not interchangeable in the spiritual life. (*VRE* 384)

James's detractors insist on a monistic explanation of everything. Pragmatist James offers a pluralistic view of the world, which includes religious experience; he would contextualize the moral question raised by the assumption that Bates and Williams share, and he does so by recalling Henry's prayer later in the same scene:

> O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts,
> Possess them not with fear! Take from them now
> The sense of reck'ning, [if] th' opposed numbers
> Pluck their hearts from them. Not to-day, O Lord,
> O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
> My father made in compassing the crown! (4.1.289–94)

In this famous exchange between sovereign and foot soldier, Henry refutes Williams' argument, which assumes that, should a son "sinfully miscarry" while in the process of transporting his father's merchandise, the father may be rightfully held responsible. Then, just moments afterward, Henry remembers his father's usurpation of Richard's crown, and he prays to the "God of battles" to "steel" his soldiers' resolve to fight, regardless of the situation on the battlefield. "The sense of reck'ning" at issue here concerns a soldier's understandable fear in the face of the opposing battle lines; but it harks back, also, to Henry's figure of war as God's "beadle," God's "vengeance." Henry prays that neither fear of the enemy, nor a sudden awareness that death is the deserved punishment for one's "manifold sins and wickedness," overwhelm troops fighting on his behalf. He begs the Deity not to use this occasion to put right what, years ago, his father, Bolingbroke, put wrong.

Pragmatist James stresses the immediate circumstances of Henry's prayer, as well as the propriety of the particular "God" invoked. For him, moral questions cannot be parsed outside of the corporate behavior of a particular community at a particular time. Aims and ends are never isolated, personal decisions, but, rather, they are symptoms of communal motives and values. Communities create values. Good is what experience shows *will*, in the future, turn out well for society, and that is precisely what *has* turned out well for society in the past. Thus, Henry's prayer is addressed to the right God at the right time and the right place. We can see here why James thought that the religious pluralism of his pragmatic point of view is directly linked to the British school of utilitarianism. He writes:

> I am happy to say that it is the English-speaking philosophers who first introduced the custom of interpreting the meaning of conceptions

> by asking what difference they make for life. Mr. Peirce has only expressed in the form of an explicit maxim what their sense for reality led them all instinctively to do. (*P* 268)

It should be no surprise, then, that James dedicates *Pragmatism* "To the Memory of John Stuart Mill from whom [he] first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom [his] fancy likes to picture as [their] leader were he alive to-day" (3). So James recognized the connection between the philosophy that he would introduce to his Harvard audience in his "next lecture" is closely related to utilitarianism, and so to science. Even so, James subjects this link to one notable proviso:

> The pragmatistic philosophy of which I hope to begin talking in my next lecture preserves as cordial a relation with facts, and, unlike Spencer's philosophy, it neither begins nor ends by turning positive religious constructions out of doors—it treats them cordially as well. (*P* 26)

Clearly the "and" here functions as a synonym for "but." James wants to express the "principle of practicalism—or pragmatism, as [Peirce] called it" (258), but he would apply that principle "more broadly" than Peirce would allow. Such a "broadening," James thinks, associates his brand of pragmatism with Mill's "openness of mind." It seems to follow that it would be closed-minded to exclude religious experience from philosophical consideration. Looking with an open mind toward "consequences" of inquiry, which is the touchstone of pragmatism, James insists that the meaning of truth "is indeed the conduct it dictates or inspires" (259), and so, the "particular consequence." Yes, he says, statements of truth require "concrete cases"; but then religious beliefs do in fact generate particular, concrete actions.

For James, then, a broad, open-minded pragmatism agrees with nominalism in its appeal to particulars, with utilitarianism in its concern for practical outcomes, and "with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions, and metaphysical abstractions" (*P* 32). In this way, as we learn elsewhere, James agrees with John Dewey when he insists that the boundaries of radical pragmatism cannot be "neatly marked off" (*SPP* 10). He wants to expand, not delimit, the domain of philosophical interest. In this connection, it might be well to recall that James was trained as a physician, and that his main interest was in psychology. In a letter to John E. Russell, he writes in 1907 that "experience *grows*," and because that is so, even in science, doubt can never be entirely eliminated (*ERE* 290). For James, Christopher Hookway writes, "the important point is that experience itself is richer than earlier atomistic forms of empiricism had allowed" (Hookway 161). So, again in *Pragmatism*, James concludes: "Philosophers are after all like poets. They are path-finders" (257–58).

It would be wrong to think that, in an effort to color serious philosophical remarks with literary flourishes, James merely ladles on the metaphors and comparisons employed here. On the contrary, as we see in his critique of Herbert Spencer's Darwinian positivism, these literary devices are integral to James's philosophical aims. He is determined to show that the thinking of certain pragmatists eliminates too much of importance in human experience. Positivism, James is saying, is right as far as it goes, but, like nominalism and utilitarianism, it does not go far enough. He wants to inquire into the totality of human "experience," which for his kind of pragmatic philosophy includes not only religion, but also art and poetry. This outlook suggests why, in "Spencer's Definition of Mind," James attacks the positivist definition of knowledge as merely a mechanism of human "survival." Such a materialist approach, James insists, posits a system on far "too wasteful a scale" to account for the phenomena of Beethoven and Shakespeare (*EP* 15). If we want a philosophy of human experience, we would be better advised to consult Shakespeare than Spencer. Indeed, in "Philosophy and Its Critics," James affirms that Touchstone's question to Corin in *As You Like It* ("Hast any philosophy in thee?") should be the normal way in which men greet each other, for philosophy brings together science, poetry, religion, and logic. It is, in fact, "a fecundation" of the four, and therefore "good for both literary and scientific students" (*SPP* 11).

In the last year of his life, while traveling in Germany, James wrote to several individuals about Frank Harris's new book on Shakespeare, *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story* (1909), which had drawn considerable attention from critics, both inside and outside of the academy. James seemed to be a little unsure about sharing his responses to the book. The author, he wrote, was "horrid young and crude," and much of what he says is "absurd." (*CWJ* 12, 525). "But, nevertheless," James added, "*that's the WAY to write about Shakespeare*" (526). The problem was that "the pack of reverent commentators who treat him as a classic moralist." But as Harris understood, this was an entirely misguided perception. In reality, Shakespeare was "a professional *amuser*," one unlike any other in possessing "a lyric splendor," which "made people take him for a more essentially serious human being than he was." Hence, the "reverent commentators," with their insistence that Shakespeare was a "classic moralist," were all mistaken. In accord with Harris, James affirms the essential truth about Shakespeare: "Neurotically and erotically, he was hyperaesthetic, with a playful graciousness of character never surpassed," which enabled him to be whatever his audience needed him to be. James's figurative description of Shakespeare vividly exhibits his holistic approach:

> A cork in the rapids, with no ballast of his own, without religious or ethical ideals, accepting uncritically every theatrical and social convention, he was simply an aeolian harp passively resounding to the stage's call. (*CWJ* 12, 526)

James sees Shakespeare as "soulless," as a harp played upon by Aeolus, the god of winds; Shakespeare's "reaction against the false conventions of life was . . . an absolute zero." On this note, James breaks off his discussion, suggesting that, if he were to continue, he would become "a Harris" himself.

Actually, the obverse of this assertion seems to me more probable. Harris admired James extravagantly. In fact, in his "Introduction" to *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story*, which is based on a series of articles in *Saturday Review*, Harris describes James's view of Shakespeare as "astonishingly accurate" (Harris xi), and his *Varieties of Religious Experience* as a "masterpiece of psychology" (7). As for Shakespeare's neurotic and erotic proclivities, the title of the work is indicative of Harris's radically biographical method. Like other critics of his time, Harris reads Shakespeare's works as an account of his "tragic life." A "sensualist by nature" (216), Shakespeare was "the most impassioned lover and love-poet in all literature" (217). Harris draws this inference, along with the details of Shakespeare's life, from his published plays and poems. In fact, "Shakespeare painted himself at full-length not only once but twenty times" (x). For Harris, many of Shakespeare's plays retell the intense love story of the *Sonnets*, namely that between Shakespeare and Mary Fitton: "This extraordinary woman is undoubtedly the sort of woman Shakespeare depicted as the 'dark lady of the sonnets'" (217). This makes her also the Rosaline of *Love's Labor's Lost* as well as Juliet of *Romeo and Juliet*. As Samuel Schoenbaum has pointed out, Harris revived a discredited argument that the Dark Lady of the *Sonnets* was one of Queen Elizabeth's ladies-in-waiting (Schoenbaum 458). "Nowhere," Schoenbaum writes, "are the excesses of this biographical approach more flagrant than in the fantasies of Frank Harris" (666). Although he cut a rather dashing figure among the New York *literati*, and, in fact, as Editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, gained a certain prestige, including the friendship of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, Harris and his book were more or less ignored by the scholarly Establishment. Harris's offbeat reputation might, in itself, explain why William James was so enamored of *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story*. As Harris tells the story, Shakespeare's mistress, the Dark Lady, betrayed him with Lord William Herbert (the beautiful young man of the *Sonnets*), and the stormy affair showed itself in such plays as *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*. In his effort to portray the sexual exploits and agonies of Shakespeare, Harris overlooks the hard fact, well known in Shakespeare circles, that Mary Fitton was a woman with a very light complexion (Schoenbaum 674). Although it might be worth noting that, although Harris calls *The Varieties of Religious Experience* a "masterpiece of psychology" (Harris 7), what matters to James is the sense of sexual transgression, of intellectual daring, in Harris's view of Shakespeare.

James sees himself as a kindred spirit of Harris in the same way he thinks of himself as more broadly concerned with all aspects of human

experience than were his philosophical predecessors, or are many of his philosophical contemporaries, even those calling themselves pragmatists. What some critics think of as James's "religious meliorism" is an apposite aspect of a coherent system, which would consider aesthetic experience well within the domain of legitimate philosophical subjects. From this point of view, Jamesian pragmatism includes, but goes beyond positivism's "disdain for . . . metaphysical abstractions," just as it embraces the utilitarianism's insistence on practical outcomes. "The greatest good for the greatest number" can be reduced to a mechanical, even hedonistic, formula, in which "pleasure" becomes, in practice, a synonym for "good." In fact, some pragmatists criticized utilitarianism for its perhaps unwitting identification of the two related, but nonetheless distinguishable, values. Thus, to imbue philosophy with scientific objectivity, all that those pragmatists, who were inclined to that utilitarian confusion, had to do to establish "scientific" morality was categorize and calculate the most pleasure and the least pain for as many subjects as possible. From James's point of view, a broader pragmatism could finesse this too-mechanical reduction by extending the horizon of philosophy's purview.

For James, the question was not whether philosophy should extend its horizon, but "How far?" But among pragmatists there was no consensus on the answer to this question. For in fact Peirce was not the only pragmatist to object to James's venture into religious experience. Josiah Royce was, if anything, more exercised than Peirce about James's religious project, and even more penetrating in his analysis of it. Although James did not intend to do it, Royce argued, in effect, by focusing on his own experiences, he had trivialized religion. Referring to only personal reminiscence as proof, James imputed saintliness to a friend's perfectly normal behavior (*BWJR* 2, 1035). Such anecdotal use of the term "experience" did not meet the standards of scientific investigation, and so fell short of philosophy's claim to intellectual rigor.

Here, Royce attempts to confront the issue: To what extent is pragmatism an American extension of British empiricism, and so, by implication, a philosophical appendage of science? More aggressively, Peirce insists that the designation, "pragmatism," be used as it was in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, namely, in the sense of "pragmatic consequences" (Kant 2006, 210), which were "open to observation" (xiii), as most religious experience was not. With Kant—and we might add, with Bacon and such philosophical descendants as Hume and Spencer—Peirce wanted man's knowledge and skill to answer to "the rule of hope," to better man's condition (Peirce 6, 206). For this reason, it seems, Peirce coined the term "pragmaticism" in order to distinguish his philosophical project from James's speculations on inner experience.

Few would deny that Peirce's "pragmaticism" bears a "family resemblance" to British empiricism and its counterpart, with its emphasis on social policy, utilitarianism. In Chapter 2, we discussed the focus of

seventeenth-century philosophy on epistemology, which was Francis Bacon's major concern. The other was "the relief of man's estate." Bacon and his followers wanted to better the human condition, and they fervently believed that scientific progress would make for more friendly and generous conduct of society's affairs. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the two main representatives of utilitarianism, dedicated the greater part of their intellectual energies toward political matters; Mill was active in government, and he worked hard to bring "new mercies for the human family" through specific legislation. With respect to the subject of *Shakespeare and Philosophy*, Mill's father was fond of Milton, but he had no particular regard for Shakespeare. As a matter of fact, he decried the "English idolatry" of Shakespeare (Mill 1, 19), and considered Joanna Bartley's *Constantine Prologues* superior to anything Shakespeare wrote (1, 26). John Stuart Mill did not share his father's disdain for Shakespeare, and, in fact, considered him the most admirable of authors, especially for his ability to bring poetry and story telling together (1, 346–47). Unfortunately, for all his talent, Shakespeare was oblivious to moral distinctions (1, 320).

Unlike his father, James, the more doctrinaire utilitarian of the two (who wanted everything subjected to the most severe scientific scrutiny), John Stuart Mill took up the matter of fiction. While reading his father's *Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Human Mind* (1829), he wondered whether psychologists had overlooked an important philosophical question: "Can we have ideas of ideas?" (Mill 30, 109). Ever since Locke, the focus of English philosophy had been on sensations, which give rise to thoughts, ideas being copies of the original sensations. For instance, when one thinks of the color of snow, one is not aware of any difference between the remembered image and the image remembered, that is, the original perception. Along with combinations of simple ideas which have never been presented to the mind "otherwise than ideas," Mill claims that "the testimony of history" lies behind the "idea" of Pericles. But this is not so with Hamlet; in this case, only the words of Shakespeare—not perception of an "outward object, but only of an idea of this character in Shakespeare's mind"—can be the object of anything we say about Hamlet. This is not so with the idea of Mont Blanc, in which case we have the actual sight—the sense perception—of the mountain etched in our memory. Again, we cannot say this about our idea of Falstaff. Falstaff, that is, the idea of Falstaff, is a repetition of the original idea, which Mill relates to the "psychological examination of memory" (30, 110). Elsewhere, but in the same connection, Mill suggests that *Hamlet* exhibits the association of ideas much like that laid out by Hume (8, 852). In a letter to Florence May, Mill once divided reading into four types, from demanding to the lightest of the light. In the latter category, he included Fielding, Sterne, Austen, and Shakespeare (16, 1475). We know that he was quite fond of Jane Austen, and he did remark favorably on Shakespeare's ability to create "human beings" (20, 135). Likewise, in his inaugural address delivered at the University of St.

Andrews, he praised Milton and Shakespeare (21, 252), but he added that no law restrains women from writing "all the plays of Shakespeare" (312). With these remarks in mind, we could say that Mill considers reading Shakespeare something of a diversion, not to be taken too seriously.

On the other hand, his reference to Shakespeare as "light reading" aside, Mill does claim elsewhere that Shakespeare was an "extraordinary authority on a question of philosophy" (Mill 22, 89). In fact, Shakespeare and Goethe were the only two authors "since the creation of the world" able "to understand and sympathize with human nature in all its diversity" (23, 426). We get something like the same level of praise when Mill disapproves of Carlyle's remarks on Goethe in his *Diary*. Mill considered it a mistake to compare modern man unfavorably with Greek models. One might as well cut down Shakespeare or a Gothic cathedral (27, 651). And that would be, Mill implies, patently absurd.

If Mill's view of Shakespeare was somewhat equivocal, that of pragmatism's founder, Charles Sanders Peirce was decidedly not so. In 1858, Peirce wrote a letter to *Harvard Magazine* in which he claimed that the collegians' distaste for Shakespeare must be attributed not "to the age of the world, but to the age of the critics" (Peirce 1, 21). He was responding to a student drama review of a production of *The Taming of the Shrew*; the college student had faulted Shakespeare for the "radical change" that Katherina undergoes in the play. In real life, such drastic alternations of character do not occur. So it follows that Shakespeare is not, as some critics naively assert, true to nature. In fact, Peirce observes, the unusual does on occasion occur. By the drama reviewer's logic, Peirce argues, the Parable of the Prodigal Son must never have come "from the lips of our Saviour" (22), for that logic holds that a change of heart such as depicted in Holy Writ cannot be true.

About three decades later, Peirce put together "Materials for an Impressionist List of 300 Great Men," placing Shakespeare among the only thirty-one in all history in the "First Rank." Of these thirty-one "Great Men," only Homer, Scipio, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton are authors. Since a question mark follows Milton's name, it could be that Peirce harbored doubts about whether Milton belonged in the "First Rank." If so, it appears that Peirce felt confident that the modern world had produced only one author of the "First Rank," namely, Shakespeare (Peirce 5, 26–31). For quite some time, Peirce pursued his ranking project in an effort to understand how greatness comes about. He applied questions to all of these famous people, with answers for individual achievers, including Great Men of the "First Rank," among whom he invariably placed Shakespeare.

From early on, then, pragmatists exhibited a broader interest in literature than did their utilitarian mentors. There were continuities with their forebears, of course. In 1883, Peirce follows Mill in his understanding of fictitious worlds. In "On Propositions," for instance, Peirce writes: "So if I say 'Hamlet's purposes are sometimes undecided,' I refer to the fictitious

world created by Shakespeare" (Peirce 4, 402). His point is to discriminate between the world described by science and that represented in literature. Science makes general statements about the world. But a poet cannot describe the world in general terms, since, as we know, another poet might generate an alternative one, or one might exist in reality. Likewise, Josiah Royce appears to reiterate Mill's thesis, that our idea of a fictional character like Falstaff is a repetition of Shakespeare's idea, and not of a sense perception. Royce raises this matter especially in *The World and the Individual* (1899), where he considers it "the central dilemma as to the nature of truth" (*BWJR* 1, 527). Is there a necessary connection between an idea and an object? Memories might be similar, but they may also refer to different experiences altogether: "My ideas in a moment of reminiscence, refer to my own past, and have that for their object, they do not refer to your past, nor to your deeds and sorrows, however like my own these experiences of yours may have been" (1, 528). For Royce, it is important to recognize that a fictional object exists in the mind of the author, prior to any assignment of a relation of the object to the idea of it:

> In brief, the object and the idea of that object appear to be related as Hamlet in the play is related to the intent of Shakespeare, or as creation and creative purpose in general are related. (1, 529)

Where Mill saw Falstaff as an idea original in Shakespeare, which our idea repeats, Royce names that idea Shakespeare's "intent": "Hamlet is what Shakespeare's idea intends him to be." The purposefulness of Shakespeare's creative "intent" corresponds to the "object" in its predetermination of the idea: "The object is what it is because the idea means it to be the object of just this idea." Shakespeare intends Hamlet to be Hamlet, and not Mark Antony or any other among a myriad of possible characters. Intention shapes, or as Royce puts it "predetermines," the relation of the idea that we have to the object, which is Hamlet.

The point is that, just as James considered religious experience a legitimate subject of philosophy, Josiah Royce thought that English literature deserved a more comprehensive approach than his predecessors had allowed, and, furthermore, that critics had victimized Shakespeare with "elaborate parasitical growths such as the mass of literary industry that ha[d] grown up at Shakespeare's expense" (*FE* 372). Royce's "voluntarism" went hand in hand with his deep literary involvement; he wrote extensively on such famous authors as Shelley, Eliot, Goethe, and Schiller. As J. Loewenberg observes, "Literary values could not for him be severed from ethical significance" (*FE* 10).

For all their instrumental affinities with utilitarianism, then, pragmatists take literature more seriously than do their British forebears. It would not be wrong to say, I think, that the pragmatists share with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche a serious interest in the "inner" aspect of "experience" that

we associate with literature and the imagination. Whether or not the experience of reading or writing leads directly to legislation, it is, as is all human activity, open to investigation, and for that reason a legitimate concern of philosophy. As we have seen, Charles Peirce considered Shakespeare's literary works examples of fictitious worlds, which may be differentiated from other such constructions. It is therefore not so strange that Peirce's lists of "Great Men" should always include Shakespeare in the "First Rank." With respect to the logic of literary fictions, Peirce looked forward to John Dewey, who was to hold forth at much greater length on the subject of literature. But even for the hard-nosed Peirce, Shakespeare's imagined worlds are made up of describable internal consistencies. In an essay entitled "On Propositions," for instance, he writes: "If I say 'Hamlet's purposes were sometimes undecided,' I refer to the fictitious world created by Shakespeare" (Peirce 4, 402).

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Richard Rorty investigates ideas of the human soul from Peirce's point of view. Peirce, Rorty argues, was interested in the internal logic of that imaginary world, and his work exhibits a particular fascination with Shakespeare's figure of a "glassy essence" (Rorty 1979, 41–45). By the time Peirce entered the conversation, the standard view was that the soul differentiates humans from other creatures. The question for philosophy was, "How?" Indeed, Rorty holds that the question at the core of Western philosophy is, "Why is man unique?" For two thousand years, answers given to this question fall between the two poles of Plato and Aristotle. Human knowledge runs "the gamut between neo-Platonic notions of knowledge as a direct connection with (emanation from, reflection of) the Godhead on the one hand, and down-to-earth neo-Aristotelian hylomorphic accounts of abstraction on the other, the soul as immaterial-because-capable-of-contemplating-univerals remained the Western philosopher's answer" (41) this question. Following Peirce, Rorty takes Shakespeare's sketch of Isabella as an accurate characterization of the conflict between Plato and Aristotle, and so between two aspects of human consciousness. He is thinking of the scene just after Isabella hears what she takes to be Angelo's final answer to her appeal for mercy in Claudio's case. She manages to say, if somewhat lamely, "Yet show some pity," Unlike the Portia of *The Merchant of Venice*, who intercedes in a life-threatening legal situation, Isabella only alludes to the Christian value of mercy with an equally supererogatory question: "How would you be / If He, which is the top of judgment, should / But judge you as you are?" (2.2.75–77).

The point is that Isabella delivers no grand pronouncement on the godlike value of mercy. If anything, just as she sought out the strict, cloistered Order of St. Clare, Isabella takes the side of law and order. Shakespeare wants the audience to see the partial truth of Lucio's accusation that Isabella is "too cold" (2.2.56). She knows, perhaps too well, that Mosaic Law condemns all of the sons and daughters of Eve. At least at the outset of the action, Angelo shares with Shylock a sense of self-righteousness. Everyone

in Vienna holds him above reproach, and Angelo is of the same opinion; he sees himself above the (lower case) law. And this is precisely the point of his later confession: Isabella is the only woman in the world who has ever moved him "to sin in loving virtue" (2.2.182). I am not suggesting that Shakespeare portrays Isabella as without passion. She is passionate about her commitment to the cloistered life at St. Clare. Indeed, we might say, in agreement with Rorty, that her great "ape and essence" speech not only expands upon her remarks on tyranny, but that it also elucidates something of her passion for a disciplined life. If this is so, it is important to remember that Isabella looks upon the time spent outside the cloister on Claudio's behalf as "stolen out of other affairs" (3.1.158). So her judgmental tone, although immediately directed toward Angelo, is also about a world governed by man, not God:

> Could great men thunder
> As Jove himself does, Jove would never be quiet,
> For every pelting, petty officer
> Would use his heaven for thunder,
> Nothing but thunder! Merciful heaven,
> Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
> Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
> Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man,
> Dress'd in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd
> (His glassy essence), like an angry ape
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As makes the angels weep; who, without our spleens,
> Would all themselves laugh mortal. (2.2.110–23)

Rorty looks back at Peirce's use, apparently the "first invoked in philosophy" (42n), of the intriguing figure of "man's glassy essence." Peirce employs the term in an essay in which he argues that "a person is nothing but a symbol involving a general idea," which is, in turn, instrumental "in establishing the existence of 'group minds'" (Rorty 1979, 42n).

At first glance, it might seem that Peirce is elaborating on the Aristotelian notion of man as a "social animal." But the pragmatist seems to be going further, suggesting the existence of a corporate body made up of consistent mental constituents. Pragmatists like Peirce want to move away from the idea that morality is a matter of individual responsibility. In the preceding chapter, we saw how Bacon's analysis of the mind of man and the problems that beset it differed from Nietzsche's. Bacon employed the figure of "*Idols*" to suggest how the mind of man was more like "an enchanted glass" than a "glassy essence," or mirror, which clearly refracted the image of nature as it was. At about the same time, William James was writing to Charles Renouvier. In American philosophy, John Stuart Mill and Herbert

Spencer appeared to be the obvious intellectual heirs of Francis Bacon. But, again, in his interest in Renouvier, James went against the grain; he argued that scientific philosophy, along with its social cognate, utilitarianism, was excessively "deterministic and materialistic" (Perry 1, 662). It was Renouvier's antideterminism, Ralph Perry writes, that made him the "greatest individual influence upon the development of James's thought" (2, 155), and Renouvier's influence went hand in hand with this particular pragmatist's opposition to orthodox science, which he considered arrogant and closed-minded. In fact, rather than being an interesting oddity, James's attachment to psychical research and other occult interests was "central [to] and typical" of his perspective on experience. The point is that his departure from the standard vision of science opens the way for an inquiry into literary subjects not commonly found in utilitarian thought. For James, Mill and Spencer were obstinately deterministic, just as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were mindlessly pessimistic. The latter two thinkers so lacked the breadth of vision, usually enhanced by religious experience, that what they took for "melancholy" was, more often than not, little more than "peevishness." Lacking the "purgatorial note which religious sadness gives forth," to James, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche sound more like "the sick shriekings of two dying rats" (*VRE* 39).

The plain fact is that, whether the other pragmatists liked it or not, James was convinced that religious experience was important in life. James believed that religious experience had practical consequences in the real world. After all, in a descriptive rather than a normative sense, pragmatism was a philosophy concerned with the practical consequences of thought. In *Shakespearean Pragmatism* (1993), Lars Engle claims that critics have understated the market economy significance of James's definition of pragmatism as "the philosophy which sought to 'bring out of each word its practical cash-value'" (Engle 4). Actually, James thinks that he is explaining pragmatism as "the English-speaking philosophers who first introduced the custom of interpreting the meaning of conceptions by asking what difference they make for life." Just as Locke went back to the receptacle of sense perceptions in the memory, pragmatists like Peirce pressed "the principle of practicalism" (270) to inquire of any conception "right off": "What is it *known as*? In what facts does it result? What is its *cash value*, in terms of particular experience? And what special difference would come into the world according as it were true or false?" (*P* 268)

Although it would probably be wrong to think of pragmatism as solely, or even primarily, concerned with money and commerce, here, Lars Engle touches on an aspect of pragmatism that drew the ire of English philosophers, with whom the pragmatists shared a common admiration of science. Bertrand Russell made no secret of his opinion that pragmatism was too closely linked to American ideas of capitalism and free enterprise. In an essay entitled "Pragmatic American," Dewey responded to Russell, who had saddled pragmatism with the label of "justified commercialism" (*MW*

13, 306). Russell seemed to think that pragmatism had more in common with the loading dock or grocery store than it did with Oxbridge or the Athenæum. (One could point out that Wittgenstein made something like the same criticism of Russell, whose popular, journalistic ventures, in works like *A Free Man's Worship*, for instance, he found vulgar.) No doubt there are historians who will say that the notion of "manifest destiny" had something to do with America's successful economic expansion, which would not have been possible without practical, even "commercial," policies in place. I suspect that Russell was talking also about the venues, including newspapers and magazines like *Popular Mechanics*, in which Dewey published a good deal of his work. But in fact, except for Dewey, "American pragmatism," like language analysis at Oxford and Cambridge, was pretty much an academic phenomenon.

As such, with its expanded interest in what "experience" amounted to, Dewey thought pragmatism should build upon James's remarks on psychology and religion. Indeed, James "might have said about esthetic experience" exactly what he said about "religious experience" (*LW* 13, 367). It is fair to say, I think, that art is to Dewey what religion was to James. Early on in his career, in a review of Bernard Bosanquet's *A History of Aesthetic* (1892), in which he noted a deficiency in this particular branch of English philosophy (*EW* 4, 189), Dewey commented on Shakespeare in a way that anticipates remarks that he would make in *Art as Experience*. He admired Shakespeare for extracting spirituality from Christianity, without the trappings of "supernatural machinery" (193). But Dewey's most comprehensive statement on art came later, in 1934, when he drew together ideas that he had explored in various essays throughout the intervening decades. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey expresses chagrin at the way in which products of the imagination have suffered from the tendency of culture to compartmentalize the various areas of human activity. As a result, "practice," with its obvious link to pragmatism, has been cut off from insight. Mind and body are thought so far apart that different people are assigned jobs on the basis of one or the other, as if never the twain should meet. The flesh suffers from low prestige, and even philosophy trivializes sense perception as only a minor component of knowledge. At least the moralist links the flesh to emotion. If he errs in stigmatizing certain sensations, and is too determined to identify "the sensuous with the sensual and the sensual with the lewd," at least he does not think of the eye as only "an imperfect telescope designed for intellectual reception of material to bring about knowledge of distant objects" (*LW* 10, 27). In fact, Dewey writes, "sense" is inextricably attached to the intellect, and we, as willing agents, act in the world: "Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment" (28). Artists are especially able to invoke the convergence of the ideal with the material. Here, Dewey borrows the term "ethereal" from Keats to suggest the meaning or significance which many philosophers believe eludes the senses.

Science has been complicit in this compartmentalization, to the detriment of serious ethical considerations. In 1891, Dewey published *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*, in which a quotation from *Hamlet* serves as nothing short of the postulate at the very foundation of ethical conduct, the importance of which he emphasizes with small capitals:

> In the realization of individuality there is found also the needed realization of some community of persons of which the individual is a member; and, conversely, the agent who duly satisfies the community in which he shares, by that same conduct satisfies himself. (*EW* 3, 322)

Shakespeare states a truth here, which is essentially political. This postulate declares "that there is a community of persons; a good which realized by the will of one is made not private but public." From Dewey's point of view, Shakespeare states that very postulate through the instructions Polonius gives to Laertes, as he takes leave to return to his university studies in Paris: "to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man" (1, 3, 78–80).

Again, as James recognized, too narrow a scientific focus can cause one to miss the mark. Dewey makes clear that he does not use the word "postulate" in a deprecatory sense, as if the ethic assertion here were "unprovable, much less unverifiable." On the contrary, his point is that moral experience depends entirely on "its verification." So unless we are to launch into metaphysics, moral experience, as Dewey—and, implicitly, Shakespeare—think of it, we must concede that the proposition is verifiable, in much the same way as a "scientific postulate" is so. The presupposition of Shakespeare's postulate is that the community looks to "the end of action, this existence of a practical common good, that makes what we call the moral order of the world." And it is just so in science, which presupposes the "uniformity of nature." Everything in nature—and in society—is held together by a system of law. So, according to Dewey, Shakespeare is saying that it is in the nature of things that "a practical common good" comes about when individuals are faithful to their own best interests. "Moral experience," Dewey writes, "*makes for the world of practice* an assumption analogous in kind to that which intellectual experience makes for the world of knowledge" (*EW* 3, 323). It is not the business of science to question the assumptions of society's practices. For the same reason, Dewey insists, it is "not the business of conduct, or even of ethics (the theory of conduct) to justify what we have termed the 'ethical postulate.'" Accordingly, Shakespeare sets forward a postulate that has the same relation as a scientific proposition has to experience.

It seems to me that this is an important aspect of Dewey's expansive view of Shakespeare, as it is of his favorable opinion of James's remarks on religious belief. For Dewey, literary and religious experiences fall under the purview of pragmatic philosophy. Dewey admired James for his "double-barrelled" use

of the word "experience": "it includes *what* men do and suffer" (*LW* 1, 18). Implicitly, those who disagree with James's broadened view exclude at least some portion of the substance of men's "doing" and "suffering." Here, Dewey catalogues a wide area of "experience," which he means to leave open, because the "double-barrelled" figure of speech "recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them with an unanalyzed totality." Similarly, in *Philosophy and Civilization"* (1927), Dewey states that the truth in *Hamlet* is "something quite different from that of scientific and historical record." The latter is "comparable to the meaning of Athenian civilization or of a drama or a lyric" (*LW* 3, 5). We see here, I think, why Sidney Hook suggests that Dewey preferred the term "culture" to the Jamesian locution "experience" (*LW* 1, viii); the two words set out slightly different understandings. A decade later, in a talk on "The Philosophy of the Arts" (1938), Dewey expands upon this implied comparison, arguing that the Parthenon, Shakespeare, and Beethoven "have in common, in spite of all their differences, with all works of art" (*LW* 13, 358) a capacity to make "total experience" available to ordinary people (363).

Implicitly, Dewey thinks of the particularities of the individual's experience as radically part of an ongoing cultural stream of events. Thus, in "Time and Individuality" (1940), he construes the mystery of selfhood in this way:

> If we knew enough about Shakespeare's life we could doubtless show *after Hamlet* was produced how it is connected with other things. We could link it with sources; we could connect its mood with specific experiences of its author, and so on. But no one with the fullest knowledge of Shakespeare's past could have predicted the drama as it stands. If they could have done so, they would have been able to write it. Not even Shakespeare himself could have told in advance just what he was going to say—not if he was an individual, not a nodal point in the spatial redistribution of what already existed. (*LW* 14, 111)

In this comment on *Hamlet*, Dewey separates himself from the Hobbesian notion that poets merely reassemble, and in reassembling distort, past experience. The memory is part of imaginative creation, but not its "totality." And here Dewey parts company, too, from the behaviorism of many of his contemporaries, perhaps even from that of his fellow pragmatist, William James. In "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James," Dewey sees James grappling with "dogmatic materialism" that would reduce man to an "automaton" (156). Dewey is not sure if James's figurative mechanism can actually extricate him from this atomistic explanation of experience:

> On this side, James's fundamental doctrine is that psychological phenomena (called by him *mental life*) are intermediate between impressions received from the environment and the responsive adjustments the organism makes to the environment. (158)

Since Dewey seems to use the terms "consciousness" and "experience" synonymously (163), it is understandable why he finds "two incompatible strains" in James's psychology (166).

By attributing a nonmechanical aspect, transcending the past, to experience, Dewey's aesthetic theory opens art to the expression of possible arrangements that are not simply repackaged recollections of the past. In this way, art serves as "a complement to science" (*LW* 13, 113). By transcending mere "rearrangement of the past," creative artists, Shakespeare included, reveal also a world of "potentiality" (114). Dewey insists that we cannot reduce Shakespeare, as the materialist would do, to a practitioner who is merely possessed of eidetic memory, nor to one whose "misprision" of the past produces amusing results.

Here, there is a sense in which Dewey separates himself from other notable pragmatist thinkers, from Josiah Royce, for instance. Royce felt "obliged to maintain a position which we may characterize by the term Absolute Pragmatism" (*EW* 2, 813). We can infer, I assume, that some pragmatists fall short of this description. Writing in the *Journal of Philosophy*, one of Dewey's critics parodied what he regarded as Dewey's ardent embrace of science; for him, Dewey naively held that scientific order must be imposed upon every segment of society, as the healer attaches a poultice to an open wound. Parodying a line from Shakespeare's greatest play, Daniel Sommer Robinson sees Dewey, scientific philosopher *par excellence*, as a rejuvenated Hamlet: "O blessed privilege that modern man was born to set it right" (*MW* 15, 332). Naively, Dewey believes that science can lead the way to social reform.

Dewey responded to Robinson by insisting that "morals in the broadest sense" (*MW* 15, 15) could not be separated from the supposed "disinterestedness" of science. Dewey rightly associates Robinson with Josiah Royce (19), who considered himself "a pragmatic absolutist" (10, xxiv). But, for Dewey, Royce was no pragmatist at all, because, along with Robinson and like-minded purists, Royce failed to consider consequences as the arbiter of knowledge (xxv). Again, Dewey insists that abstract notions of procedure were not the defining characteristic of pragmatism. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey reiterates an essentially Baconian theme. Pragmatism "purposely modifies the environment" (10, 354). In this way, Dewey associates Bacon's project with the Enlightenment thought of Herder and Hegel. The proper idea is to construct institutions that will enable communities to advance humanity (9, 64)—to make life better for the conglomerate of ordinary people. This is how, rightly considered, pragmatism differs from previous thought, from utilitarianism, for instance. There, perhaps unwittingly, the emphasis had been too much on pleasure, which can too easily be reduced to individual experience.

Again, Dewey thinks of knowledge in Baconian terms, as an effort aimed at "the relief of man's estate." Dewey's pragmatism insists that the whole of humanity must benefit from the project of intellectual reflection on the human condition. So when Dewey looks at Shakespeare in this way,

he sees him as the Germans do, in his "spiritual universality" (*MW* 8, 191). It is not hard to see how Dewey's way of talking about Shakespeare differs from, say, that of Comte or Russell. Writing in 1892, Dewey claims that English philosophers are particularly weak in aesthetics (*EW* 4, 189). They fail to see that imaginary worlds are no less worlds of experience by being imaginary than are those emanating from sense perceptions. Like James, Dewey insists that imaginary worlds are accessible to human apprehension and inquiry. Indeed, as we find in Shakespeare and Beethoven (*MW* 5, 145) experience, which, being the source of art, is therefore the source of new kinds of art. Returning to the question of universality and Shakespeare, Dewey states that all of the wise judgments that one finds in the Bible one also finds in Shakespeare and Plato. For instance, in scripture, we read "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23.7). And in Shakespeare, "There's nothing right or wrong but thinking makes it so" (*MW* 5, 215).

"Categorizing Dewey's thought in the pigeon holes of vulgar pragmatism," writes Abraham Kaplan in his "Introduction" to *Art as Experience*, "is most patently inappropriate for his philosophy of art" (*LW* 10, viii). As we have seen, Dewey had for some time sought to reconcile the appreciation of art with the scrupulous investigative procedures of science. But if his aesthetic perceptions veered in one rather than the other direction, in *Art as Experience*, it was toward a poet's understanding of poetry, toward Keats's remarks on Shakespeare, for instance. In his discussion of "Ethereal Things," a figure that Dewey borrows from Keats, he notes that the Romantic poet "speaks of Shakespeare as a man of enormous 'Negative Capability'" (10, 39). Keats argues that reasoning takes man only so far, after which the imagination either takes over, or human insight can go no farther. This is the sense of the closing couplet of *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: "What Imagination seizes as beauty must be Truth" (40). For Dewey, the problem is that, under the influence of science, we think of truth in one and only one way, as "correctness of intellectual statements about things." Keats understood that neither science nor "Philosophy" could, unassisted, deal with, much less answer, "the question of justifying good and trusting to it in spite of the evil and destruction that abound." Since reason fails to satisfy, traditionally, humanity resorts to divine intervention, an option that Keats could not accept. But, with the terrestrial power of the imagination, even the nonreligious poet was not bereft of comfort: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Following Keats, Dewey is reluctant to attribute Shakespeare's "greatness" to his mastery of literary technique (*LW* 10, 148). Nor does he accept the view that Shakespeare merely assembled material from reading habits so "insatiable" that "he would have been a plagiarist if the material had not at once antagonized and cooperated with his personal vision by means of an equally insatiable curiosity concerning the life surrounding him" (163). Sounding faintly like Nietzsche here, Dewey argues that artists like Shakespeare bring to our awareness a "deeper reality" (199), a "larger,

all-inclusive whole which is the universe in which we live." This is a wholeness that science does not and cannot open up, or completely describe. Art takes us where science cannot: "We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. The experience is not exactly "mystical," it is nevertheless "an expansion of ourselves," as if "normal experience" were apprehended more deeply and with greater clarity:

> This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves. For only one frustrated in a particular object of desire upon which he had staked himself, like Macbeth, finds that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (10, 199)

The sense of isolation from the world can neither be appreciated nor attenuated by science; and the "Reason" of philosophy may only exacerbate man's frustration. Macbeth's focus on the world, shaped only by "vaulting ambition" and his love for his wife, is best seen in that striking figure that Dewey tangentially recalls, of the hapless victim in the bear pit, surrounded by bloodthirsty mastiffs: "They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, / But bear-like I must fight the course" (5.7.1–2). The perimeter of his vision is just this immediate scene of personal conflict. Macbeth is pathetically buttressed only by the ambiguous notion, planted by an "Apparition" whose "show" is managed by the "weird sisters," that "none of woman born / Shall harm" him. In the play's final scenes, Shakespeare opens his audience to a "sense of unity," of being at one with the "vast world beyond ourselves," of a world from which Macbeth, through his egotism, has willfully exiled himself, and to which Shakespeare offers his audience a momentary return. For Dewey, Shakespeare's "personal vision" transcends technical skill to make "this world beyond this world," which is "normal experience," accentuated in a certain way, accessible to ordinary observers.

Here, Dewey argues, the point is that, although Milton and Lucretius deal with nature, including the creation of the universe, we do not praise them for their science (*LW* 10, 323). The hard fact is that science has not produced the social good of consensus. More likely, science leaves disharmony and conflict in its wake. On the other hand, and in marked contrast, art imparts a sense of reconciliation to the world. This is what Dewey means by the sense of experience in art as "totality." In 1938, in a talk entitled "The Philosophy of the Arts," given to the Washington Dance Associates, Dewey tried to explain what Shakespeare and the Parthenon "have in common, in spite of all their differences, with all works of art" (*LW* 13, 358). Again, the answer that he gives goes right along with his view that what James said about "religious experience . . . he might have said about esthetic experience" (367). Art is not one-sided; it is not split up. It is, as science cannot be, "total experience" (363). This being so, Dewey argues, philosophers from Aristotle on have held art to be a domain of knowledge (10, 293). Aristotle insisted that poetry was more philosophical than history.

In poetry, the tangled scenes of life are made "intelligible" in impassioned experience; and this is knowledge, although not in the logical form of science. Dewey sums up by quoting Shelley: "Poetry . . . is at once the centre and circumference of all knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science and to which all science must be referred" (294). This is why it would make no sense to praise Milton or Lucretius for their science (323). These great poets transcend the limits of science. Science cannot reach the core of human experience. Science elicits disharmony, while art imparts a sense of reconciliation to the world.

This does not mean that science is lacking in what it does. Science is very good in dealing with particulars; but that obvious strength also exhibits its limitations. In characterizing what he means by the totality of "experience," Dewey again invokes James. When a bird takes flight or alights or hops about, it moves just as it breathes, with the succession of movements, which are themselves "the consequences of prior doing" (*LW* 10, 62). The whole is the consequence of this "prior doing," a gestalt of all that has gone before. In this way, what James says of religious experience applies as well to artistic expression. What seems to be spontaneous is in actuality a coming together of a totality of experiences, real or imagined, recognized or unconscious (78–79).

The problem in contemporary philosophy is that, under the influence of science, we think of truth in one and only one way, as "correctness of intellectual statements about things, or truth as its meaning is now influenced by science" (*LW* 10, 40). As a result, the problem of pain and death bedevils us. Reason fails to satisfy. So, traditionally, humanity resorts to divine intervention, an option which neither Keats nor Dewey can accept. For Dewey, as for Keats, there is faith in "divine revelation," and there is perception of "a world of surmise, of mystery, of uncertainties" (41). That is, there are really two distinct philosophies. Again, Dewey agrees with Keats, who rightly "contrasts Shakespeare in this respect with his own contemporary Coleridge." Coleridge "would let a poetic insight go when it was surrounded with obscurity, because he could not intellectually justify it" (39). Keats was right in seeing these philosophies as irreconcilable, and he was right, too, to cast his lot with Shakespeare rather than with Coleridge:

> One of them accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities—to imagination and art. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats. (41)

Scientific knowledge, then, and "reconciliation to the world," are not contrary human possibilities. One does not flourish only as the other languishes. Quite the opposite, art and science are complementary activities, conjoined by the corporate experience of the human community, which both can, and should, serve.

With respect to the last remark, Abraham Kaplan observes that "Dewey is more sociologist than psychologist" (*LW* 10, xi). For him, Kaplan writes, "Ideas are to be understood in terms of their historical origins and their social functions, as Marx and Nietzsche had already emphasized." Dewey associated himself with liberal causes, of course; his theories of "progressive education," once considered radical, have been more or less absorbed into the mainstream of the American education system. Like education, art has the elements of communal effort and consumption. As for Shakespeare, Dewey emphasizes his commonality, brushing aside those who argue for his aristocratic bias. If indeed Shakespeare had such a bias, which Dewey thinks he did not ("I fancy that his limitation was conventional, family, and therefore congenial to pit as well as to stalls" (*LW* 10, 194), it hindered his "universality." But such efforts to reduce art to "economic documents" ("as I saw once done by a 'proletarian' guide in the Hermitage") are similarly limiting. Although different in their focus, the schools of psychoanalytic and sociological criticism exhibit of the same "reductive fallacy" (320). Again, in *Art and Experience*, Dewey turns to Shakespeare, suggesting that only with undue effort can one wrest conventional morality from his works (351). Dewey insists that art can never be reduced to service of either the Church or the "political revolution" (332n). Science seeks to use the same material as art, but for the purpose of the increase of power over nature. Art serves for "the enhancement of direct experience itself" (323). Science makes limited statements of facts about the world; art reconciles man with the totality of his experiences in the world.

8 Shakespeare and the "Limits of Wittgenstein's World"

In his "Introduction" to the screenplay of *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, Terry Eagleton remarks on the ever-expanding interest of creative artists in Wittgenstein: "What is it about this man, whose philosophy can be taxing and technical enough, which so fascinates the *artistic* imagination? Frege is a philosopher's philosopher; Bertrand Russell every shopkeeper's image of the sage, and Sartre the media's idea of an intellectual, but Wittgenstein is the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists, and snatches of his mighty *Tractatus* have even been set to music" (Eagleton 5). Alexander Waugh writes: "Thousands of books have since been written to explain the meaning of the *Tractatus*, each different from the last" (Waugh 146–47). In *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996), Marjorie Perloff, who was born in Vienna and claims "a slight connection" with Wittgenstein through his cousin, Friedrich von Hayek (Perloff 2004, xiii), shows the impact of Wittgenstein's thought, in particular, on such literary modernists as Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett.[1] Then too, although Wittgenstein's taste in music seems not to have reached far beyond Brahms, he seems to have registered an influence on the compositions of John Cage (6). Indeed, Perloff catalogues dozens of works that show Wiggenstein's influence on painting, photography, theatre, music, poetry, the novel, and, of course, film.

As for film, Wittgenstein's taste ran to westerns and Betty Hutton movies (Monk 423). He especially disliked "foreign films," which he found depressing. Like most Viennese aristocrats, Wittgenstein was well trained in music. Brahms was a frequent visitor to the Wittgenstein residence, where he attended Wittgenstein musicales; and, in fact, "one of his major works—the Clarinet Quintet—received its first performance at the Wittgenstein home" (Monk 6). Although he enjoyed the cultural advantages of a very wealthy Viennese family, and contributed a considerable part of his inherited wealth to the literary journal, *Der Brenner*, and despite the tremendous impact that he had on the culture surrounding and succeeding him in England and on the Continent, Wittgenstein was uncomfortable with the established literary wisdom prevailing at the Cambridge of his time. It should come as no surprise, then, that he held no higher opinion

of the major theory of language that held sway at Cambridge after World War I than he did of the trendy literary attitudes that prevailed on campus and in its London appendage, Bloomsbury. It is in the area of language study that a tension emerged (for which Theodor Adorno would blame Wittgenstein) between literary appreciation and Wittgenstein's supposed positivism, a tension nowhere more evident, I think, than in the strange relationship that developed between Wittgenstein and the famous literary critic, F. R. Leavis.

Rumor began soon after Wittgenstein and Leavis first met that the philosopher and the literary critic "fell on one another's necks" (*CAP* 131). Leavis denied that characterization of the encounter, but it is clear even from his account that the friendship that developed between the two men was as strained and strange as their views on literature and criticism were different. Judging from the Leavis narrative, it seems safe to say that the tension between them marked more than an incompatibility of temperaments, although I can think of no two Cambridge gentlemen more different in their outlook on issues that mattered at the time. Even so, despite Leavis's deeply felt reservations about Wittgenstein and the latter's intellectual disdain for the don's Oxbridgean manner and values, a bond between the two men developed, and, if we may believe Leavis, it did so largely because of Wittgenstein's persistence, which on the surface might have looked like personal need. Wittgenstein was weary, and Leavis was available for company and support. But even more relevant to our purpose, Wittgenstein saw in Leavis a sophisticated interlocutor on the subjects of language and ethics. Not only were these two topics at the forefront of Cambridge intellectual life at the time, but the exchange of views between this Cambridge "odd couple" sheds light, I think, on Wittgenstein's thoroughgoing opposition to a theory of language roundly supported by Leavis and his friends, just as it does on Wittgenstein's critical strictures on Shakespeare.

We need not believe Leavis's claim, of course, that he never discussed philosophy with Wittgenstein, any more than we must credit his disclaimer that he lacked the "philosophical qualifications" to evaluate Wittgenstein's work. The title assigned to the volume of Leavis essays including "Memories of Wittgenstein"—*The Critic as Anti-Philosopher*—insinuates, writes G. Singh in his "Introduction" to that work, a tension between philosophy and literary criticism, which would greatly concern Leavis "in his later criticism" (*CAP* xiv). That title surely suggests that Leavis was sufficiently acquainted with philosophy to insist that it be kept separate from literary criticism.[2] One critic calls Leavis "a literary philosopher" (Leavis 1995, 172), pointing out that the mentors who most influenced him, I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, possessed "professional philosophy credentials" (Leavis 1952, 152). Moreover, Leavis himself claims that his recollections have a "significant bearing on Wittgenstein's intellectual approach and habit" (*CAP* 129). Personalizing this dyad of "Wittgenstein's intellectual approach and habit," Leavis recalls once asking (rather too directly, perhaps), "You don't

think much of most other philosophers, Wittgenstein?" When Wittgenstein pressed him to be more specific, and Leavis mentioned G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein perkily responded, "'Moore?—he shows you how far a man can go who has absolutely no intelligence whatever'" (130).[3] I think we can justly infer that Leavis knew what was going on in philosophy at Cambridge.

What are we to make, then, of the fact that Leavis perceived Wittgenstein's gratuitous insult as having borne no hint of irony? Taken at face value, how would such a flippant remark fit with what we know of Wittgenstein's views on Shakespeare? *On Certainty*, a late (perhaps Wittgenstein's last) work, "investigates" a few sentences for which one of his mentors, G. E. Moore, was famous. But why would so brilliant a mind bother with a philosopher "who has absolutely no intelligence whatever"? It may be worth noting that, while rehearsing Wittgenstein's uncharitable characterization of the "philosopher of common sense," Leavis claims an equal and opposite ration of generosity for himself, allowing that it would not be quite right to infer from this remark that Wittgenstein was "arrogant" (*CAP* 130). Rather, in some sense (Leavis doesn't say exactly *what* sense), "arrogant" was not quite the right word, because Wittgenstein was a "genius." Then, as if to acknowledge that one could imagine an "arrogant genius," Leavis adds that Wittgenstein's behavior, in this instance and often in others, was marked by a peculiar and abiding "disinterestedness" (130), which, *a priori*, precluded the self-concern which he considered the *sine qua non* of arrogance.

Leavis recalls the circumstances of their first meeting at the home of logician W. E. Johnson shortly after Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929. Most philosophy students, including Wittgenstein, studied with Johnson. As for Johnson's recollection that the two men "fell on one another's necks," Leavis takes the blame for that. Only *he*, Leavis, was angry—well, not so much angry as indignant at Wittgenstein's "cold brutality" toward a young man in attendance (*CAP* 131), who happened to be from a noble family, and was known to have some musical training. When asked to sing something from Schubert (Wittgenstein's favorite composer), the young man demurred, protesting that Wittgenstein would correct his German. At this, in a tone that Leavis claims is inimitable, and obviously meant to wound, Wittgenstein said, "'How can I? How can I possibly?'" Then, as if to complete the insult, Wittgenstein departed when the song ended, with an outraged Leavis in hot pursuit. In retrospect, Leavis admitted that it might have looked as if he wanted to fight, but in fact, Leavis claims, he aimed only to say that Wittgenstein behaved disgracefully.

Although not published until 1965, Wittgenstein's "A Lecture on Ethics" was composed and delivered in 1929, right about the time of this angry encounter with Leavis; and it was contemporaneous, too, with Wittgenstein's hard work on "Some Remarks on Logical Form." This was the "something which [he was] keen on communicating to [the more general public]" (LE 4). Instead, Wittgenstein chose to talk on ethics, but ethics in

a sense somewhat broader than Moore's definition of "the general enquiry into what is good," which would include "what is generally called Aesthetics." It would seem fair to take Wittgenstein's remarks in "A Lecture on Ethics," in tandem with those now gathered in *Culture and Value*, as indicative of his views on valuation in the arts, in general, and on Shakespeare, in particular.

Here, after laying out his quasi-Galtonian[4] perspective on the analogy between a composite of Chinese faces and an aggregate of adjectives, Wittgenstein compares two kinds of value judgments. The first is, roughly speaking, a kind of shorthand. One man tells another that such and such an itinerary is "the right way to Granchester," when he means that, by following this direction, anyone in the same circumstances, including the party addressed, will arrive at the desired destination in the quickest, most convenient way. For Wittgenstein, such a statement can be reduced "to a mere statement of fact," and so is therefore not a value judgment in the ethical sense that Moore is talking about, but, rather, a shorthand description of the real world. Wittgenstein characterizes all such statements of "correctness" as "trivial or relative." In contrast, questions of ethical judgment are of a different order. For example—and here Wittgenstein turns to Shakespeare—one might infer from Hamlet's response to Rosencrantz ("Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so") that he thinks "good and bad, though not qualities of the world, are attributes to our states of mind" (LE 6). If so, such a mistake would require more than the unpacking of the factual content of language used in giving directions to Granchester. Wittgenstein's point is that states of mind are describable parts of the world, and therefore cannot be, in any ethical sense, good or bad:

> If for instance in our world-book we read the description of a murder withall its details physical and psychological, the mere description of these facts will contain nothing which we could call an *ethical* proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event, for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotion, or we might read about the pain or rage caused by this murder in other people when they heard of it, but there will simply be facts, facts, and facts but no Ethics. (LE 6–7)

Wittgenstein imagines a "world-book"—something like Bacon's "Book of God's Creatures"—in effect, the world as science represents it. In this world, all sentences that sound like value judgments are not "value judgments" in the ethical sense. Here, Wittgenstein discriminates between what sounds like grammatically identical locutions. He argues that grammatical constructions can mislead; some are, some are not, "value judgments." This is not to say that Wittgenstein is using the term in an honorific sense. Rather, he distinguishes "value judgments" from truncated statements about the

world, in which judgments about facts of the world are themselves facts within the world, which must apply in every circumstance:

> *The* absolutely right road . . . would be a road which *everybody* on seeing it would, *with logical necessity*, have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly the *absolute good*, if it is a describable state of affairs, would be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would *necessarily* bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. (7)

This line of reasoning begins with a comparison between two apparently apposite judgments. Supposing that someone watching him play tennis observes that he plays "pretty badly," and Wittgenstein answers, "I know, I'm playing badly but I don't want to play any better" (LE 5). The answer might be, "Ah then that's all right." It is important to see that any rejoinder informed by indignation would look pathological. But not so with the second example:

> But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better," could he then say "Ah, then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you *ought* to want to behave better." (5)

For Wittgenstein, the "*ought* to" of such an "*ethical* judgment" carries one imaginatively beyond the world into the realm of the "supernatural" (7). Over a decade earlier, Wittgenstein entered this aphorism in his *Notebooks*: "Ethics is transcendental" (*NB* 79e), and, in 1929, he writes: "What is good is also divine. Queer as it sounds, that sums up my ethics. Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural" (*CV* 3e).

Wittgenstein's ethical views are consistent with his strenuously held views on language and the standard of "completeness." As his remarks on architecture, Mahler, and Shakespeare make clear, for Wittgenstein, the standard of "completeness" is not trivial. For instance, he does not say why he finds Mahler's music "useless," and Mendelessohn's lacking. Shakespeare's literary expressions fall short, too, but so does Wittgenstein's ability to articulate what is missing in each case. When we talk about value in the arts, we press toward the limits of language, and this notwithstanding the fact that natural languages are never complete. We can always create a neologism to say something about a particular case that has not been said in just that way before. But the fact is, too, that we are unaccustomed to talking about value in the arts, and this fact of ordinary language usage explains why Wittgenstein insists that "ethics and aesthetics are one" (*NB* 77e). Even when we try, we fall short, because in both ethics and aesthetics, the completion of our thoughts on their meaning—and by this he means

not a paraphrase or translation that improves on what we have said, but the significance of the subject in question in our lives—lies beyond the visible world. This lying beyond the visible world limits our ability fully to articulate the role these subjects play in our lives. For this reason, often with such matters in philosophy, we find ourselves on unfamiliar ground, and our usual ways of expression seem to fail us.

It seems to me that Wittgenstein's attitude toward language theory at Cambridge is in play here. Leavis recalls that Wittgenstein registered a tone of indignation regarding the critic's support of the "Basic English" movement, which had taken firm hold at Cambridge. "What is Basic English?" Wittgenstein asked "out of the blue," in a forceful manner. Apparently, he meant to confront Leavis on this important issue, one on which Leavis was soon to take a public stand in support of C. K. Ogden, the most visible proponent of the theory. Clearly, Leavis recognized the social and political significance of Ogden's theory of "Basic English," for he insisted, in accord with Ogden, that poetry belongs to the human race, as do science and philosophy, "as far as these may affect the sense of the human situation and of the nature of life" (Leavis 1930, 5). In *The System of Basic English* (1934), Ogden argues that education should stress "mass production and standardisation," which could be accomplished by simplifying language instruction. And as on numerous critical issues, Wittgenstein stood on the opposite side from Leavis and Ogden. In this case, Wittgenstein held Ogden's attempt to simplify the English language on a par with efforts on behalf of Esperanto: "Esperanto. The feeling of disgust we get if we utter an *invented* word with invented derivative syllables. The word is cold, lacking in associations, and yet it plays at being 'language.' A system of purely written signs would not disgust us so much" (*CV* 52e).[5] Rudolph Carnap remembers Wittgenstein's contempt for this designer language with particular clarity: "As I expected, Wittgenstein was definitely opposed to this idea. But I was surprised by the vehemence of his emotions. A language which had not 'grown organically' seemed to him not only useless but despicable" (Carnap 26).

After Leavis had replied to Wittgenstein's query, and explained Ogden's concept of "Basic English," Wittgenstein responded, "Would he do *that*?" Since in this context the pronoun could refer to either Ogden or Leavis, the question might sound odd. But the conversational style here is typical of Wittgenstein. He is thinking aloud about the linguistic issue involved. He rightly associates Leavis with Ogden's attempt to establish "a complete" "System of Basic English" (Ogden 1932, v) in which an "ideally simple language" (11) would replace the "Babel" of many languages. Proponents of the program would have the confusing array of tens of thousands of English words replaced by 850 English words, accompanied by a simple "Panopticon," "The Basic Word Wheel" (305), which would enable one to place any of the words from the "Basic English" list in the right order. Another improvement of the program was that "Latin traditions [would be] frankly abandoned" (6). With "Basic English," simplicity was the key.

From Ogden's point of view, "conveniently inscribed on one page," anyone could find "almost all the material which will ever be needed" (Ogden 1938, vii).

Why, Wittgenstein wonders aloud, would anyone want to do *that*? His visceral reaction suggests that the very notion of a "complete" language, artificially reduced to fit some preconceived ideal, is odd. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he would take up this very question:

> Ask yourself whether our language is complete;—whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language. (And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?) Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (*PI* §18)

Not only, at the time of his exchange with Leavis, does Wittgenstein register a low opinion of Ogden's theory of "Basic English," but he is direct in his criticism of *The Meaning of Meaning*, a "miserable book" (Monk, 214), although it was certainly a trendy one at the time. In it, C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards addressed what they took to be problems raised in the *Tractatus*, but Wittgenstein was not impressed. "Philosophy," he protested, "is not as easy as that!" As in Ogden's "Basic English" project, so in *The Meaning of Meaning*, Ogden and Richards advanced a mechanistic, cause and effect explanation of language, one that, Wittgenstein insisted, was wrongheaded in its theory of language, and completely missed the point of the *Tractatus*, besides.

In this context, we can infer that, in his exchange with Leavis, Wittgenstein does not mean to belittle Leavis for his naiveté. Rather—and typically—Wittgenstein, having pondered the matter involved in their discussion, argues in public with himself as interlocutor. Rightly associating Leavis with Ogden's theory of language, he omits only Leavis's flawed articulation of that argument; but in so doing, he implicitly affirms the significance of the issue at hand. Norman Malcolm offers a charitable characterization of Wittgenstein's habit in situations like this: "Wittgenstein had an extraordinary gift for divining the thoughts of the person with whom he was engaged in discussion. While the other struggled to put his thought into words, Wittgenstein would perceive what it was and state it for him" (Malcolm 55). Less generously, other contemporaries describe Wittgenstein's rapid style of speech, and a concomitant impatience in conversation. When arguing, Wittgenstein often preempted the opposition by articulating both—or all—sides of the question at issue in an unbroken stream of questions and answers: "'He doesn't give one a chance.'" He did

not so much speak as present a rapid-fire forum on whatever topic presented itself: "Wittgenstein can take all the sides himself; he answers before you've said it—you can't get in" (*CAP* 130). Setting aside social conventions, and considering Wittgenstein's unusual intellectual gifts, we should recognize this rhetorical strategy as part and parcel of his philosophical method and literary style. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he applies the same relentless give and take even to himself, sometimes responding to remarks in the *Tractatus*, in effect, making the author of the earlier work his interlocutor. Wittgenstein sums the matter up very well: "Nearly all my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tête-á-tête" (*CV* 77e).

Wittgenstein's rhetorical style reflects the ease and speed of his thought. He is not so much discourteous as he is concerned to present his interlocutor's argument in its clearest form. A "conversation" is not the same thing as a "dialogue," and it doesn't sound quite right to call them "monologues." Wittgenstein's "private conversations" seem to move more rapidly than the most famous of all philosophical dialogues. Wittgenstein loved Plato, but he was impatient with the so-called "Socratic method," which was never a serious clash of different opinions:

> Plato's arguments! His pretence of discussion! The Socratic irony! The Socratic method! The arguments were bad, the pretense of discussion too obvious, the Socratic irony distasteful—why can't a man be forthright and say what's on his mind? As for the Socratic method in the dialogues, it simply isn't there. The interlocutors are ninnies, never have any arguments of their own, say "Yes" and "No" as Socrates pleases they should. They are a stupid lot. No one really contends against Socrates. (*WC* 60)

The point is that Wittgenstein does not ridicule his interlocutor. Rather, he fashions his interlocutor's argument in its proper form, "completing" it in a "forthright" way, saying, in the particular case of his discussion with Leavis, what the theory of "Basic English" amounts to.

This feature of Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy affected some people, including Rudolph Carnap, as verging on the oracular. Wittgenstein's point of view and his attitude toward people and problems, even theoretical problems, "were much more similar to those of a creative artist than to those of a scientist; one might almost say, similar to those of a religious prophet or seer" (Carnap 25). What Leavis sees as intemperate "ejaculation," Carnap perceives as "a newly created piece of art or a divine revelation" (26). Wittgenstein's oracular pronouncements are, in effect, the product of redaction, which presents his interlocutor's argument in its clearest, most succinct form. Unlike the interlocutors of Socrates, those of Wittgenstein, including Leavis, aren't "ninnies." Instead, thanks to the help of their brilliant collaborator, they become coherent proponents of a

particular, if flawed, point of view. They "go on together" with Wittgenstein, as he goes "on together" with himself.

I am talking now about Wittgenstein's bemused tone, as he suggests that Leavis doesn't quite get the description of the Ogden–Leavis "system of Basic English" right: "Would he [really] do *that*?" On the rise at Cambridge at the time, the theory of "Basic English" was already shaping Leavis's *Mass Communication and Minority Culture* (1930). In his account of their exchange on the subject, Leavis characterizes the way Wittgenstein responded, as if he had already rehearsed all of the arguments, pro and con, and in the process noticed an anomaly in their every articulation. In effect, he fits Leavis's remarks into all that he knows about his and Ogden's "system," assumptions, and values, which he then shapes into expressions of a worthy interlocutor. As I have already suggested, sometimes—more than by chance, I think—that interlocutor is Wittgenstein himself. We see the best examples of this strategy perhaps in Sections 23, 97, and 114 of *Philosophical Investigations*, where the later Wittgenstein engages "the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" (*PI* §23) as his intelligent, informed, articulate interlocutor. It is wrong, I think, to say that these "conversations with [him]self" are a renunciation of the earlier work. They are more like observations on the same subject, looked at from a slightly different point of view, at a different time, with a slightly different purpose in mind.

Assuming that this analysis of Wittgenstein's stylistic technique of internalizing various sides of a dispute is correct, we are in a position to consider his views on Shakespeare, and even to challenge Leavis's claim that, at the time of his return to Cambridge, Wittgenstein was not well read. If familiarity with the canon of a classically trained Oxbridgean literary critic in the early twentieth century were the norm, Wittgenstein might not appear acquainted with "the great" literary tradition. Add to this his appetite for Betty Hutton and Carmen Miranda movies, compound that with the fact of his disdain for French and English films, and he might look to university patrons of high culture like a cultural philistine. But in fact Wittgenstein did know many of the great works of the Western tradition, especially the Bible.[6] Alexander Waugh points out that close reading of Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*, a book which Wittgenstein once said "'virtually kept [him] alive,'" shows in the numbered, aphoristic sentences of the *Tractatus* (Waugh 99–101). And besides Tolstoy, Wittgenstein knew the works of Augustine, Milton, Fox, Bunyan, Dr. Johnson, Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, Dickens, Ibsen, Trakl, and Rilke. He was especially fond of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, which he supposedly "knew . . . by heart" (*CAP* 144). Then there is the fact that he recognized the literary genius of Gottfried Keller (Malcolm 37–38). And, of course, he knew Shakespeare. Not only had Wittgenstein read many important authors in considerable depth, but he also made intelligent critical remarks about them. For instance, he pointed out that Tolstoy's *Resurrection* was marred by the narrator's intrusions to address the audience in discursive prose (Malcolm 43). Then too,

Wittgenstein had read enough Nietzsche, Newman, Freud, and Frazer to register thoughtful reservations about their thinking.[7]

More to the point of Leavis's criticism, however, is the fact that even he recognized Wittgenstein's formidable analytic powers, which were, even when applied to practical literary criticism—and this surprised Leavis—on a par with his own. When Wittgenstein braced Leavis with the instruction to "give up literary criticism," he was criticizing Leavis, mandarin advocate of The Great Tradition, not the enterprise of "understanding a poem," which Wittgenstein regarded as like any other skill, that is, one that could be learned, taught, and talked about. In the *Investigations*, he describes his philosophical method as akin to the practice of literary criticism: "This may be called an 'analysis' of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart" (*PI* §532). Mistakenly, Leavis thought that Wittgenstein was merely voicing the opinions of "the Bloomsbury *milieu*, in which he was 'Ludwig' to Keynes and company" (*CAP* 143), and so one unable to "imagine that literary criticism might matter intellectually."[8] In fact, circumstances forced Leavis to admit, though in a different context, that Wittgenstein was at least as capable of literary analysis as he. Once, in a somewhat confrontational mode, Wittgenstein insisted that, if Leavis admired a certain poem—William Empson's "Legal Fiction" was the one in question—then he could describe it.[9] Leavis recalls reading the poem at Wittgenstein's insistence:

> When I had read it, Wittgenstein said, 'Explain it!' So I began to do so, taking the first line first. 'Oh! I understand that,' he interrupted, and, looking over my arm at the text, 'But what does this mean?' He pointed two or three lines on. At the third or fourth interruption of the same kind I shut the book, and said, 'I'm not playing.' 'It's perfectly plain that you don't understand the poem in the least,' he said. 'Give me the book.' I complied, and sure enough, without any difficulty, he went through the poem, explaining the analogical structure that I should have explained myself, if he had allowed me. (*CAP* 144–45)

Here again we see Wittgenstein impatiently preempting his interlocutor, anxious to get to the core matter of how the sequence of Empson's poem unfolds. Effortlessly, Wittgenstein explains "the analogical structure" of "Legal Fiction" just as Leavis would have. Leavis complains only about Wittgenstein's typically obtrusive, preemptive style; he intrudes to "do Leavis on Empson" as well as Leavis would have done, if only Wittgenstein had allowed him.

Returning to the question of Wittgenstein's reading, then, it seems to me that Leavis did not understand in what low esteem Wittgenstein held the level of intellectual life at the university. He was never "'Ludwig' to Keynes and company" in "the Bloomsbury *milieu*." In fact, Wittgenstein was more likely than not to hold himself at a distance from the predictably

fashionable views of the privileged intellectuals at Cambridge. Consider the conventional professorial wisdom on Shakespeare, for instance; here, Wittgenstein registered disdain. "I am *deeply* suspicious," he mused, "of most of Shakespeare's admirers" (*CV* 84e). Ray Monk has written about Wittgenstein's unease with the social culture of Bloomsbury, but the entrenched views on Shakespeare—the question of Shakespeare's achievement—seems to concern two intellectual and cultural difficulties. First, and most obviously, Wittgenstein was of the opinion that professors like Leavis were wrong in their estimate of Shakespeare, and second, he could not say why. With regard to Shakespeare's standing in among "distinguished men," he observes:

> It is remarkable how hard we find it to believe something that we do not see the truth of for ourselves. When, for instance, I heard the expression of admiration for Shakespeare by distinguished men in the course of several centuries, I can never rid myself of the suspicion that praising him has been the conventional thing to do; though I have to tell myself that this is not how it is. (*CV* 48e)

How can he affirm a valuation that he cannot perceive? Suspicion surrounds the question of custom; centuries establish conventions, but somehow, because he cannot see it for himself, Wittgenstein cannot affirm the "truth" of this particular cultural judgment. The implication is that men are "distinguished" because they do "the conventional thing," namely, express "admiration for Shakespeare." But since custom rings hollow in his case, Wittgenstein is suspicious, and so tells himself that "the truth" must be otherwise.

If Wittgenstein cannot "see the truth" of conventional wisdom on Shakespeare, neither can he see its falsity either. What he experiences is suspicion. But why be suspicious of the customary praise of Shakespeare on the part of "distinguished men in the course of several centuries"? Although Wittgenstein does not exactly answer this question, he does go on to say that he can believe in "the authority of a *Milton*," because he takes "for granted that he was incorruptible." It would be hard to ignore this comparison between Shakespeare and Milton, which is, at bottom, moral. In sharp contrast between the two great poets, Milton has what Shakespeare lacks, namely, "authority." Moreover, for Wittgenstein, this authority is persuasive in a way centuries of admiration on the part of distinguished men is not. Given this outlook, it is not surprising that Wittgenstein believes that an "enormous amount of praise" has been, and continues to be, "lavished on Shakespeare without understanding and for the wrong reasons by a thousand professors of literature."

We have a way here, I think, of better understanding Wittgenstein's difficulties with Shakespeare. The first difficulty mentioned above—the sense that Shakespeare's "authority" was somehow askew—is compounded by a

second. Wittgenstein seems to recognize that, in one way like these "thousand professors of literature" who have gotten Shakespeare all wrong, he does not understand Shakespeare either:

> The reason why I cannot understand Shakespeare is that I want to find symmetry in all this asymmetry.
>
> His pieces give me an impression as of enormous *sketches* rather than of paintings; as though they had been *dashed off* by someone who can permit himself *anything*, so to speak. And I understand how someone can admire that and call *it supreme* art, but I don't like it.—So if someone stands in front of these pieces speechless, I can understand him; but anyone who admires them as one admires, say, Beethoven, seems to me to misunderstand Shakespeare. (*CV* 86e)

The distinction here between a sketch and a painting suggests Wittgenstein's equivocal reaction. It seems to him that Shakespeare's "enormous" project is out of control, "*dashed off*," and so, lacking in art. Worse, Wittgenstein perceives an underlying self-indulgence; we cannot miss the sense of Wittgenstein's moral indignation. It is not only that Shakespeare is careless; "idolater" Ben Jonson wrote, in answer to those who said that Shakespeare never blotted a line, that he "would he had blotted a thousand." But Wittgenstein seems to go further; he thinks that, not only does Shakespeare not care about stylistic niceties, but he has no concern for ethical consequences. Shakespeare is unrestrained, undisciplined, in both areas.

Unlike a painting, a sketch often leaves a part, sometimes the greater part, of the surface untouched. In the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein compares his work to an album of sketches, as distinct from pictures. These sketches register impressions received through many passages across the "same" terrain, at different times of day, on clear and cloudy days, at different times of the year, and so on. Of course, the sketches do not "represent" the landscape in the way a picture does, but rather they express different moods, as well as perceptions, experienced in and by an ever-changing landscape, as the speaker traversed the terrain, never taking exactly the same steps. So the sketches of the landscape bear a certain "family resemblance," in that, say, individually, they would be recognized by people familiar with the terrain. Wittgenstein's figure of Shakespeare's works as paintings "*dashed off*" exhibits irritation because, I suspect, there is something about Shakespeare's "sketches" that he finds unnerving, so much so that he dislikes them. Hence, the comparison with Milton, and the implication that Shakespeare is, in some measure, "corruptible," and perhaps even "corrupt." Thus, Wittgenstein continues, "a thousand professors of literature" praise Shakespeare for all of the wrong reasons. They either cannot or will not recognize how he is lacking in "authority," that is, in the "authority of a *Milton*." I think we can see, now, that, for Wittgenstein, Milton's "authority" is moral "authority." Milton would not simply "permit himself *anything*."

The fact is that Wittgenstein does not abandon Shakespeare with this judgment of moral "incompleteness"; he seems to recognize, if begrudgingly, something deeply moving in Shakespeare, a something that he cannot quite put into words: "I could only stare in wonder at Shakespeare; never do anything with him" (*CV* 84e). We are talking now, I think, about Wittgenstein's skepticism toward subcategories of the language, specialized vocabularies, for instance, especially those favored by "professors of literature." More generally, Wittgenstein's suspicion of the language of valuation—perhaps I should say overvaluation—falls within his insistence on the limits of articulation. Many feelings, attitudes, and beliefs that play important roles in our lives simply cannot be put into words. Perhaps what English culture finds in Shakespeare transcends the limits of our (or at least of Wittgenstein's) capacity to articulate:

> It may be that the essential thing with Shakespeare is his ease and authority and that you just have to accept him as he is if you are going to be able to admire him properly, in the way you accept nature, a piece of scenery for example, just as it is. . . . That is, as one views a splendid piece of scenery. (*CV* 49e)

Again, Wittgenstein thinks of scenery in relation to his reaction to Shakespeare, but now the subject of a "sketch" comes to mind, not an "enormous" sketch "*dashed off*" without concern, but "a splendid piece of scenery," unmediated by an artist's hand. Only a madman remonstrates with "a piece of scenery." A reasonable person accepts, and, in this case, "properly" admires Shakespeare by so doing. This species of experience, which transcends articulation, does not fall under the calumny rightly aimed at "a thousand professors of literature," precisely because it bears no taint of the vaunted praise of misguided academics.

At the same time, Wittgenstein makes clear that, in his remarks on Shakespeare as a natural phenomenon, like a landscape, he is only speculating. For the fact is that he cannot quite "accept" Shakespeare "as one views a splendid piece of scenery." Instead, he "could only stare in wonder at Shakespeare." So, as we have seen, Wittgenstein is as dubious of his perceptions of Shakespeare as he is of what "a thousand professors of literature" say about say about him. With respect to the latter, he continues: "The misfortune is, I believe, that he stands by himself, at least in the culture of the west, so that one can only place him by placing him wrongly" (*CV* 84e). In order not to "place" Wittgenstein's remarks on Shakespeare "wrongly," we must consider them, I think, in the context of his objections to the views of Leavis, Ogden, and Richards on the matter of "constructed" languages. In this context, his reservations on Shakespeare may sound at first like Voltaire's notorious defamations, but they are, in fact, consistent with his considered views on the limits of language, which certainly include the doubts he had about his own command of the English, which was, after

all, Wittgenstein's second language. Even his assertion that Shakespeare did not deserve comparison with Beethoven sounds like little more than recycled Otto Weininger (whom Wittgenstein recognizes as a major influence on his thinking, along with others, including Spengler and Russell [*CV* 19e]).[10] And even in his echoes from Otto Weininger, Wittgenstein qualifies what seems to be a rather harsh judgment: "'Beethoven's great heart'—nobody could speak of 'Shakespeare's great heart.' 'The supple hand that created new natural linguistic forms' would seem to me nearer the mark" (*CV* 84e).

Without doubt, Wittgenstein thinks that Shakespeare's "supple hand" was capable of mistakes—in diction, for instance:

> Shakespeare's similes are, *in the ordinary sense*, bad. So if they are all the same good—and I don't know whether they are or not—they must be a law to themselves. Perhaps, e.g. their ring gives them plausibility and truth. . . .
>
> If I am right about this, that would mean that the style of his whole work, I mean of all his works taken together, is the essential thing and what provides his justification. (*CV* 49e)

So Wittgenstein does insist that "Shakespeare's similes are . . . bad," but only "*in the ordinary sense*," which, as we might expect with Wittgenstein, is justified. What is less clear is how we can say that Shakespeare's similes are "good," if they are "good," which Wittgenstein admits that he does not know. Given the all-important "if" here, Wittgenstein says that it must be the case that the usual rules for the use of similes do not apply in this case. Shakespeare's similes follow the law that they establish; and it is in those similes that admiration of Shakespeare must be justified. Wittgenstein allows that he might be mistaken in his judgment ("It may be," "If I am right"), but he insists that grounds of propriety precedes justified admiration. And he finds those grounds in the "law" of "plausibility and truth," which govern the totality of Shakespeare works.

It seems to me, then, that Wittgenstein's critique of Shakespeare is an expression of his view of language in general. As such, it is far from the "truth" talk that dominates nineteenth- and twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism. Wittgenstein insists that Shakespeare's human portraiture is "all wrong, things *aren't like that* . . . In other words he is completely unrealistic" (*CV* 83a). His claim that Shakespeare's picture of Renaissance England is "all wrong" puts him, of course, at the far pole, too, from Johann Herder, who, like many of his Enlightenment colleagues, believed that Shakespeare presented the Elizabethan world in its awesome, majestic, terrible, true multiplicity. On the contrary, says Wittgenstein, people never were as Shakespeare presents them. But, for him, the matter of Shakespeare's greatness does not end with a denial of "truth" claims that others have made regarding his works. Rather, "if Shakespeare is great, as he is said to be, then it

must be possible to say of him: it's all wrong, things *aren't like that*—and yet at the same time it's quite right according to a law of its own."

For Wittgenstein, that law is like the grammar of a particular language. The rules apply only within the reach of Shakespeare's world. In this connection, we should recall the entry of the *Tractatus*: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (*TLP* 5.6). Wittgenstein's many remarks on Shakespeare's reputation exhibit an effort to get past the silence of just "staring" at him, as if he were a phenomenon of nature rather than a creation of the artist's hand—to "do" something rather than nothing, to transcend the silence of his inability to say something sensible about Shakespeare. "If Shakespeare is great," Wittgenstein insists, then there must be ways in which the rules that apply make his portraiture seem "quite right," despite its being "all wrong." And this is precisely the case, because Shakespeare's plays are "like a dream" (*CV* 893a). The "dream rightness" of Shakespeare's representations does not derive from their correspondence to the way things are—or were—in the world: "It is *not* as though Shakespeare portrayed human types well and were in that respect *true to life*. He is *not* true to life."

Implicitly, then, there is something "wrong" about the thought of critics whose admiration of Shakespeare depends on one or another variation of the "correspondence theory" of truth (of "accurate" portraiture, for instance). We can see, then, why Wittgenstein is suspicious of the conventional explanations of literary critics like Leavis which depend on something like a standard set of comparisons within an established literary canon. In its workings, it too much resembles the "Panopticon" of "Basic English." In opposition to this mechanical system, Wittgenstein states a fact, followed by a question: "I do not believe that Shakespeare can be set alongside any other poet. Was he perhaps a *creator of language* rather than a poet?" (*CV* 84e). It seems to me that Wittgenstein suggests an affirmative answer here: "He is *not true* to life. But he has such a supple hand and his *brush strokes* are so individual, that each one of his characters looks *significant*, is worth looking at" (84e). Although Wittgenstein considered the distinction between "meaning" and "significance" important, it is not one much appreciated by Ogden and Richards, at least not as Wittgenstein understood their *Meaning of Meaning*.

Wittgenstein responds here, I think, to a perceived Whiggish attitude of the apostles of "Basic English" and "the Great Tradition," which he finds apposite to the ethnocentrism of Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Like Frazer, Leavis and his colleagues seemed to think that evolution and civilization aimed at, and ended in, late-nineteenth, early-twentieth-century English culture. That historical perspective skewed their understanding of different cultural attitudes and values. From Wittgenstein's point of view, different languages and different cultures embody different worlds of values, and this fact makes it difficult for us, as outsiders, to "find our feet." For this reason, Wittgenstein questions his own response to Shakespeare,

which may be limited by his cultural background : "I believe that if one is to enjoy a writer one has to *like* the culture he belongs to as well. If one finds it indifferent or distasteful, one's admiration cools off" (*CV* 85e). It is not that English was not Wittgenstein's first language; neither was Bengali, but he was very fond of Rabindranath Tagore. Wittgenstein argued that Shakespeare's plays created "their *own* language" (*CV* 83e). In "A Lecture on Ethics," he reminded his audience "that English is not [his] native tongue and [that his] expression therefore often lacks that precision and subtlety which would be desirable if one talks about a difficult subject" (LE 3). Implicitly, Wittgenstein allows that his understanding of Shakespeare is beclouded, not only by the fact that English was not his native language, but, more importantly, by the fact that Shakespeare built his own "suburb," to use Wittgenstein's figure, of the English language presumably, a "suburb" of Elizabethan and Jacobean English. Notice how this remark on Shakespeare's English fits with the way in which Wittgenstein softens his critique of the Socratic dialogues: "Perhaps Plato is no good, perhaps he's very good. How should I know? But if he is good, he's doing something which is foreign to us. We do not understand. Perhaps if I could read Greek!" (Bouwsma 60). We need not believe that Elizabethan English was "Greek" to Wittgenstein to appreciate the importance of his confession that he did not read Shakespeare "*easily.*"

The point is that the natural skill of articulation is more likely to fail us when we are not going about our usual activities in our usual way, dealing with the cashier at the market, for instance. Notice how the problems that academics have with the uncertainties of language seem of so little consequence there. This is *a fortiori* true when we are trying to come to terms with foreign languages or strange practices or literature of a distant time or place. Special vocabularies of literary theory or philosophy may "bewitch" us. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with the language, or with us, but only that we are not used to talking, say, in the manner of "a thousand professors of literature." In "Memories of Wittgenstein," M. O'C. Drury recalls, when asked about Hegel's philosophy, Wittgenstein responded:

> Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different. I was thinking of using as a motto for my book a quotation from *King Lear*: "I'll teach you differences." (*RW* 157)

Having said this, he laughed, adding that it "wouldn't be a bad motto [for *Philosophical Investigations*] either." Perhaps Kent's exhortation would have made a good motto for the *Investigations*, but I doubt that it would work if it conveyed the significance that Shakespeare's Kent had in mind. He wants Oswald to show respect for Lear's social rank, or, as he puts it,

his "authority," which is hardly a matter of concern in the *Investigations*. My guess would be that Wittgenstein understood Kent's meaning very well, but chose to ignore the significance of his remark. Wittgenstein brushes aside the cultural importance of social rank that functions so powerfully in *King Lear*, as it does in many Shakespeare plays, and in Elizabethan and Jacobean society at large. "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (*TLP* 5, 6), Wittgenstein writes. One cannot put everything that one feels or values into words, because certain values "lie beyond" the individual's "world-book." Accordingly, sometimes, responding to certain types of philosophical questions in such a way as to reiterate his thesis that ethics and aesthetics "cannot be put into words," sometimes, when in front of his class, Wittgenstein would end a long silence by reciting a poem, just as he would conclude his experience of Shakespeare, staring in wonder, unable to "do anything with him." It seems to me that, unlike Herder, Wittgenstein draws back from Shakespeare and the seeming anarchy of the Renaissance English culture that surrounded him. The same collision of ranks and aspirations that enraptured Herder put Wittgenstein off.

Remember the famous close of the *Tractatus*: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." Wittgenstein not only confesses his unease with Shakespeare. It seems to me that he concedes the limits of his experience with the English language, but also those of his genteel, Austrian upbringing. In his attempt to come to terms with Shakespeare, we see him, at least partly, unwilling to remain silent, rattling instead against the limits of his language like the fly in the fly-bottle (*PI* §90). Of course, he knew better: "In art it is hard to say anything as good as: saying nothing" (*CV* 23e). He knew that, in literary criticism, it is difficult, but not impossible, to say anything helpful, and also that it might be, even knowing this, still harder to remain silent. He told Leavis to "Give up literary criticism," and yet, where Shakespeare was concerned, he was tempted to talk in ways that had him "run against the boundaries of language," like an animal "running against the walls of its cage" (LE 12). Like Ogden and Richards, at times, he gave in to the temptation of thinking that all one needs is the right words, and one will be able to say something sensible about Shakespeare. But at other times, he recognized that he could not put his unease, any more than his wonder, into words. As he neared the end of his life, and was writing *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein reminds himself, and perhaps all of his interlocutors, that whether one is doing literary theory or philosophy, one is susceptible to the "bewitchment" of august ways of talking. In this particular situation, he means only to put a newcomer, who enters the room in the midst of conversation, at ease, by assuring him that he has not walked into a lunatic asylum: "This fellow's not insane. We are only doing philosophy" (*OC* 61e).

9 Shakespeare and "The Litrification of Philosophy"

Not long ago, I came across a book entitled *The Baumgarten Corruption: From Sense to Nonsense in Art and Philosophy*, a good part of which is given over to discussion of the importance of Wittgenstein in modern philosophy. "Corruption" is always an interesting topic, but at the time, newspaper and television reports were full of talk about "corporate" and "government corruption," which made the book sound all the more intriguing. I was not disappointed when the first sentence perfectly followed from the spirited title of the book: "Alexander Baumgarten corrupted the Greek word for sensible when he used it in the philosophical discourse on 'taste'" (Dixon 1995, 1). According to Robert Dixon, the corruption of "Art and Philosophy" began during the Enlightenment, in fact, right in the middle of the century of Shaftesbury, Hume, Hamann, Herder, Smith, Kant, and all the other luminaries of the eighteenth century. As a result of this single error, "the word *aesthetic* came to be misapplied in modern languages." Furthermore, had this one mistake been limited to valuations of art objects, probably there would have been no significant philosophical impact, and therefore no need for Dixon, or anyone else, to complain. But the impact was not so limited, and Dixon does complain about the way in which the "Baumgarten Corruption" fixed matters in such a way that academic discussion of philosophy, as well as of art, "might be largely explained as displaced religiosity." Indeed, as a result of "this philosophical mistake," intellectual corruption cannot be isolated—even today—to one domain of philosophical discourse, or even to only a few philosophers. All of society is permeated by this one mistake: "It colonises the educated mind and is enshrined in public policy and public-funded infrastructure. In other words, it has become a philosophical problem of 'cultural production'" (1).

In explaining this ominous situation, Dixon distinguishes between philosophy "in a universal sense" and in the sense that Wittgenstein characterized as "an engine idling in neutral," namely "the Philosophy he encountered and inherited in Cambridge" (Dixon 1995, 133). Throughout the book, Dixon capitalizes "Philosophy" to indicate the sense of a "professional" identity, which he thinks bears only a "theatrical correspondence to philosophy—no less a quirky parody than Art is of art," hence, the significance of the

"The Baumgarten Corruption." Unlike some polemicists in the "culture war," Dixon does not see the current "mess in Academia" solely in terms of the conflict between the Analytic and Continental partisans operating as adversaries in academic departments. Rather, he thinks that these supposed antagonists, alike, think and write in a manner symptomatic of the same "corruption" of philosophy. Wittgenstein's standing in "Philosophy" is Dixon's primary example, albeit one that has been egregiously misunderstood, of what is wrong with "Philosophy"; and the malaise that besets the discipline, he argues, can be best seen in the reactions of Ernest Gellner and Bertrand Russell to Wittgenstein.

It is important to Dixon's thesis that Wittgenstein is misunderstood. For unlike Gellner, Dixon does not find Wittgenstein symptomatic of all that is wrong with modern "Philosophy." On the contrary, he argues that Wittgenstein is in agreement with Gellner on the wretched state of the profession. For Dixon, the problem here is technical: "The scripts which Wittgenstein left English Philosophy record the poorly written thoughts of a rich foreigner not disposed to play the Cambridge game of metaphysical riddles as if they were real problems," hence, the relevance of Wittgenstein's figure of "Philosophy" as an "engine idling." Wittgenstein was not, as Gellner portrays him, the "arch-villain of "Philosophy":

> Being earnest and honest he tried to comment on the game, but it all came out in the staccato ramblings of a man who had been made professor of Philosophy not because of any skill with prose or mathematics; but because he was a son of the richest industrialist in Austria, whose home was open house to many famous musicians and artists of Vienna in its heyday—just the man that the high bourgeois Russell accept for his protégé. (Dixon 1995, 5)

It is hard to miss the tone of indignation here. Clearly, Dixon shares Wittgenstein's low opinion of academic "Philosophy," with its established canon, just like those of other disciplines (Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and so on down to Russell and Wittgenstein). Moreover, "Philosophy" has well-established "supraquestions," which lead to fields, such as Metaphysics, Ethics, Epistemology, Aesthetics, and so on. Supposedly like Wittgenstein, Dixon is annoyed with the presumption that "Philosophy" lends itself to research, as if, with the proper infusion of research funds, these "supraquestions" can actually lead to answers (13).

Gellner's attack on linguistic philosophy, aimed especially at Wittgenstein, was that it had reduced the world to the partial explanations of science: "It is as if science has shone a cold light on the world and replaced meaning with knowledge" (Dixon 1995, 116–17). In other words, Gellner argues, in modern culture, "meaning" has routed "significance." From Gellner's point of view, in fact, the reductive practices of "analytical philosophy" emerged victorious in the profession, and "it is significant that

it continues to regard Wittgenstein as the pre-eminent twentieth-century Philosopher" (117).[1] Just as it does not bode well for philosophy or the world that Dixon capitalizes the category which consensus accords to Wittgenstein, so it is telling that Gellner compares the *Tractatus* to "poetic utterance," more like Eliot's *The Wasteland* than serious philosophical discourse. Although apparently in agreement with Gellner on the pernicious trend in modern philosophy of which the rise of Wittgenstein is a symptom, nevertheless, Dixon rightly points out that Wittgenstein calls most of the assertions in *Philosophical Investigations* "nonsense," a category of utterance to which, in his *Tractatus* and "Lecture on Ethics," he consigns both ethics and aesthetics.

Dixon's complaint is that philosophy has become "Philosophy" in much the same way that art has become "Art." For him, the field has become mystified by professional practitioners: "A subject called Philosophy at our universities is apt to create the illusion that answers of one kind or another exist to these [philosophical] questions in an expert form, involving specialist techniques for ordering them and answering them, with or without lively debate" (Dixon 1995, 133). The problem, which has infected the intellect, is actually curricular: "As an academic subject, Philosophy must restrict the scope of its activities to something resembling a branch of knowledge" (134). But, Dixon writes, philosophy is not like physics; there can be no debate about the data, for if there were, "Philosophy" would be exposed, not as a field of knowledge, but in its true function in society, as a defender of "law, religion and custom" (134). This is not to deny that society has found "Philosophy" useful as a learning center, to train "suitable young persons" in law, government, and diplomacy. It grooms them to work for which "verbal dexterity and the ability to argue the hind leg off a donkey may be prime requisites for the job." To accomplish this task, academic departments of "Philosophy" must seem to offer a field of knowledge, but this is the one thing it cannot be: "Sights and sounds and smells and tastes and feelings and experiences are aesthetic but laws and theories and beliefs and religions are noetic" (176). And here, writes Dixon, lies a seemingly insoluble problem, and hence, the scandal: There is no body of knowledge in "Philosophy," only texts. Since everyone is in a position to know the scandal in the field, no one wants to be the "whistle-blower, for that would mean the jettisoning of grant money, and tenured appointments in "Philosophy" manqué.

That said, Dixon insists, the scandal cannot be denied: There has been a transformation of "Philosophy" into a species of literary criticism. Departments of "Philosophy" assign articles and books from the established canon, just as do Departments of English, French, German, Comparative Literature, and Classics. Indeed, often the same books will be on the reading lists of any or all of these supposed disciplines, and others—Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Gender Studies, Queer Studies—too. Worse, in support of this homogenization, academic administrators all over the Western

world support "interdisciplinary studies," furthering the deception that there is something to be "discovered" and "known" in the humanities. So now "Philosophy" has become only one of many branches of literary criticism: "If we correctly audit the intellectual acts of Philosophy we discover that it is a form of literary studies" (Dixon 1995, 144). As in the various literary departments, in "Philosophy," "the chief purpose to which a canon of exotic and ambiguous literature is put is the social purpose of group membership and identification" (146).

Dixon is aware that deciding what Plato, Descartes, Kant, or Wittgenstein meant by this or that obscure utterance has always been a literary question. Since there can be no established canon of interpretations of the literature of philosophy, in what Dixon calls the "universal" sense of the term, we are left with a canon of literature, that is, "Philosophy"; and so it is that "Philosophy" today stands right there with other literary genres: the romance, the novel, the drama, the epic, autobiography, and, of course, literary criticism. Dixon is at pains to point out that Socrates addressed philosophical questions, but left no texts. Further, no bibliographies accompany the philosophy of Plato, Descartes, Kant, or Wittgenstein: "In the case of Philosophy, however, there is no agreed body of knowledge and no successful process of enquiry" (Dixon 1995, 147). "Philosophy" has become a game of paraphrase of such "tricky literature" as "Adorno, Hayek, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein" (147–48). If the discipline were recognized as such, Dixon would have no objection. The danger that he perceives comes from "confusing literary studies with philosophy" (148).

I have no reason to argue for or against the program that Dixon lays out to dismantle what he takes to be the corrupt system of academic "Philosophy." What interests me is Dixon's thesis that a shift in philosophical focus has already occurred: "I propose the term *litrification* to denote the substitution of a non-literary object of study by a literary object of study" (Dixon 1995, 151). I am interested, also, in the way in which that thesis is accompanied by a certain tone, typified by the title of the penultimate chapter of *The Baumgarten Corruption*: "The *Litrification* of Philosophy." It sounds as if, by an infusion of foreign material, a wellspring that was once pure "philosophy" has been contaminated. In Dixon's lexicon, "*Litrification*" sounds like "*Putrefaction*." Accordingly, canonization is the outward sign of inner corruption. It seems that Dixon came to the discovery of this transformation from purity to sepsis after deciding to study the "later Wittgenstein" (134), given his understanding that Wittgenstein was "the foremost philosopher of the modern analytical tradition" (135).

Although he matriculated on the assumption that he would master a field like mathematics or physics, Dixon came to see that it was "fake." Rather than learning a subject, he was internalizing established texts and privileged interpretations. Dixon takes Stanley Cavell, who has written extensively on Shakespeare, as a good example of "the illogicality and evasion" of this

phony situation in "Philosophy." Cavell, Dixon writes, is "an American professor of Philosophy who stumbled on the following propositions:

> *a:* Philosophy is phenomenological
> *b:* Philosophy is not arguable (Dixon 1995, 139)

Since what cannot be argued is immune to examination, it is therefore unsuited as subject matter "for an academic course." Any legitimate academic interest must, perforce, lie outside the content of the subject matter of "Philosophy." And why is this? Because "Philosophy does not attempt to evaluate phenomenology of students or professors" (139). Instead, students and professors set about reading and discussing "set books and authors," just as do students and professors of literature departments. Since phenomenology is largely dismissed to the "Continent," Anglophone departments of "Philosophy," in effect, agree that it does not entail propositions. In effect, phenomenology says nothing. But since everyone also agrees "that the later Wittgenstein is a pre-eminent contributor to Philosophy, and that Philosophy is supposed to be an academic discipline," obviously, "Philosophy" is in a quandary, which is to say "caught up" in a paradox, which goes like this:

> Philosophy is a university subject;
> Wittgenstein is Philosophy;
> Wittgenstein is phenomenology;
> phenomenology is not thesis;
> therefore Philosophy is not a university subject. (139)

Happily, from his point of view, Dixon would not let Cavell take us into inhospitable terrain from which there is no escape. When confronted by a *reductio ad absurdum*, mathematicians "reject the premise," which propels an argument to "its own contradiction." Dixon, a mathematician, is the author of *Mathographics* (1987), which was "inspired" by the "staff of *New Science*" to which he has contributed numerous essays (Dixon 1987: vi, 207, respectively). For him, "the world, and also its beauty, might be studied mathematically" (vi). So understandably, he goes right to the problem, which is Proposition *a*. He reminds us that, in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein suggests that there are no theses in philosophy: "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (*PI* §128). Accordingly, in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (1969), Cavell rephrases this statement this way: "There is virtually nothing in the *Investigations* which we would ordinarily call reasoning; Wittgenstein asserts nothing which could be proved, (and only what is) obvious'" (Dixon 1995, 137). Dixon then explains that Wittgenstein is often considered obscure because of the "key fact" of "his poor ability to write prose" (137). Dixon takes exception

to Cavell's classification of Wittgenstein's knowledge as "knowing-what-we-mean" (138), because it blandly ignores the obvious implication that, should this definition be taken seriously, the entire enterprise of academic "Philosophy" must immediately collapse. In fact, Dixon insists, Wittgenstein specifically repudiated this "phenomenological" approach.

Chapter 7 dealt with the way in which pragmatists like James and Dewey tried to expand the purview of philosophical inquiry. They sought to incorporate subjects which, because they were thought not open to empirical investigation, had been more or less excluded from philosophical discourse. Their efforts meant that, in practice, religious and artistic experience became legitimate subjects of philosophical conversation. To some perhaps more traditional pragmatists, this shift in focus seemed to be aimed at collapsing important philosophical boundaries. In the century after James, thinkers like Gellner resisted this trend. It seems fair to say that when Gellner "categorises the writing in *Tractatus* as poetic utterance, and compares it to T. S. Eliot" (Dixon 1995, 119), he does so in an accusatory tone. And there might be an equivocal tone in Renan Springer de Freitas's characterization of the "Wittgensteinian pragmatism of Richard Rorty" (Freitas 145). For Carnap is not alone in his belief that Wittgenstein is writing imaginative literature rather than "doing philosophy." Dixon insists that "Philosophy is becoming an act of homage to a new canon of tricky literature" (Dixon 1995, 148); he thinks that the work of Stanley Cavell proves his point.

Again, Wittgenstein and literary criticism come into focus, as no philosopher that I know of has written more extensively on both subjects than Stanley Cavell. To begin with, Cavell's academic credentials are in philosophy. He studied under the renowned analytic philosopher J. L. Austin, and he has written many books on modern philosophers, including Wittgenstein. However, unlike Richard Rorty, whose name has also been linked to Wittgenstein, Cavell has written many distinguished books and articles on such literary subjects as Shakespeare, Emerson, Thoreau, Romanticism, and film. These books will be found—in some libraries, many floors away from *The Claim of Reason* and *Must We Mean What We Say*—bearing the Library of Congress catalogue designations "PN," "PR," and "PS." Here, we are especially interested in Cavell's writings on Shakespeare. In Chapter 2, we touched briefly on Cavell's argument that Shakespeare's *King Lear* articulates a view tantamount to philosophical skepticism. Now we must take a closer look at Cavell as one the most notable examples of what Dixon calls "The *Litrification* of Philosophy."

In a candid, personal "Preface to the Updated Edition" of *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, Cavell confesses to feeling *uneasy* with his sense that some readers feel *uneasy* with his philosophy-centered reading of certain Shakespeare plays. But how much sense would it make, he asks, if the greatest writer in the English language demurred from engaging "the depths of the philosophical preoccupations of his culture?" (Cavell 2003, 2). This rhetorical question does not carry the weight

of Cavell's statement comparing Shakespeare with Descartes: "My intuition is that the advent of skepticism as manifested in Descartes *Meditations* is already in full existence in Shakespeare" (3). It seems to me that former remark is much like A. D. Nuttall's stronger assertion, discussed in Chapter 1, that "if we set aside technological advances like mobile telephones, it is remarkably hard to think of anything Shakespeare had not thought of first" (Nuttall 265).

In coming to terms with Cavell's project, I think it might be helpful to compare the depth of feeling implicit in Dixon's invective ("The *Litrification* of Philosophy") with Cavell's hesitant, even apologetic, tone. Cavell seems diffident in regard to the standing of his interdisciplinary study. His problem is that American philosophy has settled on two sources, and he "edges" towards both. There is the scientific trend, stemming from Peirce and Dewey (subjects of Chapter 7). Cavell clearly associates his thinking with the empirical, experimental aims of these pragmatists. But he cannot separate himself from influence of transcendentalism—the philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau—which has been so important to the development of American thought. Cavell favors American transcendentalism, too, and he favors it, not in spite of, but because of, its "oddness." You might say that Emerson and Thoreau go against the grain of everything that Cavell learned from Austin and the Anglophone analytic tradition. So, in the transcendental tradition, Cavell explicitly distances his critical perspective from approaches "where so-called literary works would become kinds of illustrations of matters already independently known" (Cavell 2003, 179).

In a literary departure from the usual ways of doing philosophy in the analytic tradition, Cavell would see the tragedies of Shakespeare as studies in skepticism, proper. And in so doing, he chooses a mode of exchange, of "thinking and writing that would find, as it were, the membrane between the past of literature and the present of science" (Cavell 2003, 180). This exchange he calls philosophy. According to the protocols of this philosophical mode, what Cavell says about Hamlet functions as an ostensive definition of both "literary criticism" and "philosophy." In the example at hand, the case of Hamlet involves Freud and W. W. Greg. At about the same time Freud published his remarks on "Infantile Neurosis," Greg published "Hamlet's Hallucination"; in this essay on the dumb show, he argued that Claudius does not recognize the murder scene as represented, and so did not murder Hamlet Senior in the manner described by the Ghost, in the manner mimed in the dumb show, and enacted in "The Murder of Gonzago." While Cavell demurs at Greg's claim that his "one rational conclusion," that "*Claudius did not murder his brother by pouring poison into his ear*" is "as certain as anything in criticism can be," Cavell does assert the more modest claim: "it does strike me that no one, to my knowledge, has satisfactorily answered Greg's claim" (180).

It is possible, as Harold Jenkins points out, that Claudius did not see the dumb show. Or, Cavell reasons, along with Dover Wilson, that he saw it

but was able to control his reactions. The question is not whether Claudius murdered Hamlet Senior, but only how he did it. Cavell insists that it is not helpful to ignore the manner in which anyone, in particular Hamlet's father, is killed. *Hamlet* is, after all, a revenge tragedy. The "intuition" that appeals to Cavell is, as Greg has demonstrated, that the Ghost's murder narrative is nothing but Hamlet's imagination. Further, Cavell sees Greg's insight as a "clue" to Freud's Wolf Man, namely, "the memory of the primal scene, a scene of parental intercourse" (Cavell 2003, 183). We want to believe the Ghost because of "the potentially foul condition of our own imaginations." For Cavell, the dumb show and "The Murder of Gonzago" are Hamlet's delayed effort, as the "tables" speech is not, to obey the Ghost's injunction to "remember" him. This connection with the Wolf Man scenario requires substitution of Gertrude for Claudius in "The Murder of Gonzago."

In what way, then, is the play within a play "the Heart of Hamlet?" (Cavell 2003, 186) To answer this question, Cavell relies on followers of Freud (which ones, for the moment, is not important). How can Hamlet let himself be born who he is? The answer is "what Freud calls the diphasic character of psychosexual development" (187). Descartes and Emerson alike argue that to exist one has the burden of proving one exists. If one fails in this effort, one is condemned to skepticism. Cavell's aim is to show that "The Murder of Gonzago" is "the play's figure for itself" (188): "Hence the play interprets the taking of one's place in the world as a process of mourning, as if there is a taking up of the world that is humanly a question of giving it up" (189). Accordingly, for both Freud and Cavell, fantasies of the primal scene are a "physiogenetic inheritance."

It does not matter whether Greg and Cavell–Freud are "against the idea of the actual murder by poison through the ear" (Cavell 2003, 189–90), nor even whether it is plausible that "Hamlet inseminates Claudius" (190). What Cavell demonstrates is a determined effort to affirm literary criticism as at least potentially a species of philosophy, in that it is able to expose layers of philosophical thought, in this case, the thought that the thought—or memory—of the "primal scene" is refracted through fantasy, and in that way "deferred."

In much the same way, Cavell writes, *Macbeth* asks the question, "What is history?" The same question concerned Emerson, on whom Cavell has written extensively; and it is also one that Wittgenstein made "a function of his writing" (Cavell 2003, 227). From Cavell's point of view, they are in accord with Heidegger, who, in "On the Origin of the Work of Art," in turn, follows Friedrich Schlegel, the great German translator of Shakespeare, in calling "for the union of philosophy and poetry." This connection leads Cavell to mention Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, on the "privacy of language" (228). Here, Cavell is concerned with the problem of "philosophical skepticism," which he thinks of as a wish to escape the bonds of the human" (229). Nietzsche characterizes the same impulse as "the wish to be elsewhere"; humans exhibit an "all-too-human" longing to be other than they are.

Although Dixon takes Cavell to task as a typical instance of "The *Litrification* of Philosophy," he often refers Jacques Derrida, whom many critics might consider the very embodiment of those literary practices that have done the most to change the course of what Dixon takes to be the proper direction of philosophical discourse. So the question might be: Is Derrida a philosopher or a creative writer? I suppose one could argue that this question is little more than a quibble about the placement of books in one rather than another section of the library. Another might ask, then, Would the world be better off if we had a clear boundary between literature and philosophy? That is, would it make any difference if librarians placed, say, Malcolm Bradbury's *My Strange Quest for Mensonge* in either or both the "B" and "PR" sections of a library? The "pragmatist" might say that what matters to the interested user of the collection is the ease by which the book can be retrieved from the stacks. Suppose for a moment that we were to come across the one copy of Bradbury's book in the library's possession in the "L" section of the stacks.[2] In that case, my guess would be that we were not looking for it, or, if we were, that our retrieval method is not pegged to any time constraints.

I take Bradbury's book to be a satire on the way Jacques Derrida does philosophy; so it would not be wrong to find a copy of *Strange Quest for Mensonge* among secondary works on Derrida. But *Strange Quest* is also a work of fiction; and here we might recall that Bradbury is a novelist, a scriptwriter for television, a literary critic, and a literary historian. Of course, library catalogues are moving online, and nowadays cross-listing of titles is easier and less expensive than duplicating copies of the same text for different purposes; but the problem of misplaced books is another matter. For example, Vance Adair's *Shakespearean Object* (2000) shows up in the British Library's Integrated Catalogue under the heading of "Jacques Derrida," presumably, because it seems to fit under the umbrella of secondary works on Derrida. It is an interesting book, even though it has little to do with either Shakespeare or Derrida. But again, this doesn't mean that a librarian has made a cataloguing mistake, because, as the subtitle of Adair's book indicates, readers of Derrida might very well be interested in Adair's Lacanian study of *Psychoanalysis, Subjectivities and the Gaze* (for instance, Cavell links Lacan and Derrida [17]); and it seems to me clear that some of Dixon's ire is aimed at Derrida. Although Derrida heaped much praise on Emmanuel Levinas, who claimed that "the whole of philosophy is only a meditation of Shakespeare" (Levinas 1987, 79), his own writings focus more on Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger than on Shakespeare. And when he writes about poetry and fiction, Derrida is more likely to turn to Percy Bysshe Shelley and Maurice Blanchot than to Shakespeare.[3]

With respect to our own time, I think it is fair to say that Robert Dixon has a point, when he insists that philosophical discourse has moved toward literary modes of expression. If we could purge Dixon's colorful title of its invidious overtones, it would not be wrong to characterize this trend as one toward

"The Litrification of Philosophy." I would say that when we think of Plato, Bacon, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein, we must admit that there is nothing new in characterizing philosophical works as "literary." Simply put, philosophy and imaginative writing are not mutually exclusive categories. Then, of course, like other trends, the current one, which causes Gellner, Dixon and others so much discomfort, may not last. Probably the most visible figure in what Robert Dixon considers symptomatic of "the litrification of philosophy" is Jacques Derrida, whose *Of Grammatology* purported to "deconstruct" the thesis of Ferdinand de Saussure's influential *Cours de linguistique génerale*. According to Derrida, Saussure's linguistic theory depended on circular reasoning, and was self-contradictory besides. Brian Vickers, a well-known Shakespearean scholar, summarizes Derrida's attack on Saussure by quoting a passage which claims that signs were "'put in the place of" that elusive will-o'-the-wisp of Western philosophy, "the thing itself" (Vickers 1993, 4). As Vickers sees it, Derrida concludes with the proclamation that "'the sign represents the present in its absence'" (40). It is clear that Vickers finds this assertion less than satisfactory. Besides claiming that Saussure's notes (*Cours de linguistique génerale* was published posthumously based on notes taken by Saussure's students) were poorly edited and, in critical instances, badly translated, Vickers accuses Derrida of a "distorting destruction" of the linguist's views on language (Vickers 1993, 41). Like other historically oriented Renaissance scholars, Vickers is vigorous in his critique of Derrida:

> I insist . . . on these gross inaccuracies, among many others, in order to show, once and for all, that the reputation enjoyed by Derrida for careful reading of texts—and extended to deconstruction, the practical criticism modeled on him—is an illusion. (41)

Derridians praise Derrida for his explications of particular texts, but all the while "Derrida has supposedly shown that there is no determinate object to which one can be true." To Vickers and traditional Shakespeareans like him, this denial of determinate meanings makes no sense, especially if it is taken seriously, as a basis for dispute about specific texts, by Shakespeareans. Vickers writes:

> I think that there are determinate objects such as texts, which can be interpreted faithfully (subject always to discussion, never apodictically or categorically definitive), and from that position I must say that Derrida's reading of Saussure is biased, fragmentary, willfully ignoring crucial stages of the argument, misrepresenting others, and soaking the remnant in his own terminology until it begins to dissolve and be reconstituted in the form he wants to give it. (41)

Like Robert Dixon, Vickers sees such thinkers as Derrida, Barthes, Foucault, and Lacan as espousing an attack on empirical standards in discussions

of language. If so, they undermine the foundations of rational discussion of language, as well as any of its constituent parts, such as the historical analysis of Shakespeare's works. In agreement with Vickers, I think, Robert Dixon would probably say that Derrida and "deconstructionists" like him are not "doing philosophy," but writing imaginative prose. If his analysis is correct, then their writings must be judged, not by their reasoning (because these writings undermine the foundations of rational discourse), but according to the standards of creative—or, if I may tweak Dixon's locution, of "litrified"—composition.

To examine this charge of unreason, let us look at a recent example of Derrida's writing on Shakespeare. In 1993, professors from various disciplines convened a symposium at the University of California, Riverside, on the topic "Whither Marxism? Global Crises in International Perspective." The focus of the conference was on Francis Fukayama's world-historical declaration of the approaching end of history, and, because the aim of the gathering was to get beyond "yet another autopsy administered mostly by Anglophone economists and policy analysts" (Derrida 1994, ix), the symposium featured remarks by one of the world's most famous French philosophers, namely, Jacques Derrida. Conveners of the conference, Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (whose help with *Shakespeare and Philosophy* I acknowledge in the front matter of this book), confess that not all participants agreed with Fukayama's sunny view of a future marked by a triumphal free-market society ("Introduction"). For them, the collapse of communism, and the rise of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and China left us with the question: "Has the collapse of communism also spelled the death of Marxism, and of Marx as an important philosopher and political thinker?" (x). For Derrida, the question was: In the world of ideas, how do we discriminate the living from the dead? And this question was, as expected, the main subject of Derrida's plenary address, which soon appeared in book-length form entitled *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1994).[4]

Since it concerns Derrida's perspective on Shakespeare, we are interested in what Derrida has to say about this question of discriminating the living from the dead. For conveners of the symposium, entitled "Whither Marxism?" probably do not exaggerate when they describe Derrida as "one of the most famous and influential contemporary philosophers" (Derrida 1994, ix). From Derrida's point of view, it is no easy thing to say that someone or some "thing"—a human interest, say, an idea—is dead, because we do not really know what it means "to live"; and this is so, because we have no one to teach us, and no certain context in which to make such a lesson, which can neither be taught nor learned, accessible:

> To live, by definition, is not something one learns. Not from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death. In any case from the other at the edge of life. At the internal

> border or the external border, it is a heterodictatics between life and death. (xviii)

This statement suggests why Derrida is "getting ready to speak at length about ghosts" (xix), and about one ghost in particular, the ghost of Hamlet Senior. Questions about the living and the dead "arrive," but they arrive in the present, which can neither be finally separated from the past nor from the past that is to come, which we often refer to as the future. For Derrida, this "just beyondness" is the perhaps decipherable, if elusive and even evanescent, border between life and death that might tell us how "to live":

> To be just beyond the living present in general—and beyond its simple negative reversal. A spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present, "now," future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time. Furtive and untimely, the apparition of this specter does not belong to that time, it does not give time, not that one: "Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost" (*Hamlet*). (xx)

Amid this ebb and flow, this unbidden coming and going, a terrible truth of justice emerges, carrying one beyond the restricting border of life, because it is the spirit of that unbidden (I am tempted to say Kierkegaardian) moment, which is neither past, present, nor future, but the spirit, of memory, feeling, and expectation flowing forth together, like the spirit of Hamlet Senior: "Enter . . . exit . . . re-enter the ghost."

From Derrida's point of view, it is not mere coincidence that the first noun in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* is "specter" ("Gespenst"), for "the spirit of Marxism" is, in fact, like the ghost of Hamlet's father:

> As in *Hamlet*, the Prince of a rotten State, everything begins by the apparition of a specter. More precisely by the *waiting* for this apparition. The anticipation is at once impatient, anxious, and fascinated: this, the thing ("this thing") will end up coming The *revenant* is going to come. It won't be long. But how long it is taking. Still more precisely, everything begins in the imminence of a *re*-apparition, but a reapparition of the specter as apparition *for the first time in the play*. The spirit of the father is going to come back and will soon say to him "I am thy Father's spirit" (I, iv), but here, at the beginning of the play, he comes back, so to speak, for the first time. It is the first, the first time on stage. (Derrida 1994, 4)

There is a sense in which Marx "diagnosed a certain dramaturgy of modern Europe" in which his own spirit would be like "the shadow of a filial memory," namely Shakespeare's "theatricalization" of the reapparition of

Hamlet Senior, which reenters, like the name on the skull in Hamlet's hands in Paul Valery's "The Crisis of Spirit," in which "'the European Hamlet looks at thousands of specters'" (7). They—these specters—are the skeletal remains—"'the life and death of truths'—of Leonardo, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Marx. "'Hamlet,'" Derrida recalls Valery recalling all of these dead authors of "truths," "'does not know what to do with all these skulls. But if he abandons them! . . . Will he cease to be himself'" (7).

How can we say—how can we know—that Marx, and/or Marxism is dead, when the past will not stay put in the past? And what about our present, which is "*waiting*" for the reentry of an expected spirit, which has already entered, exited, and reappeared many times? And what does it mean when Valery reprints this very page of "the European Hamlet" reviewing all of the skulls, but with one exception, namely, Marx, whose spirit and skull has somehow vanished from the page, which was only a reentry or copy of what had already appeared? Shakespeare, Derrida writes, might say that the Ghost and Marx exit, but we know that "the name of the one who disappeared must have gotten inscribed someplace else" (Derrida 1994, 7). And, he continues, it is not even the body whose spirit Hamlet—or rather, first, Horatio—sees, but the armored, helmeted, visored, and so presumed body of a now noble and authorized but hidden body of Hamlet Senior. For Derrida, this is an important feature of the technical apparatus of the play; no production can ignore the armor of the specter, and, paradoxically, the visor and the armor could cover either a real body or a specter, as the human eye cannot see beyond the seen. When Hamlet asks if the apparition was armed, Bernardo and Marcellus together answer "Arm'd, my lord." And when the prince presses, "From top to toe?" they again respond in unison: "My lord, from head to foot." Why then they could not see his face; and yet they did, as "he wore his beaver up":

> When Marcellus wants Horatio to speak to the ghost, he gives a reason: "Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio." Marcellus thinks that the intellectual understands the importance as well as the limits of observation, and has a better command than others of what to say in vexed circumstances, such as re-apparitions like this. The fact is that most scholars do not believe in ghosts. (12)

But Hortatio demands that the ghost speak: "Speak, speak, I charge thee speak," and in French, that line is often translated "*je t'en conjure*," as if the conjunction of injunction and conjuration amounts to stabilization or identity of two seemingly different endeavors.

Whether one is talking about the works of William Shakespeare or Karl Marx, the nexus between these two activities of the mind enter, exit, and reenter unexpectedly and indefinitely, as political, intellectual, and philosophical perspectives enter, exit, and re-enter. And they do so, do they not, along with, and because of, "new knowledge, new techniques, and new

political givens?" (13). Some will say, perhaps in agreement with Francis Fukayama, that the end of history, the end of Marxism, the end of everything, including the Western canon, is upon us. Derrida suggests that, as soon as news of death has been officially proclaimed, the spirit of the one who has just been pronounced dead is seen walking among us, reappearing, as it were, on the battlements, just when we thought the light of a new age had banished specters—especially this specter—of the past.

But, Derrida insists, end-of-history, end-of-canon, and end-of-philosophy talk—"this period of deconstruction"—has become "a tiresome anachronism" (Derrida 1994, 14). Derrida brazenly announces the belatedness of the entire panoply of apocalyptic pronouncements: "the end of history," "the last man," and "the end of philosophy." For him, the rhetoric of dramatic endings is old fashioned. It dates; its time has passed. But, then, Derrida inquires, "How can one be late to the end of history?" Because, he answers, like the discussion surrounding Fukayama's thesis, the "end of history" takes place as an event: "it obliges one to wonder if the end of history is but the end of a *certain* concept of history" (15).

I realize that Derrida is talking about Hegel and Marx, and, in particular, about a certain malaise in Western civilization concerning the collapse—that is, the *apparent* death—of Marxism. His thesis concerns us because Derrida firmly links Marx and Shakespeare: "I cannot hear 'since Marx,' since Marx, without hearing, like Marx, 'since Shakespeare'" (Derrida 1994, 17). For him, the two are bracketed, because they haunt our way of looking at, and feeling about, the world. Even as we say we are done with them, that they are in fact dead, indeed, the more we insist that their place has been taken by more sophisticated, more relevant, more scientific, more ethnic, more democratic, minds, the more certainly they reappear, take center stage, and re-exit, like the Ghost of Hamlet's father. Just when it seems that a new order is in place, the wedding invitations having been sent out (with perhaps more than the usual haste), the guests and the players having nevertheless arrived on time, and the musicians and hors d'oerves all in their proper place, the spirit of "the King that's dead"—the ghost of a vanquished ruler—strides forth, looking for all the world like the indomitable warrior he once was.

After this reapparition, Hamlet complains that the "time is out of joint" (Derrida 1994, 20), and, for Derrida, no statement more effectively demonstrates "the necessity of what Austin used to say: A dictionary of words can never give a definition, it only gives examples," such as this one in the OED from *Hamlet*. And it is only example because, over the centuries, a myriad of meanings attach to it, as the spirit of genius "resists and defies after the fashion of a spectral thing" (18). A work of genius is like a haunting; it is a thing, formed by translations into and out of the spirit of an utterance in a disjointed, dis-articulated time. Hamlet curses his place, his mission, in *the*—his, the present—"time [that] is out of joint." He complains bitterly that it is he who must put time back on its hinges.

All at once, now, justice and vengeance are on his shoulders, "and what he curses in his mission is this expiation of expiation itself" (20). Long "before Nietzsche, before Heidegger, before Benjamin," Hamlet complains that he must, in one time, expiate for injustice, that he was born for that, or to that end (21). Shakespeare makes possible the entering and reentering of all of the "plurivocity" that ever attended or will attend upon that utterance, "the time is out of joint: "This is the stroke of genius, the insignia trait of spirit, the signature of the Thing 'Shakespeare'': to authorize each one of the translations, to make them possible and intelligible without ever being reducible to them" (22).

Here, Derrida writes, we have the odd sense that one may arrive too late to the end of history. He asks: Why now? Why me? Hasn't it always been this way, with brothers and fathers and humans and God (remember Job?) locked in an endless struggle to put the past and the present and the future on their hinges? Derrida asks: "What does *not* happen in this anachrony!" (Derrida 1994, 22). Isn't our present always disjointed? Isn't the time always bad? And is this not the only good news we should expect? "Is not disjuncture," Derrida asks, "the very possibility of the other?" Isn't the sense of injustice a prerequisite of justice? Derrida makes clear that he is not talking about justice in any legal, "calculable and distributable" sense:

> Not for law, for the calculation of restitution, the economy of vengeance or punishment (for if *Hamlet* is a tragedy of vengeance and punishment in the triangle or circle of an Oedipus who would have taken an additional step into repression—Freud, Jones, and so forth—one must still think the possibility of a step beyond repression: there is a beyond the economy of repression whose law impels it to *exceed itself, of itself* in the course of a history, be it the history of theater or of politics between *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*). (22)

With Immanuel Levinas, then, Derrida sees Hamlet as "speaking in the space opened by" the question of "why" he or anyone is born "To be, or not to be," just at the historical moment when "The time is out of joint"? The specter of his father, and Hamlet's perception of the way things are in Elsinore, makes his "To be, or not to be" a determination that one might translate "To do, or not to do" vengeance or justice.

This feeling that that "The time is out of joint" is anomalous, in that it requires us to think that the present is somehow "out of joint," which would mean that time has members, is jointed, and so not present. Could this juncture be Nietzsche's "injustice"? (Derrida 1994, 24) Is this the task that Hamlet perceives in setting things right, that is, putting time back into proper alignment, with the presence of the present (the gift)? But there can be no gift without ensuing (following) debt. Heidegger sought to circumvent this inconvenience; he wanted to remove "such a gift from any horizon of culpability, of debt, of right, and even, perhaps, of duty" (25). If his

project were to succeed, then time would have no joints; but it would also mean that there would be no injustice, and therefore no need for vengeance. "Out-of-jointness" would disappear into nothingness:

> Hamlet declares "The time is out of joint" precisely at the moment of the oath, of the injunction to wear, to *swear together* [conjurer], at the moment in which the specter, who is always a sworn conspirator [*conjure*], at the moment in which the specter, one more time, from beneath, from beneath the earth or beneath the stage, has just ordered: "Swear." And the sworn conspirators swear together ("*They swear*"). (29)

In the context of Derrida's project, the swearing and the apparition are like the invoking of the spirit—with its concomitant prestige or odium—of Karl Marx. Marx had his ghosts, and we have ours, and Marx is one of them. We politicize, we depoliticize, we condemn, we canonize, and, uninvited, the spirit enters, exits, and reenters. Marx is dead, and Marxism is "in rapid decomposition" (32). But then, at this disjointed time, Marx strides forth in the halls of academe, like Hamlet Senior on the battlements, "'as a great philosopher'" (32).

We need not dwell on Derrida's wry remark regarding the question of whether Marx was or was not a Marxist. More to the point of our discussion, Derrida just as wittily suggests that, at the moment when Maurice Blanchot first heralded the "End of Philosophy" (Derrida 1994, 36), the specters of Marx and of Marxism were, right along with philosophy, resurrected. Metaphorically speaking, Marx had to bury philosophy, and Blanchot had to read over the interred bodies of all three disembodied voices (of Marx, of Marxism, and of philosophy) for their lively echoes to be heard in entirely new circumstances. So "Whither Marxism?" Well, says Derrida, "the future can only be for ghosts" (37). We only have the past, which is the disjointed monstrosity of the present (the gift) of our inheritance in the world: "To be." We could perhaps swear to wipe out all trace of the specter: "It would be possible to form a secret alliance against the specter" of Marxism, for instance. But the effort looks hopeless. Derrida has already examined the appositeness—at least in the French language—between swearing and conjuration. Derrida thinks that, had he written in French rather than German, Marx would probably have "played on the word *conjuration* " (40), a word which, in both English and German conveys the sense of two words. There is, first, the sense of conjuration as conspiracy, as in the swearing upon an oath at the close of Act 1 of *Hamlet*:

> It is to this conspiracy that Hamlet appeals, evoking the "Vision" they have just seen and the "honest ghost," when he asks Horatio and Marcellus to swear ("swear't," "Consent to swear"). To swear upon his sword or to swear together *on the subject of the spectral apparition itself*, and to promise secrecy on the subject of the apparition of an

> honest host, that, from beneath the stage, conspires with Hamlet to ask the same thing from the sworn: ("*The Ghost cries from under the stage: Sweare*"). (41)

Here, Derrida observes, the son and the "honest ghost" of Hamlet Senior conspire. There is the sense, too, that "conjuration" suggests an incantatory utterance, an evocation. A voice is summoned, which, if evoked, cannot be present. It is just so in this instance, for the voice affirms nothing, although it makes "something happen." Such an evocation is like "the usage encountered again in the opening of *Timon of Athens*" (41). Derrida is thinking of the exchange, in the opening scene of the play, between the poet and the painter. The two men greet each other, and, after the poet asks how the world is going, the painter answers, that "'it wears . . . as it grows.'" To this casual remark, the poet responds vigorously to the effect that everyone knows *that*. What is really interesting and rare, the poet says, is what drives the throng to move as one in the same direction: "See, / Magic of bounty! all these spirits thy power / Hath *conjur'd* to attend. I know the merchant." Derrida italicizes "*conjur'd*" in an effort to raise the question of "a spectralizing disincarnation" (41). The spirit, the ghost, is a "who," a "being," "a kind of body, but without 'real' or 'personal' right of property" (41–42).

Marx knew Shakespeare well, and he quotes from him often, apparently from memory.[5] Marx often cites Shakespeare's *Timon* because, as the passage from Act 1 of the play indicates, for him, the poet understood "how the property (*Eigentum*) of money neutralizes, disincarnates, deprives of its difference all personal property (*Eigentümlichkeit*)" (Derrida 1994, 42). Marx specifically refers to Shakespeare's "genius" in understanding the "'phantomalization' of property centuries ago and said it better than anyone." In effect, as he veered into literary criticism, Marx enlivened Shakespeare's voice, which, in turn, elucidated the spectral view of money exhibited by the poet in *Timon of Athens*: "What, Marx seems to say, the genius of a great poet—and the spirit of a great father—will have uttered in a poetic flash, with one blow going faster and farther than our little bourgeois colleagues in economic theory, is the becoming-god of gold, which is at once ghost and idol, a god apprehended by the senses." In his most incisive, cutting analysis, Marx goes beyond theory, crying "out the truth." This Shakespeare text "promises, it provokes." It is an imprecation, a prayer, a "malediction on malediction" (43). Shakespeare is engaging the spectral power of gold, just prior to the sound of Alcibiades approaching with his army, and just before Timon's stunning announcement: "I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind" (4.3.54). Here is "the slave [that] Will knit and break religion." Derrida is convinced of Marx's admiration of Shakespeare, who sees gold as the god that will raze all humanity, and religion, too. With his newfound god, Timon would finance genocide against the human race:

> Spare your oaths;
> I'll trust to your conditions, be whores still.
> And he whose pious breath seeks to convert you,
> Be strong in whore, allure him, burn him up,
> Let your close fire predominate his smoke,
> And be no turncoats; yet may your pains six months
> Be quite contrary. And thatch your poor thin roofs
> With burthens of the dead—some that were hang'd,
> No matter; wear them, betray with them. Whore still,
> Paint till a horse may mire upon your face:
> A pox of wrinkles! . . . Consumptions sow
> In hollow bones of man, strike their sharp shins,
> And mar men's spurring. Crack the lawyer's voice,
> That he may never more false title plead,
> Nor sound his quillets shrilly; hoar the flamen,
> That [scolds] against the quality of flesh
> And not believes himself. Down with the nose,
> Down with it flat; take the bridge quite away
> Of him that, his particular to foresee,
> Smells from the general weal. . . . Plague all,
> That your activity may defeat and quell
> The source of all erection. (4.3.139–64)

Marx admires Shakespeare's vision of money turned to war against civilization. Timon would use Phrynia and Timandra as the weapon to overwhelm Athens, and all mankind, with venereal disease. Here is the true nihilism, which, as Derrida reads Marx, will not come about from specters of Marxism or of Shakespeare, but from our own reapparitions of our own ghosts from our own pasts, which even now dismember the gift of our possible future present.

Derrida's address did not go unanswered. In *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Specters of Marx (1999), some critics, including Derrida, disagreed on the matter of what Derrida meant to say in his plenary address on *Specters of Marx*. At least for some participants, *Hamlet*—perhaps I should say Hamlet—figured prominently in the exchange of opinions, which, at times with a soupçon of testiness, often focused on the question of filial relations between Hamlet, Hamlet Senior, Marx, Derrida, and certain Derrida interpreters. Again, the question concerns which survivor is the true inheritor—the true son—of Karl Marx. In whom does the specter of Marx sally forth to summon justice in the here and now? For instance, in "Reconciling Derrida: 'Specters of Marx' and Deconstructive Politcs," Aijaz Ahmad interrogates Derrida, who interrogates Ahmad. The question is: Which one, if any, seeks reconciliation with himself? Specifically, the question is: Is Derrida a Marxist? If he is, if I understand correctly, then wouldn't it be right and proper for him to say

so? And if he says so, what could be more self-serving on his part? For at this juncture at either near, at, or shortly thereafter the end of history and the end of philosophy, what could be more self-serving than for Derrida to claim to be a Marxist? And would he not make the case against him worse by claiming to be a Marxist, while simultaneously disclaiming any allegiance to, or even recognition of, a metanarrative of history not at all unlike that laid out by the nemesis of the conference on *Specters of Marx*, Francis Fukayama?

It is not my intention to end this discussion by suggesting that the world would be better off with a clear boundary between literature and philosophy. I think we have seen, even in this limited survey, how various approaches to Shakespeare exercise a range of means of engaging "Shakespeare" as a subject of philosophy. If we find Bradbury's *Strange Quest* in the "L" section of the library, we either were not looking for it, or were really lucky and came upon it by accident, because it really doesn't belong among books on astronomy. So, although for me, it would not be wrong to find a copy of that book among critical studies of Derrida, the problem of misplaced books is another matter. Consider another example. *Shakespearean Object* shows up in the British Library's Integrated Catalogue under Jacques Derrida; it is an interesting book, even though it has little to do with either Shakespeare or Derrida. I suppose the question is: Does it matter? Well, there might be critics who ask, "What purpose would be served by a physical boundary between literature and philosophy?" Another might respond: What would a satisfying answer to that question look like? "Good fences make good neighbors," perhaps, but do they make it easier to get from one yard to another? For me, the point is not to hoist the banner of interdisciplinary studies, which has been waving in the academic breezes for decades, now; but neither should we call in artillery fire on the academic bastions that are already standing. Categories have their uses. It is not for nothing that we keep books on "Shakespeare" and "Entomology" in different stacks of the library. In Chapter 1, we started out by setting the question of whether Shakespeare is a "philosopher" aside for the purpose of focusing on what philosophers—as philosophers—had to say about him. Then we traced out the ways in which different thinkers from different times fit "Shakespeare" into their various philosophical projects. I have tried to show how they shaped their views of "Shakespeare" in such ways as to resonate with their philosophies, however discordant—even contradictory—those views might be. I have tried to show, then, that we have a wide range of "Philosophy's Shakespeares."

Chapters 1 and 2 are titled "Philosophy's Shakespeare: Defining Terms" and "Philosophy's Shakespeare: Breaking the Silence." At the close of the preceding paragraph, I use the plural and the "scare quotes" to emphasize the variation among philosophers in the way they talk about the subject of Shakespeare and his works. I do not mean to imply that such variation requires skepticism on our part regarding the possibility of valid

knowledge of that subject. Nor has my aim been to show how one philosopher's "Shakespeare" is better—more historically valid, more psychologically liberating, or whatever—than another's. Still, it is possible that I have, without trying, betrayed my biases. In the famous banquet scene, Macbeth tries to deflect ungenerous scrutiny by confessing: "I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing / To those that know me." I say—I hope with due modesty—that, if my biases show, they will, unlike Macbeth's "infirmity," do no harm. With that disclaimer in mind, as this survey of Shakespeare as a subject of philosophy concludes, I want to admit that, to one degree or another, I concur with both Robert Dixon and Stanley Cavell in at least one proposition on which they seem to agree: In our time, philosophy has moved toward an interest in literature as a legitimate subject of philosophical discourse, and, in so doing, has developed increasingly literary modes of expression. In other words, although I would prefer to denude the term of Dixon's negative connotations, we see, over the centuries, in the work of philosophers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Levinas, Derrida, Cavell, and many others, a "litrification" of philosophy.

Indeed, we see this literary trend even in the sacrosanct empirical realm of "positivism," in the work of no more unlikely a figure than Hans Reichenbach, who, in order to characterize the situation facing modern philosophy, turned to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He does so in an influential book that makes no mention of Wittgenstein, but aims at a rapprochement "with pragmatist philosophers, who maintain the existence of a scientific ethics" (Reichenbach 321). In *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1953), he argues that Hume's attack on the cause and effect assumptions of empiricism cannot be applied to modern science, which proceeds along probabilistic rather than cause and effect lines of inquiry. In making his case, Reichenbach resorts to a parody of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy.

For here, in Shakespeare's most famous lines, is the perfect representation of the quandary that modern philosophy finds itself in. It makes no sense "to be," while asking "to be or not to be?" For philosophy, the more meaningful question would be "shall I be," as if philosophy, standing in Hamlet's place, would ask of itself, "whether I shall have the courage to avenge my father" (Reichenbach 250). The motive is there; everybody knows that. And although the ghost is only a ghost, he is nevertheless very explicit in his denunciation of his brother Claudius. Moreover, the ghost's accusation has the support of indirect evidence. So philosophy-as-Hamlet must make the logical inferences: My father was in good health, and Claudius had the most to gain by his untimely demise. Can I believe in what is only probable? Hume's argument was, after all, that we do not "experience" causation. So why should empiricists "believe in" cause and effect? So, Hamlet must reason, logic gives me only probabilities, which may not apply in the case that interests me. I could proceed on a probability, kill Claudius, and find that I had erred. Then the question becomes: How is definitive action possible in a world of probabilities? Alas, says Reichenbach, "that is the question":

> There I am, the eternal Hamlet. What does it help me to ask the logician, if all he tells me is to make posits? His advice confirms my doubt rather than giving me the courage I need for my action. Logic is not made for me. One has to have more courage than Hamlet to be always guided by logic. (251)

Reichenbach suggests that, even if the logician is correct, inaction is no less a choice than action in the real world. But I can put on a play to witness in the here and now "confession" in my uncle's looks, if he is truly guilty. Even then I must admit that the probable remains only the probable, and therefore no certain guide to serious action. The future cannot be predicted with certainty; we have the high principle of "undecidability" to guide us into inaction. On the other hand, the Heisenberg principle may have altered the way scientists talk about the world, rendering cause and effect models irrelevant to their considerations. The target of this chapter of Shakespearean monologue is the likes of John Dewey, who, in the mid-twentieth century, was probably the dominant figure on the American philosophical scene. Reichenbach suggests that "pragmatist philosophers" err in their efforts to "maintain the existence of a scientific ethics" (321). They prop their project up by relying on "the science of sociology for the elaboration of rules of conduct appropriate to a man's place in human society" (322). "But," writes Reichenbach, "I would not object to calling such an ethical system a scientific ethics if there is agreement that it is not a science" (322). It is "scientific" in the way that medicine and "machine industry are scientific; it is a form of social engineering." It shows how certain goals can be attained, but the goals themselves are not thereby established as valid. "A scientific philosophy," he writes, "cannot supply moral guidance; that is one of its results, and cannot be held against it" (323). Like Hamlet and Hume, philosophy must "be" without direct experience of "cause and effect." But this does not mean that philosophy is without resources "to be" an "actor" or "player."

Reichenbach seems to recall that Hamlet was not just a reluctant revenger ("O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right"), but also a patron of the theatre. He is like the logician, able to "make posits." But since a posit is not certainty, how can the Hamlet-logician proceed to action? Reichenbach sums up:

> There I am, the eternal Hamlet. What does it help me to ask the logician, if all he tells me is to make posits? His advice confirms my doubt rather than giving me the courage I need for my action. Logic is not made for me. One has to have more courage than Hamlet to be always guided by logic. (Reichenbach 251)

The logician knows that probability may have no bearing in the individual case. Either Claudius did or did not do the foul deed. Well, there is psychology: "If they murdered him they will be unable to hide their emotions." But

the logician answers, no matter how good the psychology is, it will only yield the probability of exposure to the truth: "There is no certainty." So philosophy is in the same quandary as Hamlet, able only to make posits, that is, to act on the probability. After all, there is evidence: the word of the ghost. Claudius had motive and opportunity. The wedding was in haste, and Hamlet Senior was in good health. And so it goes: "nothing but indirect evidence," never certainty. Does the ghost exist? Speaking for Hamlet, Reichenbach answers, "I could not very well ask him" (250).

Presumably, if philosophy is Hamlet, the Ghost of his father is the "will-o'-the-wisp" of the philosophical past. For Reichenbach, the only product of the past is the ground of uncertainty. If the pragmatist dream of "scientific ethics" foundered on the limitations of the logic of modern science, then what of its alliance with the politics of progressive ideology? Again, the figure of the ghost of Hamlet Senior emerges.

So even logical empiricist Hans Reichenbach not only writes about literature, but employs literary devices, for literary ends. Philosophy has gone a long way towards absorbing Shakespeare into philosophical discourse. As we have seen, thinkers like Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke had different ends in view, and so the subject of "Shakespeare" is as absent as the rhetorical tools one might use to address him and his works as a subject. But as times changed, the subjects of philosophy changed, and so did the ways in which philosophers talked about those subjects. The preceding pages do not show, I think, that these changes have improved or harmed either philosophy or Shakespeare.

Appendix

The Evolution of Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis*

				Intro															
Yr.	*Shelf #*	*T*[1]	*Pref.*	*(M)*	*(-M)*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*B* [A]**
1774	*PR2989	P		X		X	X		X	X									
1774	642.b.31	P		X		X	X		X	X									
1780	11713.a.3	P		X		X	X		X	X[2]									
1784	11764.b.7	E		X		X	X		X	X									
1785	840.b.27	E		X		X	X		X	X									
1784	642.b.33	E	X								X		X	X		X			[X]
1785	1607/1747	E	X								X		X	X		X			[X]
1789	642.d.33	E										X			X			X*	
1797	642.d.31	E			X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
1812	81.d.10	E			X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Chapter numbers below are those of 1812, the first comprehensive collection.

1. "On the Character of Macbeth"
2. "On the Character of Hamlet"
3. "Additional Observations on Shakespeare's Dramatic Character of Hamlet, In a Letter to a Friend"
4. "On the Character of the Melancholy Jaques"
5. "On the Character of Imogen"
6. "On the Dramatic Character of Richard III"
7. "On the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff"
8. "On the Dramatic Character of King Lear"
9. "On the Dramatic Character of Timon of Athens"
10. "On Shakespeare's Imitation of Female Characters"
11. "Shakespeare's Imitation of Characteristical National Manners, Illustrated in the Character of Fluellen"
12. "On the Faults of Shakespeare"
13. "Conclusion: Containing Observations on the Chief Objects of Criticism in the Works of Shakespeare"

APPENDIX: "A LETTER FROM MR. BURKE TO THE AUTHOR"; "ANOTHER LETTER FROM MR. BURKE TO THE AUTHOR"

* In this edition, the quotation from Burke appears without attribution.

** The brackets here and below indicate the sequence in which this entry appeared in the particular edition. Richardson rearranged the sequence for 1789 and then inserted the essay on "The Character of Fluellen" before the essay on Shakespeare's "Faults" for 1812, which proved to be the last over which the author could have exercised any control. Richardson died in 1814 (DNB).

1774	*A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*. London, 1774. William Andrews Clark Library (UCLA) copy. The author's name does not appear on the title page of this, the first edition.
1774	*A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*. 2nd ed. London, 1774. 642.b.31
1780	*A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*. A New Edition, Corrected. London, 1780. 11713.a.3
1784	*A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*. London, 1784. 11764.b.7
1785	*Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters of Macbeth, Hamlet, Jaques and Imogen*. London, 1785. 840.b.27
1784	*Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters of Richard the Third, King Lear, and Timon of Athens. To which are added, an Essay on the Faults of Shakespeare; and Additional Observations on the Character of Hamlet*. 642.b.33
1785	*Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters of Richard the Third, King Lear, and Timon of Athens. To which are added an Essay on the Faults of Shakespeare; and Additional Observations on the Character of Hamlet*. London, 1785. 1607/1744

1789 *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff, and On his Imitation of Female Characters, etc*. London, 1789. 642.d.33

1797 *Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters, To which is added An Essay on The Faults of Shakespeare* (containing the two series). London, 1797. 642.d.31

1798 *Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*, *To which is added An Essay on The Faults of Shakespeare* (containing the two series). London, 1797. 11869.ff.8

1812 *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*, *with an Illustration of Shakespeare's Representation of National Characters, in that of Fluellen*. 81.d.10

1818 Except for new title page, same as 1812.

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. I am thinking of such well-known books as Hiram Haydn's *The Counter-Renaissance* (1950) and Richard Popkin's *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (1964); I am aware that Popkin revised and expanded this influential work, but I allude now to the version that influenced many Renaissance scholars prior to the later revisions.
2. Given the importance of Freud in Nuttall's analysis, it may be worth noting that, whenever Freud discusses the "Oedipus Complex," he devotes a few paragraphs to the Greek play, before turning to paragraph after paragraph on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
3. I am aware that McGinn makes a similar case for a mathematical scheme in *Lear* (116–18).
4. For a thorough and even-handed discussion of Coleridge's "plagiarism," see Fruman.
5. For two well-argued, full-length studies, see, for instance, Perkins (1969) and Orsini (1994).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Panofsky's argument, unlike that of the "social constructionists," is that the humanist project has the potential of restoring the vitality of the creator's composition.
2. For a comprehensive discussion of Bacon's public career, see Jardine and Stewart (1999).
3. For a well-balanced analysis of Bacon's complex attitude toward fable and allegory, see Rossi, chap. 3.
4. For an extensive discussion of the relation between printed and staged satire, see Loewenstein, esp. chap. 1.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. For a detailed account of this episode, see "Introduction," *LGF*.
2. Mossner 1954, 366; Mossner quotes from *A Letter to the Reverend the Moderator, and Members of the Presbytery of Haddington*.

3. For an analysis of the intellectual context of Hume's subtitle, see Cohen 1958.
4. The foregoing remarks are drawn from Mossner 1954, chap. 26.
5. Published in 1769, Montagu's *Essay* went through four editions, and was translated into German, within five years.
6. For an account of the position taken by the Scottish Presbytery, see Mossner 1943, 38–66.
7. The French reads: *"L'absence diminue les médiocres passions, et augmente les grandes, comme le vent étient les bougies et allume le feu"* (Rochefoucauld 1998, 107). Hume could have read the work in either French or English or both, as an English version appeared in 1694. Aphra Behn's *Seneca Unmasked* (1685), a loose translation and compilation of *Maximes* and *Reflexiones*, has no exact counterpart for Maxim 276.
8. For a detailed account of Hume's part in the *Douglas* controversy and its aftermath, see Mossner 1954, chap. 26.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. The earliest lectureships in "humanity and philosophy" in Britain were established at Oxford in the Tudor period; see Curtis 282.
2. Citations from Richardson will be to the date of publication of the various parts and versions of his *Philosophical Analysis of Shakespeare's Characters*; see Appendix.
3. For a sampling of such commentary, see *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, especially those of John Dennis and Dr. Johnson.
4. The title page of the British Library copy reads "Second Edition, Corrected." Except for minor corrections ("Crouded" > "Crowded" [177]), the major alteration is the inclusion in the "Corrected" edition of the author's name and academic rank on the title page (see Appendix).
5. For a discussion of the seventeenth-century background of this phenomenon, see Chapter 2.
6. For an extensive account of the work of Alexis Clairaut, Joseph Jerome de Lalande, and Mme. Nicole-Reine Etable de la Brière Lepaute on the application of Newton to Halley's Tables, see Sagan 83–85.
7. For a discussion of the genesis of the discussions on gravitation between Halley and Newton, see Ferris 113–17; for the impact of this discussion on Cartesian thought, see Mason 157–61.
8. I am aware that in the seventeenth century "philosophical" was a synonym for "scientific"; see Vickers 1987, 17.
9. Richardson cites Cicero's *De Legibus*, where Marcus explains to his interlocutors that the powerful maxim, "that we should know ourselves . . . was attributed not to some human but to the god of Delphi. The person who knows himself will first recognize that he has something divine and will think that his own reason within himself is a sort of consecrated image of the divine" (Cicero 126).
10. Smith, who studied under Hutcheson, transformed his idea of universal motivation from sympathy, in this, his first work, to self interest, in the volume for which he is largely remembered, *The Wealth of Nations*.
11. E = title page of the versions of Richardson's work beginning *Essays*; see Appendix, especially note 1.
12. For a bibliographic account of the evolution of the 1812 edition, see Appendix.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. On this point, Hume vigorously opposed Newton, holding that there was no warrant for believing in any version of a Providential plan of the unfolding of natural events; see James E. Force, "The Breakdown of the Newtonian Synthesis of Science and Religion: Hume, Newton, and the Royal Society," *Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology* (1990), 143.
2. For a discussion of Vico's adaptation of etymological ideas promulgated by Gerhard Johann Voss, see Vico 2002, 19.
3. For learned analyses of the same apocalyptic motif in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, see Kermode (1981) and Wittreich (1984).
4. Although the work was not published until 1798, Kant had been lecturing on the topic for twenty-five years; see Louden ed., "Introduction," vii. I am aware that Kant had reservations about Herder's philosophy of history, which he regarded as evolutionary, with each generation, in effect, preparing the way for an improved, succeeding generation, "a notion that Herder expressly repudiated" (Kant 1963, 29n). Kant published two reviews of Herder's *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784, 85).
5. In fact, the historical Macbeth's claim to the throne, if he had any at all, was through his wife, Granach, who might have belonged to the royal family (*EB*).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Kierkegaard did not read English, and probably knew Shakespeare in the twelve-volume German translation of August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, published in Berlin in 1839–40.
2. For an extensive discussion of this important motif in Kierkegaard, see Fenves.
3. Although there are intriguing similarities between Pater and Nietzsche, especially in their views of Shakespeare and music, I do not mean to imply any direct influence.
4. For a detailed discussion of Wagner's influence on Nietzsche in the matter of David Strauss, see Safranski 111–15.
5. The work was published posthumously as vol. 8 of the Montinari edition.
6. For an extensive discussion of the distinction between normative and cosmological notions of this motif, see Magnus et al. 1993, 25–37.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1 See Perloff 1996, esp. chaps. 3 and 4.
2. See Leavis 1952, 211–22; although he purports "to vindicate literary criticism as a distinct and separate discipline" (212) from philosophy, in effect, Leavis argues the "irrelevance of the philosophic approach" (216) to literary criticism.
3. In his screenplay, *Wittgenstein*, Terry Eagleton has Wittgenstein make this statement to David Jarrett, a young student of philosophy, not a professor of literature, whom Wittgenstein talks into abandoning mathematics for a job with "the Electrical Instruments Company" (Eagleton 48) to do "something useful" (41).

4. For a discussion of Wittgenstein's interest in Sir Francis Galton's experiments with photography, see Stewart 1997, chap. 3, esp. 126–35.
5. See also *WC* 47: "He couldn't stand it [Esperanto]. A language without any feeling, without richness."
6. For a penetrating analysis of Wittgenstein's understanding of the Gospels, see Perloff 1998, 79–89, esp. 85–88.
7. For a fuller discussion of this point, see Stewart 2000, 48–68.
8. Leavis appears to have associated Wittgenstein with the Bloomsbury group, which was something like a London branch of the Apostles, clustered around Leon Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, and Bertrand Russell. Actually, Wittgenstein was uncomfortable with this group, which he found to be a "mere waste of time." He disapproved especially of the society's sexual levity (Monk 66, 256, respectively). For a different perspective on this encounter, see MacKillop 396. MacKillop argues that Wittgenstein's remark reflected only his low opinion of "Cambridge literariness," and so does not apply to literary criticism as we ordinarily think of it: "Leavis knew that literary criticism at that date [1930] as yet hardly existed."
9. *Cambridge Poetry* 39; for a discussion of this exchange, see Stewart 2003.
10. Weininger idolized Beethoven, and committed suicide in the house where Beethoven died. Malcolm points out "that Wittgenstein held the writings of Otto Weininger in high regard (Malcolm 21).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. In his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Wittgenstein makes clear that the "significance" of religious ritual cannot be simply reduced to such Western notions as "cause and effect." If so-called savages meant their "rain dance" to cause rain, they would perform the ceremony in the dry season.
2. For most purposes, we are talking about the Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal systems. Although I can't claim that I understand the Cambridge University Library cataloguing system, I believe that benign motives are behind it.
3. With respect to the latter categories, see, for instance, Derrida 1986.
4. Papers by the other contributors to the symposium were also published in a companion volume entitled *Whither Marxism/ Global Crises in International Perspectives* (Magnus 1995).
5. Although, working in the rotunda of the Main Reading Room of the British Museum, Marx could easily have checked his quotations from Shakespeare, sometimes he did not bother to do so.

NOTES TO THE APPENDIX

1. T = the title as it appears on the title page, either P (*A Philosophical Analysis of the Dramatic Characters in Shakespeare*) or E (*Essays on the Dramatic Characters in Shakespeare's Plays*); Pref. (M) = the Preface with the sentence on Elizabeth Montagu's *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*; (-M = the Preface with the sentence on Montagu's work deleted; the numbers refer to the chapter numbers in the 1812 edition; B = the Appendix comprised of two letters from Burke on *Philosophical Analysis of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*.

2. I was unable to examine the British Library copy of 1780 during the month of July, 2008, as it was unavailable, due to needs of preservation. The AMS reprint edition, publish in 1966, purports to be a facsimile of 1780; further, 1785 appears to continue with virtually the same plates.

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