

## **‘Whaur’s Yer Wullie Shakespeare Noo?’: Literary Influence V**

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Readers may recognise my title as the battlecry of an anonymous member of the audience at the opening of the Scottish playwright John Home’s *Douglas* in Edinburgh in 1757. Since the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, expressions of Scottish nationalism more often than not have taken a cultural form. What is ironic, however, is that Home’s play is throughout an imitation of Shakespearean tragedy and Home himself became known as ‘the Scottish Shakespeare’. Home’s brief triumph, in other words, only confirmed the cultural presence, the priority and *influence*, of Shakespeare. Yet I was at pains in my last essay in this series precisely to distinguish Shakespeare’s plays from influential texts like *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare’s characters, I suggested, were too complex to enter culture as myths or archetypes, and tempted psychoanalysis rather than imitation. Moreover, *Tales from Shakespeare* aside, the stories of the plays are rarely original and would hardly be thought worth preserving for their own sake. I identified in Shakespearean drama—in its characterization; in its plot or lack of plot; in the pervasive poetry that makes speech so much more resonant than what is said—what I called a heterogeneity that militates against the mythic’. Shakespeare’s stories carry with them the burden of their dramatic and poetic instantiation, as somehow inseparable from them.

It is for this reason that, as I went on to say, ‘all the energy has gone into rereading and restaging rather than reincarnation and revision’. A Falstaff or a Hamlet can be revived and reinterpreted,

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but can they be revised or rewritten in a new form? Like people, they are existentially reciprocal with their circumstances. Of the two, it is probably Falstaff who comes closest to a mythic integrity, which derives largely from his origins in the morality drama of the late middle ages. It is hard to imagine another play written around Hamlet as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is written around Falstaff. Yet with the significant exception of Verdi's, Falstaff has begotten no Falstaffs, despite his almost uninterrupted exposure from 1660 onwards. Even 'that trunk of humours, that bolting hutch of beastliness, that swoll'n parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloakbag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey iniquity, that father vice, that vanity in years' flares too often into so unique and complex a vulnerability to himself as to defy easy adaptation.<sup>2</sup>

In line with our investigation of literature's self-consciously building upon literature, then, let me return to the question: what *have* subsequent writers like Home gained from this 'myriad-minded' Shakespeare? We have seen how *Robinson Crusoe* has ramified through European culture and can add to the characters and stories influenced by Defoe's accidental classic such proliferating characters and stories as those that derive from Homer and Virgil and the Greek tragedians, in the original and in their various translations; from the Bible (again, in its various translations); from *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Frankenstein* and so on. But just how influential upon those writers in English who came after him has been supposedly the 'most influential' of all writers in English? Let me end my series of essays on the nature and extent of literary influence with an enquiry into the literary influence of William Shakespeare, the Renaissance playwright and poet and the greatest genius in the English language . . .

## I

Sorry. I'll start that bit again: let me end with an enquiry into the literary influence of William Shakespeare, the Renaissance playwright and poet constructed as the greatest genius in the

English language by British and derivative cultures since the late seventeenth century. The critical reaction of our eighteenth-century Scottish nationalist to Home's *Douglas* plays sensationally into the hands of those who argue that a critical or aesthetic response can never be anything other than a cultural and cultured (conditioned) response. Shakespeare is undergoing an identity crisis—willy nilly, so to speak—and, these days, only a member of the general public or an uncertain undergraduate thinking to ingratiate herself or himself with a lecturer would be bold enough to begin a discussion of Shakespeare with such perfunctory deference. The new philosophy holds all in doubt, and nothing more so than the claims of literary canonicity.

If any writer in English were exempt from the rigorous sceptical materialism that has dominated literary studies since 1980, however, that writer would be Shakespeare, who appears to have had a place reserved for him in Keats's 'immortal Freemasonry' from the beginning. Having survived the praise of Ben Jonson and the closure of the theatres during the interregnum, Shakespeare's plays made it into the Restoration theatres to receive the dual compliments of neoclassical imitation—Dryden's *The Tempest* and *All for Love (Antony and Cleopatra)*, John Lacey's *Sauny the Scot; or, The Taming of the Shrew*, Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, William Davenant's *Macbeth* are the best known—and of a central place in 'the repertoire':

A repertoire is a theatrical memory, and as such it can serve as a useful model of what literary critics call the 'canon' of great literature. The works in a repertoire get played again and again; audiences come to know them intimately, to expect them, to take pleasure from their repetition. They become the familiar standards by which unfamiliar works are measured. At the same time, those who perform such plays come to be judged against the collective memory of previous performers. Can they equal or even surpass former interpretations? Can they perceive, and so reveal, new features of the beloved work?<sup>3</sup>

'The communal defining of a new theatrical repertoire in 1660 was a critical moment in the history of Shakespeare's reputation', Gary Taylor continues, one that 'would prove enormously influential

not only in the theatre but also outside it'. Certainly Shakespeare's formative assimilation into the repertoire coincided with his assumption as 'the *Homer*, or Father of our Dramatick Poets'—to quote Dryden—the one who, in spite of his 'carelessness', 'many times has written better than any Poet, in any Language'.<sup>4</sup>

Pope only confirmed Dryden's verdict on Shakespeare the playwright—'he is justly and universally elevated above all other Dramatic Writers'—and if he was too strict a neoclassicist uncategorically to extend that supremacy to the poetry generally, still

If ever any Author deserved the name of an *Original*, it was *Shakespeare*. *Homer* himself drew not his art so immediately from Nature: it proceeded thro' *Egyptian* strainers and channels . . . The Poetry of *Shakespeare* was Inspiration indeed: he is 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 speaks thro' him.<sup>5</sup>

Before Pope died in 1744, however, and long before Garrick's 'marketing masterpiece', the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769,<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare's supremacy was assured. So assured, indeed, that the historian of his reputation is soon overwhelmed by turgid encomia competing in their claims and praises:

In how many points of Light must we be obliged to gaze at this great Poet! In how many Branches of Excellence to consider, and admire him! Whether we view him on the Side of Art or Nature he ought equally to engage our Attention. Whether we respect the Force and Greatness of his Genius, the Extent of his Knowledge and Reading, the Power and Address with which he throws out and applies either Nature, or Learning, there is ample scope both for our Wonder and Pleasure. If his Diction, and the Cloathing of his Thoughts attract us, how much more must we be charm'd with the Richness, and Variety, of his Images and Ideas! If his Images and Ideas steal into our Souls, and strike upon our Fancy, how much are they improv'd in Price, when we come to reflect with what Propriety and Justness they are apply'd to Character! If we look into his Characters . . .

and so on.<sup>7</sup> Bardolatry indeed, and especially ironic when one considers that, fifty odd years later, the German and English Romantics saw themselves as rescuing Shakespeare from the

myopia and neglect of the Augustans, just as the eighteenth century imagined that it was rescuing him critically and editorially from the opacities and barbarities of the seventeenth. Even in the momentary waverings of High Modernism, when select members of the critical establishment got it in mind to elevate Donne above Shakespeare, when Joyce brought the demi-god to earth in the carnalities of *Ulysses*, and when T. S. Eliot challenged conventional wisdom by wondering whether *Hamlet* was 'interesting because it was a work of art' or mistakenly called a work of art because it was so interesting<sup>8</sup>—even then, Shakespeare's reputation was by and large taken as nothing less than he deserved.

## II

So the reason we are driven to assume the pervasive influence of Shakespeare on our literature is simply this fact that, alone in the canon, he has received the virtually unanimous deference of successive generations of writers. Exceptions are either so occasional or so outrageous as to prove the rule: 'In the *Neighing* of an Horse or in the *growling* of a Mastiff there is a meaning, there is as lively expression and, I may say, more humanity than many times in the Tragical flights of *Shakespeare*' (Thomas Rhymer).<sup>9</sup> The deference that Shakespeare has received from subsequent poets, moreover, while it may have been resigned or rueful or even grudging, has never been perfunctory. So ingenuous has it been, in fact, that it is often accompanied by the more or less disheartened conviction that Shakespeare simply cannot be rivalled. 'Shakespeare', writes Donald Davie, represents

a vast area of the English language and the English imagination which is as it were 'charged', radio-active: a territory where we dare not travel at all often or at all extensively, for fear of being morally infected, in the sense of being *overborne*, so that we cease to speak with our own voices and produce only puny echoes of the great voice which long ago took over that whole terrain for its own.<sup>10</sup>

The first point I would make with regard to Shakespeare's influence, then, is that the primary influence exerted by Shakespeare

over English poetry is one of intimidation. It is easy enough for a disinterested anatomist like Northrop Frye to speak out against the 'sonorous nonsense' and 'leisure-class gossip' of ranking poets.<sup>11</sup> It is easy for the historicist to argue that, with or without the tendentious corollary of a late seventeenth-century 'dissociation of sensibility', the historical and cultural configuration that threw up Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is unrepeatable:

Not much later the restrictive countermovement gained the upper hand. Protestantism and the Counter Reformation, absolutistic ordering of society and intellectual life, academic and puristic imitation of antiquity, rationalism and scientific empiricism, all operated together to prevent Shakespeare's freedom from continuing to develop after him.<sup>12</sup>

But the writer determined to be a great writer is ambivalent about category errors and suspicious of historical inevitability. Ambition for renown will be neither consoled nor argued down by the thought that the conditions necessary for the nurturing of a genius like Shakespeare's will never come again. Besides, the desire either to 'write like' or to rival Shakespeare can mean anything from attempting a poetic drama in blank verse, through achieving a comparable metaphorical richness of apprehension and a comparably infinite rhetorical variety of expression, to simply writing poetry—*any* poetry—that is considered as great as Shakespeare's.

In an essay entitled 'Poets, Critics, and Readers', the American poet-critic Randall Jarrell fantasized the poet as one disinterestedly concerned with the quality and survival of capital 'P' Poetry. If the public that reads with 'calm and ease and independence' does not like a poet's work, writes Jarrell,

why, surely that is something he could bear. It is not his poems but poetry that he wants people to read; if they will read Rilke's and Yeats's and Hardy's poems, he can bear to have his own poems go unread forever. He *knows* that their poetry is good to read and that's something he necessarily can't know about his own.<sup>13</sup>

Nothing could be more remote from the self-centred pursuit of recognition or renown characteristic of major poets. If the

maintenance of a canon has been the conscious or unconscious determination of one cultural hegemony after another since the first cave-dweller enhanced his lodgings for the long winter ahead, it has not been without the often hysterical collaboration of successive generations of artist themselves. The only difference is that the fluctuating canon that strikes the late twentieth-century cultural historian as culpably arbitrary and exclusive is not nearly as exclusive as the canon recognised by a jealous poet.

In short, historical and generic differences might make nonsense of the question 'is T. S. Eliot as good a poet as Thomas Gray?', but poets tend to rival each other across what for scholars are the insuperable gaps in time and space. It may be that what makes this or that expression—or form or narrative or description—more 'rich' or 'right' is nothing inherent, nothing other than the critical culture that it enters. Still, however unclear and shifting the criteria, no activity, least of all art, can give satisfaction without difficult choices and without the conviction that a certain expression, a certain way of saying, is genuinely better—more 'rich' or 'right'—than another or others. Writers know comparison and evaluation and are obsessed by hierarchies of good, better, and best. Hence the anxiety of creativity, the acrimony and jealousy of the warfare on earth that is the life of the wit.

When the anxiety of creativity involves a dialogue with the dead, Harold Bloom calls it 'the anxiety of influence': in some poets a momentary cowering in the shadow of great artistic achievement, in others paralysis ('poetic influence is a variety of melancholy or anxiety-principle'<sup>14</sup>). If Bloom vulgarizes and oversimplifies the genealogy of poetry and the fact and function of poetic ambition, his 'revisionary ratios' nonetheless register the frequently literary origins of literary motivation and intention. In the attitude they assume towards Shakespeare, moreover, later poets do at times appear more or less wholeheartedly to endorse Bloom's psychoanalytic paradigms.

Dryden's is a striking case. Born in 1631, Dryden conveniently succeeded Shakespeare while remaining close in theatrical history and close to those like the writer-manager William Davenant who knew Shakespeare (if he was not his bastard son). Dryden has the

'awfull ghost' of Shakespeare himself deliver a prologue to his adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida*:

Untaught, unpractis'd, in a barbarous Age,  
I found not, but created first the Stage.  
And if I drain'd no *Greek* or *Latin* store,  
'Twas, that my own abundance gave me more.  
On foreign trade I needed not rely,  
Like fruitfull *Britain*, rich without supply.  
In this my rough-drawn Play, you shall behold  
Some Master-strokes, so manly and so bold  
That he, who meant to alter, found 'em such  
He shook; and thought it Sacrilege to touch.  
Now, where are the Successours to my name?  
What bring they to fill out a Poets fame?  
Weak, short-liv'd issues of a feeble Age;  
Scarce living to be Christen'd on the Stage!<sup>15</sup>

A feeble Hamlet, incommensurate with Shakespeare as Hamlet the Father (whose ghost Shakespeare had acted in his own play), Dryden betrays throughout his writings a thoroughly filial ambivalence towards his inheritance, now rubbishing Shakespeare's vulgarity and shapelessness, now praising his inventiveness to infinity, now cursing his having exhausted the generic possibilities he had himself created. When Dryden read into Hamlet's equivocations under the paternal shadow a parable of his own predicament as Shakespeare's inheritor, he not only confirmed the Shakespearean legacy and anticipated Bloom's 'Œdipal' characterization, but he also suggested a brilliant reading of a play in which acting and action are throughout in ironic tension. Dryden also has the honour of being the first in a long line of self-professed literary Hamlets, amongst the best known of whom were Sterne, Goethe, Coleridge, Keats, Dostoyevsky, and Joyce. 'No English writer was more familiar than Shakespeare; no play more familiar than Hamlet'.<sup>16</sup>

### III

It was not like that for Shakespeare. 'The world for him was new, as it had been for Chaucer', writes Michael Schmidt, echoing a



commonplace.<sup>17</sup> The vital phrase here of course is 'for him'. There have always been individuals, and perhaps even cultures or periods, for whom the world has sprung forth as from the first creative fiat, just as there will always be others who feel the weight of the past acutely—whether as anxiety or guilt or nostalgia. The interesting thing about the complaint that the past has exhausted all the most impressive or expressive forms is that it is one of the most ancient tropes in literature, certainly in post-Homeric literature. For all that, however, Shakespeare is still taken as a literary historical watershed, and part of the explanation for the uninhibited fluency of Shakespeare's art has always been the freedom that comes with not having to operate within the kind of burdensome tradition which he himself came to constitute. Shakespeare, in short, did not have Shakespeare to contend with:

a Shakespeare in the history of one's language and letters can be an ambiguous providence. A Shakespearean presence seems to consume certain energies of form and perception by its own finality. It may fatally debilitate, again by virtue of complete exploitation, the genre in which it is realized (the subsequent course of English verse drama). It may lead either to perpetual imitation—the problem of freshness in the English iambic pentameter—or to laboured, ultimately sterile exercises in repudiation (Pound's *Cantos* are at one level an attempt to establish a repertoire of rhetorical tone and imagery emancipated from Shakespeare).

'Certain reaches and deeps have never again been worth simulating', concludes George Steiner.<sup>18</sup>

There can be no doubt that the creative energy invested by other cultures in creating new drama, English theatre has often invested in reconceiving and restaging Shakespeare—not to mention the energy, and money, invested in projects like the reconstruction of the Globe Theatre. 'While twentieth-century Europe was churning out its theatrical avant-gardes and manifestos', writes Terry Eagleton, 'England was staging *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with real rabbits'.<sup>19</sup> The truth is that, *pace* Eagleton, both can be pretentious and silly, but it is hard not to prefer Shakespeare with real rabbits to a lot of Romantic and post-Romantic posturing.

The disparity is striking, however, and the conservatism of English theatre surely to be regretted.

When Eagleton goes on to remind us that the majority of the more effective English-language dramatists since the Restoration have been Irish in origin—Farquhar, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, Synge, O’Casey, Beckett (even Congreve was educated in Ireland)—we are bound to wonder to what extent their national removal from the Shakespearean precedent gave them a vitally enabling independence. Even as he ‘translated’ Shakespeare into a more coherent imagery and more regular, heroic blank verse, Dryden knew he had to seek distinction elsewhere, in the heroics of his translation of Virgil and the mock-heroics of *Mac Flecknoe*. Milton conceived of *Paradise Lost* as a tragic drama in five acts, and a comparison of the soliloquies of Satan with those of *Macbeth* and *Richard III* strongly suggests that he had gone to school to Shakespeare:

Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?  
Thou hadst . . .  
Be then his love accursed, since love or hate,  
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.  
Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will  
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.  
Me miserable! Which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly is hell; my self am hell  
*Paradise Lost*, IV, 66–7; 69–75

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:  
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why —  
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself!  
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good  
That I myself have done unto myself?  
O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself  
For hateful deeds committed by myself!  
*Richard III*, V, iii, 185–92

Satan in turn rejoined forces with the Elizabethan and Jacobean villains to spawn generations of Gothic villains, but the question for us is how far Milton’s decision to convert his drama into epic

might have been encouraged by a sense of what Shakespeare had accomplished in tragedy?

Again, stimulated by the Shakespearean precedent, as well as by the dramatic possibilities evident in the new German drama of Schiller, the young writers Wordsworth and Coleridge both tried their hands at a major tragedy. What the choice of form signalled was a shift 'from social and political phenomena to the more complex phenomena of human motive and behaviour',<sup>20</sup> the shift that has got Wordsworth into so much trouble with the New Historicists lately. In both Wordsworth's *The Borderers* and Coleridge's *Osorio*, however, the 'parading of the externals of Shakespearean tragedy is merely tiresome',<sup>21</sup> as tiresome as the perfunctory echoes of Shakespeare in Romantic prose (Hazlitt's and Byron's pre-eminently, though none is exempt):

that another in his child's affection  
Should hold a place, as if 'twere robbery,  
He seemed to quarrel with the very thought  
*The Borderers*, I. i. 28–30

Given that 'the Romantics were saturated in Shakespeare',<sup>22</sup> the compulsive habit of imitation and quotation is hardly surprising, but in the formal choice of Shakespearean tragedy there is something, not just 'tiresome', but inherently self-defeating. At its most 'Shakespearean', *The Borderers* cannot hope to rival Shakespeare, and when in the play Wordsworth finds a blank verse 'worthy of himself' it is out of place in its dramatic context. While Shelley's and Byron's dramas arguably betray a surer dramatic sense, they cannot be said to have avoided the same dilemma, any more than did those of the 'Scottish Shakespeare' John Home—or of the Scottish Shakespearean Joanna Baillie, who wrote more than twenty-six more consistently talented but overly schematic closet imitations of Shakespeare.

Since the Romantic period, wise poets have circumvented either drama itself or blank-verse drama. And even so we are bound to wonder if, just as all philosophy is said to be footnotes to Plato, all drama is not footnotes to Shakespeare. The comedy of manners has been the obvious choice to escape the shadow, but, for comedy

of matter and comedy that matters, none has the sheer variety of humour and wit restlessly tending towards vulgarity or tragedy or the bizarre. And in the twentieth century, can any spare, existential absurdity come near the disorientation, the provocation and the pathos of *Lear* on the heath?

#### IV

Thus it may prove that Shakespeare's most pervasive influence is to be identified in what has *not* been attempted—or, more positively, in the evolution of literary forms that avoid the Shakespearean precedent altogether. There is arguably more Shakespearean inventiveness in the novels of Fielding or Sterne or Dickens or Joyce, for example, than in English theatre. Another often genuinely creative tradition taking its cue as well as its inspiration from the same Shakespearean inventiveness is the one mentioned by Eagleton and discussed earlier by Gary Taylor and George Steiner: the performance of Shakespeare's plays themselves. From their inception, their staging has involved a more than usually complex orchestration of different talents rarely content with slavish reproduction. If it has not been possible or desirable to imitate Shakespeare's plays, in other words, their rich and teeming variety of character, action, and diction—and one should probably add the corrupt and therefore indeterminate state of the texts—has encouraged a comparably rich variousness in their performance history. (The same may be said, incidentally, of Shakespearean criticism, usually considered even further removed from the creative epicentre.) Contrast, for example, the *Comédie Française* tradition of performing the great French dramatists of the seventeenth century, the detailed re-staging of highly conventionalized Asian drama—Japan's *Nō* and *Kabuki*, and the puppet theatre of *Bunraku-za*, for example—or even the institutionalized D'Oyly Carte Gilbert and Sullivan. Shakespeare has never been fostered or become fossilized in this way, but from the very beginning has invited and received reinterpretation, modification, and adaptation.

This has partly to do with the great freedom allowed for

innovation with physical properties like dress and staging by the anachronistic nature of Elizabethan theatre generally and Shakespearean theatre specifically, and by externalities like a minimum of un-prescriptive stage directions. More than this, however, the Shakespearean drama allows a freedom of a (broadly) ideological kind—or, if you prefer, betrays a want of ideological definition or conviction. In one sense, Shakespeare is arguably the most political of playwrights, as a selective roll call soon reminds us: Richard III; Hal/Henry V; Brutus, Antony, Caesar; Ulysses; Duke Vincentio and Angelo; Coriolanus; Octavius; Prospero. It is just that Shakespeare is *comprehensively* political, which may well be a contradiction in terms. Communist Russia and fascist Germany, no less than the Western democracies, have been able to adapt his plays to their purposes with a minimum of editorial excision and reorganization. And the fact is that all are right, but not each alone. What this adaptability testifies to is—amongst other things that will be discussed below—an inherent tolerance, in the technical or mechanical sense of an ‘allowable variation’; ‘room to move’. The allowance for and even encouragement of variation in performance hints at a deeper tolerance, that is, one that has conspired with the liberal tendencies of English political and social evolution.

One way of expressing this is to say that Shakespeare is a political ‘trimmer’, inclined to all sides on an issue; but he is so for precisely the reasons that the characteristically un- or anti-theoretical liberal conservatism of English politics congratulates itself upon: because only tolerance within tradition respects human inconsistency and perversity. It is the political counterpart of the chameleon poet stressed and idealized by the Romantics, but known to every generation of criticism since the early seventeenth century. ‘It was Shakespeare’s prerogative’ writes Coleridge,

to have the *universal* which is potentially in each particular, opened out to him in the *homo generalis*, not as an abstraction of observation from a variety of men, but as the substance capable of endless modifications, of which his own personal existence was but one, and to use this one as the eye of the other, and as the tongue that could convey the discovery.<sup>23</sup>

Just as ‘Shakespeare in composing had no *I* but the *I* representative’, so he had in composing no *ideology* but the *ideology* representative, and can be performed left and right only because he is simplistically neither.

Of course, to the acutely historicized and historicist imaginings of the late twentieth century, the word or title ‘Shakespeare’ has become a sign or symbol evoking a complex configuration of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century political, social, and economic forces. But only the most stubborn historicist is likely to deny that Shakespeare’s anatomy of the personalities or psychology of politics is less than subtle and comprehensive, and only a literary theorist to argue that its origin in the monarchical political structures of late Elizabethan England disqualifies Shakespearean drama from commenting upon subsequent political practice. We do not need Joseph Mankiewicz’s *Julius Caesar* or Ian McKellan’s and Richard Loncraine’s 1930s *Richard III* to remind us that Shakespeare has identified patterns of egotism and exploitation and has dramatized political psychopathologies that prefigure the appalling hypocrisies and brutalities of political tyranny in our own century.

It may be that, strictly speaking, history’s refusal to repeat itself should not allow an art such prophetic powers. But it has. And if the awkward, quasi-spiritual critical vocabulary that the Romantics were obliged to evolve in order to characterize this uncannily pre-emptive insight into a ‘quintessentially’ human aspiration and corruption be disqualified by historicism in the late twentieth century, then so much the worse for twentieth-century historicism. The Rome of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is no more ‘Roman’ than it is ‘Elizabethan’ or ‘American’, except insofar as it is all of those places in the only way that art can be, as Aristotle recognized and criticism until recently has always accepted—on the evidence of its own self-implicated embarrassment, as it were. The criticism that reads *Julius Caesar* exclusively as an Elizabethan exercise reveals its own imaginative limitations, not Shakespeare’s.

## V

On another level, however, this comprehensive politicizing, like the play's comprehensive moralizing, only deepens the challenge of a terrible neutrality in Shakespeare, the challenge of what George Steiner calls 'the dispassionate neutrality of sunlight or of wind':

Innumerable scholars and critics have sought to elicit from Shakespeare's works some evidence of the author's religion, some evidence of a belief or refusal of belief in God. No shred of evidence on the matter exists. Shakespeare abides our question. . . .

Where is there a Shakespearean philosophy or intelligible ethics? Both Cordelia and Iago, Richard III and Hermione are instinct with the same uncanny trick of life. The shaping imagination which animates their spectacular presence is beyond good and evil. It has the dispassionate neutrality of sunlight or of wind. Can a man or woman conduct their lives by the example or precepts of Shakespeare as they can, say, by those of Tolstoy? Is the 'creation of words', even at a pitch of beauty, musicality, suggestive and metaphoric originality scarcely accessible to our analyses, really enough?<sup>24</sup>

Steiner has used Wittgenstein's reservations about the 'truth' and efficacy of the Shakespearean drama to express a Continental horror at Shakespeare's apparent unconcern with a 'philosophy or intelligible ethics', indeed with ideas *per se*. 'What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er', wrote Keats, 'delights the camelion [*sic*] Poet'.<sup>25</sup> This is why George Bernard Shaw was so vocal in his frustration with the Shakespearean imperium, identifying the want of ideas in Shakespeare with precisely the Anglo-centric philistinism that his own articulate and argumentative plays were designed to challenge.

There may well be a good deal of truth in the implied accusation that Shakespeare has maintained his pre-eminence precisely because, since the Restoration, he has entertained upper-class audiences with a morally and politically charged high-mindedness that paradoxically does not ask them to think, let alone seriously to re-appraise their own values. As Lear tears the trappings of his social superiority from his body on the heath in search of

unaccommodated man, few of us are seriously embarrassed about recovering the trappings of our own social superiority from the cloakroom, or are likely to meditate on the fact that the very price of the tickets unaccommodates most men and women. Quite the contrary: from the ‘momentous depth of speculation’ that for Keats is excited by *King Lear* there is a good deal of self-congratulation to be derived,<sup>26</sup> as there is for some from the very fact of Shakespeare’s social exclusiveness.

Making art accountable in this way is an invidious exercise, however, and one that is no less vulnerable to socio-political probing. If we confine ourselves as far as possible to Shakespeare’s ‘point of view’, on the other hand, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that, independent of the dramatic moment, there simply isn’t one; that his too intimate and extensive understanding of humanity undermined effective moral thinking: ‘here’s an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale’ (*Macbeth*, II, iii, 7–9). Whenever in Shakespeare meaning and value are an issue, they are an issue for the character, not for Shakespeare, who for all intents and purposes would appear to have nothing at all to say. The more an openly, indeed obsessively reflective, character like Hamlet has to say, for example, and the more that Hamlet’s saying becomes an alternative to life or an alternative life, the less (it is implied) Shakespeare wishes to comment.

We are back with Shaw—indeed, with Dr Johnson’s complaint that Shakespeare ‘seems to write without any moral purpose’.<sup>27</sup> Unwilling to accept that dramatic statement—or, more fashionably, dialogical statement<sup>28</sup>—implicitly doubts transcendent or ‘philosophical’ truth, criticism has been trying for three hundred years to catch Shakespeare, if not in the act of belief or commitment, then at least in the act of agonizing personally over good and bad, innocence and guilt, God or nothingness, as Hal and Brutus and Hamlet and Lear and Macbeth are seen to agonize. Surely, criticism cries, Macbeth’s eloquent *contemptus mundi* —

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 tale



Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

(V.v.24–8)

— *must* reflect Shakespeare's at least momentary loss of faith or meaning, as Manfred's patently reveals Byron's, say, or Vladimir and Estragon reflect Beckett's? *Surely?* And yet the Porter's interlude, or the Porter's character, is just as well realized:

much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

(II. iii..29–32)

And is it not safer to identify the playwright (as I did earlier) with his own drunken equivocator?

Undaunted by the dubious authority of dramatic statement, however, readers since the eighteenth century have been tracing in Shakespeare's works as a whole an organic, psycho-biographical development—what Keats called a 'continual allegory'<sup>29</sup>—in which the verbal erotics of the youthful comedies and the political adventures of the histories are followed by the more mature meditations and tragic anticipations of a 'problematic' phase of ethical and political crisis, which is in turn thought to climax in a tragic existentialism before issuing, finally, in the autumnal lyricism of the late romances. Even ignoring the exigencies of history and genre, this kind of *Bildungsroman* can be seen as no less circular than, say, Caroline Spurgeon's discovering a hearty Stratford gentleman in the patterns of imagery in the plays. Determined to avoid 'the danger and futility of trying ... to deduce from Shakespeare's dramatic utterances what Shakespeare himself thinks and feels', Spurgeon resorted instead to *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* in her search for 'the inner man', only to arrive at a blinding tautology: 'five words sum up the essence of his quality and character as seen in his images—sensitiveness, balance, courage, humour and wholesomeness'.<sup>30</sup> As to what Shakespeare thought and felt, we are here left with nothing more definitive than Ben Jonson's three-hundred-year-old assurance in

his *Timber; or, Discoveries* that Shakespeare ‘was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent *Phantsie*; brave notions, and gentle expressions’.<sup>31</sup>

Steiner’s unease with Shakespeare’s moral indifference has a telling analogue in the Judeo-Christian theological conundrum that Milton tries more or less disingenuously to resolve in *Paradise Lost*, a conundrum in which the ethical paradox of fortunate falling is layered upon the paradox of having an ethics at all in a world created by an all-knowing and all-loving deity. On ‘this side of truth’ suggests Dylan Thomas—the side that ‘you may not see, my son’, says God/Poet the father—

Good and bad, two ways  
Of moving about your breath  
By the grinding sea  
King of your heart in the blind days  
Blow away like breath . . .  
And all your deeds and words,  
Each truth, each lie,  
Die in unjudging love.

What frightens Wittgenstein and Steiner is the fact that it appears not to matter to Shakespeare, as it cannot matter to God. Shakespeare’s love for the creatures of his imagination—‘both Cordelia and Iago, Richard III and Hermione’—is intense and indiscriminate. No moral agent wishes to be told that his or her thoughts and deeds will be met with an indifference that refuses to discriminate, whether out of absence or of love. Just as no Christian wishes to be told that his or her belief in God is a matter of indifference to God (though the analogy here with Shakespeare’s apparent indifference to his own posthumous reputation is suggestive; how much has our cultural allegiance to Shakespeare been affected by his not anxiously soliciting it?). To the human, an indiscriminate love can be no love at all. Is this not the import of the parable of the prodigal son—which is concerned less with a jostling for priority within the family of love, than with the negation of all or any priority, certainly with the negation of any priority based on the kind of ethical accounting we conventionally practise?

Steiner's glimpse of the possibility that Shakespeare cared, but did not care; that the metaphorical mirror Shakespeare held up to life, like a real mirror, accepted and encompassed life without prejudice or predilection, is a Kafkaesque version of Keats's 'negative capability' and aesthetic 'intensity': 'The excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth' ?<sup>32</sup> It was not just the disagreeables, but Shakespeare himself who evaporated when he brought his drama into so intimate a relation with beauty and truth. Jorge Luis Borges worked the idea into a famous fable in which the analogy with God is explicit; 'before or after dying', writes Borges, Shakespeare

found himself in the presence of God and told Him: 'I who have been so many men in vain want to be one and myself.' The voice of the Lord answered from a whirlwind: 'Neither am I anyone; I have dreamt the world as you dreamt your work, my Shakespeare, and among the forms in my dream are you, who like myself are many and no one.'<sup>33</sup>

Recent historical and cultural materialist criticism of the kind mentioned earlier offers an even more chilling or sinister version than Steiner's of this Shakespearean indifference. As the passive conduit of prevailing prejudices towards race and gender and politics and class, Shakespeare is seen as conspiring with his hegemonic moment to reinforce its momentary hegemony. However, insofar as such criticism conceives of Shakespeare as surrendering not just his privileged insight into life, death, and the universe to history and ideology, but his very agency and individuality as well, this version of the Shakespearean mirror is trying to have its cake of authorial transparency and self-righteously to eat it too. To damn Shakespeare as a material reproduction of what passed for right-wing ideology in Elizabethan England is to sacrifice the right to go on and discriminate between Shakespeare and (say) Brecht.

It is precisely in comparison with Brecht, moreover—and with Sophocles and Racine and Goethe and Chekov and Ibsen—that Steiner finds Shakespeare so chillingly indifferent, not to say vacuous: 'Are Shakespeare's characters, at the last, more than

Magellanic clouds of verbal energy turning around a void, around an absence of truth and moral substance?’<sup>34</sup> The short answer is, ‘Yes, much more’. Indeed, it is the apparent autonomy and substantiality of his characters that renders Shakespeare so apparently indifferent to ‘truth and moral substance’. For Shakespeare the dramatic particular supervenes upon the abstract ethical idea. The question is not whether or not Shakespeare’s drama is true and moral, but rather the ancient one of whether or not there is a realm of truth and morality irreducible to the abstractions of philosophy or theology, a realm to which neither the philosopher nor the theologian has access.

## VI

‘I have dreamt the world as you dreamt your work’, says Borges’s God to his Shakespeare; and one thinks of that other dreamer, Adam, conjuring Eve in an act of creative desire, and of Keats’s comparison of the poetic imagination with Adam’s dream: ‘he awoke and found it truth’.<sup>35</sup> So do we wake to find *Hamlet* truth. It is not often enough remarked what an unlikely tragic hero the prince of Denmark is. In the light especially of Aristotle’s stressing in his *Poetics* the primacy of plot (*mythos*) and action in tragic drama and of his careful devaluation of character, Hamlet’s protracted dithering—his unwillingness to decide and to act—is distinctly unheroic. Is not Hamlet, after all (according to the standard joke), a typical academic—or playwright—in his compulsive ‘staging’ and histrionics? The moment requires his immediate and princely attention—

The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!

*Hamlet*, I.v.188–9

— and Hamlet retreats into thought, and language, and thought as language: ‘like a whore’, he ‘unpack[s] my heart with words’ (II, ii, 57). An irrepressibly verbal character, Hamlet manages to touch on just about everything that can be said in four to five hours about life, death, and the universe—and about his own place in life,

death, and the universe. And being so acute and acutely self-conscious, Hamlet is also acutely self-critical, for it is Hamlet himself who is the first to reflect upon his own diseased will to action, the first to articulate (literally, to join) in language what remains socially and politically 'out of joint' in a misguided attempt to redeem inactivity with insight. One of the best readings of Hamlet, it seems to me—and one which ties in most of our themes—is Auden's reading of 'the dramatist', who

admires and envies in his characters their courage and readiness to risk their lives and souls—qua dramatist, he never risks himself—but, at the same time, to his detached imagination, all action, however glorious, is vain because the consequence is never what the doer intended. What a man does is irrevocable for good or ill; what he makes, he can always modify or destroy. In all great drama, I believe, we can feel the tension of this ambivalent attitude, torn between reverence and contempt, of the maker towards the doer.<sup>36</sup>

But if being a type of academic or dramatist is what critics once thought of as Hamlet's 'tragic flaw', Hamlet the character and *Hamlet* the play remain a challenge to Aristotle's priority of heroic action nonetheless, a challenge less unheroic than mock-heroic, in the sense that, while it mocks the hero, it also mocks the inherited idea of the heroic as a masculine and military nostalgia.<sup>37</sup> Fortinbras lurks in the margins of the play as something like an immanent spirit of politico-military expedition—or (in literary terms) of Aristotelian action. His is precisely that unreflective decisiveness whose notions of military honour will brook the inhibition of neither philosophical nor indeed ethical scruples.

That the idea of the heroic is something that Hamlet has 'inherited', moreover, is quite literally true, for it comes with the genes no less than it comes with the culture. If Gertrude thinks that the lady in the play protests too much, how much too much does Hamlet protest his love and admiration for his dead father, and for everything his dead father represented? The truth is, of course, that Hamlet is different from his father, yet cannot find ways to realize that unlikeness—and here Dryden's analogy between Hamlet's relationship to his father on the one hand, and the poet's

relationship to an intimidating 'precursor' (Bloom) on the other, becomes especially appropriate.<sup>38</sup> This is best captured in the graveyard scene, so characteristic in appearing entirely gratuitous while almost deafening in its resonance:

CLOWN . . . . Here's a skull now: this skull hath lien you  
i'th'earth three-and-twenty years.  
HAMLET Whose was it?  
CLOWN A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you  
think it was?  
HAMLET Nay, I know not.  
CLOWN A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'A poured a  
flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir,  
was—sir—Yorick's skull, the king's jester.  
HAMLET This?  
CLOWN E'en that.  
HAMLET Let me see. [*Takes the skull*] Alas, poor Yorick! I  
knew him Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent  
fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And  
now how aborred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at  
it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how  
oft. Where be your jibes now? Your gambols, your songs,  
your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on  
a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite  
chafall'n? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her,  
let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come.  
Make her laugh at that.

(V.i.161–83)

At the very moment that Hamlet's affectionate recollections begin to modulate into mockery, he answers his own question: Yorick's 'jibes', 'gambols', 'songs', and 'flashes of merriment' have become his own. Both the heroic Hamlet, his father, and Yorick's carnivalesque and feminine alternative have met in him: the one, a classic Freudian superego—a removed male figure issuing *ex cathedra* pronouncements that paralyse the un-willing Hamlet—the other, a lord of play and divine folly, and a font of affection. Dead Yorick, once surrogate father *and* mother, speaks for a compassion and play no less absent from 'rotten' Denmark than the firm, patriarchal integrity of Hamlet senior.

The sudden changes of meaning and metaphoric direction in Hamlet's speech throughout the play—changes that lead, at the narrative level, to the speculation about Hamlet's madness—reflect the dual influence of the two dead fathers:

Property was thus appalled,  
That the self was not the same;  
Single nature's double name  
Neither two nor one was called.<sup>39</sup>

Horatio might object that ' 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so', but Hamlet's 'madness' is a compulsive frivolity that requires and finds no constructive expression and is driven to random acts of violence. At the level of genre, the same unevenness and abrupt changes in register wilfully violate its tragic decorum. Shakespeare's violation in *Hamlet* as elsewhere of old classical and new neoclassical expectations—his medieval vulgarity, if you like—'deregulates' and feminizes as Yorick carnivalizes and feminizes the patriarchal precedent, giving a variousness to his plays that, as I suggested earlier, not only encourages a comparable variousness in their performance history but also anticipates the 'dialogic' heterogeneity of the novel.

## VII

In recognising Hamlet in themselves, the Romantics recognised in Hamlet 'the prophetic soul/ Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come'.<sup>40</sup> In Hamlet, for example, we experience the intense privacies of the self as personality that would become so characteristic of the world that lay on the other side of the Civil War, in that familiar, foreign country of the future. And not just the privacies, but also the anxieties and crises; at a *critical* moment in his own and in his country's history, Hamlet is paralysed by alternatives. In his seemingly endless soliloquizing and philosophizing, moreover, as the critical outpouring of our own century will confirm, Hamlet manages to pre-empt every possible intellectual gesture from Manicheism to existentialism.

Any account of influence must go beyond the prophetic, however, to consider the direct effects of major thinkers and writers on the structure of our individual and collective sensibilities:

The literary language of a people is a collective treasure house of phrasing that determines its users' maximum range of human experience. Any new intensity, any new subtlety of the life of the spirit remains private and becomes lost unless and until it is captured by some verbal turn of unique configuration. Only then does it become re-experienceable, transmittable.<sup>41</sup>

Because we can expect neither clarity as to the nature of this kind of influence nor quasi-empirical confirmation of its extent, it is no doubt best to proceed sceptically and to control the impulse to make large claims. Who would be rash enough to try to estimate the contribution to English nationalism—to *England*—of Shakespeare's John of Gaunt on 'this royal throne of kings' (*Richard II*, II, i, 31–68) or Henry Fifth leaping into the breach at 'girded Harfleur' (*Henry V*, III, i, 1–34)? Since Pope's edition of Shakespeare in 1725, there has been a tendency to wrest the poetry from its context and to quote it as if addressed directly to its reader, not to another character; to quote it as if a Shakespeare play were one of Pope's own moral essays. Pope earmarked 'the most shining passages' with double commas in the left-hand margin of the text and the beautiful scenes with a star, after which the reader could consult the back for a 'Table' of the most considerable speeches and an index of select passages on such topics as '*Womankind, their Nature*'. (Other indexes could be found of 'Characters'; of 'Manners, Passions, and their external Effects', and of 'Thoughts, or Sentiments'.)

To enquire into the effects of Shakespeare is to ask for a good deal more than a quotation for every occasion, however. Conventional middle-class wisdom in the manner of Polonius is one thing, the full meaning and effective charge that the words and phrases derive from their dramatic context, another. The question of the nature and extent of this altogether subtler influence begs enough questions and qualifications to delay the enquiry indefinitely, if not to make nonsense of it. How do we even describe, let alone estimate, the modifications effected by



Shakespeare's language and art on that apprehensive intellectual and emotional alertness that goes by the name of human consciousness, and on that weighing, articulating, and shaping polymonologue, continuous with it but not identical to it, which goes by the name of the 'stream of consciousness'? How do we describe modifications effected by the Shakespearean language and literature to human *unconsciousness*? On top of which—to retreat from the limits of our enquiry to limits in ourselves as enquirers—our want of comprehensiveness makes it impossible not to exaggerate the effects of the intellectual and cultural phenomena that stand out for us.

Having said all that, however, it is also true that what *enables* works of thought and art to function is precisely the tendency of posthumous culture splendidly to isolate them from their origins, wrapping them in a semi-permeable membrane of 'silence and slow time'. More to the point, if none would be rash enough to estimate Shakespeare's contribution to England and Englishness, few would be rash enough to disagree with Jane Austen's Henry Crawford and deny his having made one:

Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is part of an Englishman's constitution. His thoughts and beauties are so spread abroad that one touches them every where, one is intimate with him by instinct.

To which Edmund Bertram adds:

His celebrated passages are quoted by every body; they are in half the books we open, and we all talk Shakespeare, use his similies, and describe with his descriptions.<sup>42</sup>

If none can characterize the change in consciousness and unconsciousness, individual or collective, few would deny that change is a characteristic, not to say condition of consciousness and unconsciousness. Or would deny that, as Shelley argued in his *Defence of Poetry*, 'language is vitally metaphorical', marking 'the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their apprehension'; that art 'compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know'.<sup>43</sup> For good or ill, then, what Shakespeare said and imagined, we know.

So ‘whaur’s yer Wullie Shakespeare noo’? Well, judging by the number and quality of stage performances and film versions current, the answer has to be: ‘doing very nicely, thank you’. Shakespeare himself may remain an enigma, but one so instinct in what and how we think and feel that his *Complete Works* (abridged) informs the very ways in which we understand the question, let alone the ways we choose to answer it: ‘Shakespeare will go on explaining us, in part because he invented us’ (Harold Bloom).<sup>44</sup>

#### Notes

- 1 ‘“Le Bible du self-made man”: Literary Influence IV’, *Arts* 20 (1998): 77–105 (pp.90–93). The first three essays in this series were ‘Literary Influence: A Rule of Thumb?’, *Arts* 17 (1994–95): 2–22; ‘“Eating Their Words”: Literary Influence II’, *Arts* 18 (1996): 43–67; ‘Meaning and the Mock-Heroic: Literary Influence III’, *Arts* 19 (1997): 36–66.
- 2 *1 Henry IV*, II.iv.427 ff. All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage, Harmondsworth, 1969.
- 3 Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*, London, 1990, p.21.
- 4 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers, in 6 volumes, London and Boston, 1974–81, I, 139; 149.
- 5 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, II, 403–4.
- 6 Taylor, p.119.
- 7 Lewis Theobald, Preface to his edition of 1733; *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, II, 475–76.
- 8 ‘Hamlet’, in his *Selected Essays*, third enlarged edition, London, 1951, pp.141–46 (p.144).
- 9 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, II, 30. For all Rhymer’s characteristically neoclassical and eminently quotable complaints, as it happens, he still accepted Shakespeare’s mastery—as did Shaw, another notable dissenter writing 200 years later.
- 10 As quoted in Michael Schmidt, *Lives of the Poets*, London, 1998, pp.169–70.
- 11 Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Princeton, NJ, 1957, p.18.
- 12 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Princeton, NJ, 1953, p.324.
- 13 As quoted by Adam Kirsch in his review of Jarrell’s *No Other Book*:

- Selected Essays*, ed. Brad Leithauser (1999), *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1999, p.24.
- 14 *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford, 1973, p.7.
- 15 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, I, 267.
- 16 Taylor, p.107.
- 17 Schmidt, p.171.
- 18 George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford, 1975, pp.366–67.
- 19 'A Far Cry from Red Megaphones: The Latent Conservatism of the English Theatrical Tradition', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1999, pp.18–19 (p.18).
- 20 Stephen Gill, in the introduction to his *The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth*, Ithaca, NY, and Hassocks, Sussex, 1975, p.12.
- 21 John Jones, *The Egotistical Sublime*, London, 1954, p.55.
- 22 Peter Thorslev, 'Wordsworth's *The Borderers* and the Romantic Villain-Hero', *Studies in Romanticism* 5.2 (Winter 1966): 84. See also Jonathan Bate's *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, Oxford, 1989, and his anthology, *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, London, 1992.
- 23 Coleridge, *Miscellaneous Criticism*, pp.43–24.
- 24 George Steiner, 'A Reading Against Shakespeare', *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978–1996*, London, 1996, pp.123–24.
- 25 *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings, Oxford, 1970, p.157.
- 26 *Letters of John Keats*, p.42.
- 27 'Preface to Shakespeare' (1765), in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, V, 65.
- 28 See, pre-eminently, M. M. (Mikhail) Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, Austin, 1981.
- 29 *Letters of John Keats*, p.218.
- 30 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge, 1935, pp.200; 205–6.
- 31 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, I, 26.
- 32 *Letters of John Keats*, p.42.
- 33 'Everything and Nothing', in his *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates & James E. Irby, New York, 1964, pp.248–49.
- 34 'A Reading Against Shakespeare', *No Passion Spent*, p.124.
- 35 *Letters of John Keats*, p.37.
- 36 'The Globe', in his *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*, London, 1963, pp.171–81 (p.181).
- 37 See my third essay in this series, 'Meaning and the Mock-Heroic: Literary Influence III', *Arts* 19 (1997): 36–66.
- 38 On F. R. Leavis's phrase 'realization of unlikeness', see my 'Eating Their Words: Literary Influence II', *Arts* 18 (1996): 43–67 (p.44).

- 39 'The Phoenix and the Turtle', ll. 37–40.
- 40 Shakespeare, sonnet 107, ll. 1–2.
- 41 Hermann J. Weigand, 'Shakespeare in German Criticism', in *The Persistence of Shakespeare Idolatry: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Babcock*, ed. Herbert Schueller, Detroit, 1964, pp.105–33 (p.105).
- 42 *Mansfield Park*, ed. James Kinsley and John Lucas, World's Classics, Oxford, 1970, p.306 (III, iii; chapter 34).
- 43 *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, New York, 1976, pp.480–508 (pp.482; 505).
- 44 *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York, 1998, p.xviii.