The Picture of Nobody: Shakespeare's anti-authorship

RICHARD WILSON

Contributor: Richard Wilson is the Sir Peter Hall Professor of Shakespeare Studies at Kingston University, London. His books include *Will Power*, *Secret Shakespeare*, and *Shakespeare in French Theory*. He is the author of numerous articles in academic journals, and is on the editorial board of the journal *Shakespeare.*

1. Bare life

At the end, 'his nose was as sharp as a pen' as he 'babbled of green fields' (*Henry V*, 2,3,15*)*. In September 1615, a few weeks before Shakespeare began to make his will and a little over six months before his death, Thomas Greene, town clerk of Stratford, wrote a memorandum of an exchange biographers treasure as the last of the precious few records of the dramatist's spoken words: 'W Shakespeares tellyng J Greene that I was not able to beare the enclosinge of Welcombe'.[1] John Greene was the clerk's brother, and Shakespeare, according to previous papers, was their 'cousin', who had lodged Thomas at New Place, his Stratford house. So the Greenes had appealed to their sharp-nosed kinsman for help in a battle that pitted the council against a consortium of speculators who were, in their own eyes, if 'not the greatest… almost the greatest men of England'.[2] The plan to enclose the fields of Welcombe north of the town was indeed promoted by the steward to the Lord Chancellor, no less. But the predicament for Shakespeare was that it was led by his friends the Combes, rich money-lenders from whom he had himself bought 107 acres adjacent to the scheme. This land was his daughter Susanna's inheritance, and he had raised her interest in its development by investing in a half-share of the tithes on Welcombe's corn and hay. Critics like to read into Prospero's vision of 'nibbling sheep and flat meads thatched with stover' (*Tempest*, 4,1,62-3) 'Shakespeare's figurative return home'.[3] But at the close of his life, the dramatist was pitched into the thick of the epoch-marking conflict that was tearing this English idyll apart, for he now had to weigh his rental income from arable farming against the potential profits from those sheep.[4]

In his last days the great dramatist of indecision had to make a momentous decision. For the certain losers from sheep farming on Stratford's 'flat meads' would be the tenants, who when 'woolly breeders' (*Merchant*, 1,3,79) ate fields, in a notorious image from More's *Utopia*, must 'depart away' with babes and chattels on their backs.[5] Shakespeare had set these wrenching words in *Sir Thomas More*, where More's phrase about the destitute with babes and baggage at their backs was reassigned, however, to asylum-seekers. (*Add.II*, 81-2). When it came to evictions on his own turf his last recorded utterance that 'I was not able to bear the enclosing' is harder to read. Was his parting word on the most divisive social problem of the age that he could not *bear* or *bar* the change? Did he regret he had not barred the enclosure? Or that he could not bear its cost? And was the 'I' who he said 'could not bear the enclosing' even Shakespeare, indeed, or Greene? It seems more than chance that the Bard's valediction is such a bar to understanding we cannot tell whether he could not *prevent*, *endure* or *carry* the enclosing. We

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know he was aware of such ambiguities because he had a joke that sheep 'make me cry "baa"' (*Two Gents*, 1,1,91); his Macbeth would sooner bar the door than 'bear the knife' (*Macbeth*, 1,7,16); and he has Antigonus abandon a bairn in bearing-cloth before he is eaten by a bear (*Winter's*, 4,1,105). But was Shakespeare, as a landowner and interested party, unable to stop, suffer or support the barring of his neighbours? In what did this lack of success consist? We cannot find our bearings. For as Terence Hawkes comments, 'an entire spectrum of potential meaning' is offered by the indeterminacy of these famous last words, as if their weakness and indecision were signifiers of some irresolvable confusion not only over the barring of real estate, but the *bearing* on the writer of his own life and times:

> Plurality invests all texts of course, but none more so than this. Its very subject guarantees it a talismanic, even votive status in our culture which offers to propel the words beyond the page. They seem to present, after all, a record of oral utterance, of actual speech on the Bard's part which, at this date, might almost lay claim to the aura of last words, significant beyond the context of their saying.[6]

Whatever their meaning, Shakespeare's last words seem to speak of a profound failure. Yet in his critique of speech act theory Jacques Derrida opened a new itinerary for criticism by connecting art precisely with the experience of failure or ineptitude, and with the counter-intuitive idea that what is most powerful is 'often the most disarming feebleness'; so as a sign of the queer power of weakness, we might perhaps consider Shakespeare's reported statement that 'I was not able to bear the enclosing' as what Roland Barthes termed a biographeme: that quantum of truth that embodies a life's work.[7] For 'Who would fardels bear?' asks his Hamlet (*Hamlet*, 3,1,75); 'I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out', responds Gloucester (*Lear*, 4,6,75); and Macbeth: 'bear-like I must fight the course' (*Macbeth*, 5,7,2). But 'I had rather bear with you than bear you', sighs Touchstone (*As You*, 2,4,8); and 'He's a lamb indeed that "baas" like a bear', sneer the Citizens of *Coriolanus* (2,1.10). *Baring*, in all its multiple connotations of comportment, endurance, exemption, exposure, orientation and prevention, seems to have been this writer's habitual mode. We would thus surely like to know what the author of such lines thought about the condition of *bare life,* for human beings cannot bear too much reality, quips Hawkes, after T.S. Eliot, which is why they tell tales to paper over the cracks.[8]

Shakespeare span many sad stories about the 'bare / ruin'd choirs' (Sonnet 73) and 'thorny point of bare distress' (*As You*, 2,7,94), caused by England's textile-driven capitalist revolution. Yet when his townsmen gave him a leading part to play in this historic tragedy, it appears he almost literally sat on the fence, retreating behind a barrier of words into what Stephen Greenblatt calls the double consciousness with which an actor hides from view, and echoing his questioners with what they already knew, or even had themselves just said.[9] And this impression is reinforced by an earlier interview when Shakespeare had tried to calm their fears. For on 17 November 1614 Thomas Greene called on the great man at his London house in Blackfriars. But what the town clerk did not know, as Shakespeare and his son-in-law Dr. John Hall gave reassurances about going with the flow of events, was that on October 28 the poet's pen had signed a secret covenant to secure his own compensation 'for all such loss detriment or hindrance' as he might suffer 'by reason of any Enclosure':

> At my cousin Shakespeare, coming yesterday to town, I went to see him how he did. He told me that they assured him they meant to enclose no further

> than to Gospel Bush and so up straight (leaving out part of the dingles to the field) to the gate in Clopton hedge, and take in Salisbury's piece. And that they mean in April to survey the land and then to give satisfaction, and not before. And he and Mr Hall say they think there will be nothing done at all.[10]

Perhaps his cousin Greene called 'to see how he did' because Shakespeare was already ill, and so too infirm to join the fight. Certainly, his reported attitude seems of a piece with the wish that warms his plays, to 'laugh this sport o'er by a country fire' (*Merry Wives*, 5,5,219). Yet when the town clerk returned to Stratford he learned that 'the survey there was passed', despite his cousin's certainty that it would not take place until spring, and by the first days of December the trenches were being dug for the fences. Embarrassingly, when Greene tried to halt the developers on the 10th he went looking for their lawyer at Shakespeare's New Place, though it would be a month before lawyers tipped him off about the secret pact.[11] Biographers wring their hands at this sequence of events, which 'reveals a hitherto unseen side to the playwright of the people… quietly hedging his bets,' in Anthony Holden's words, 'by doing clandestine deals with the enemy'.[12] 'Either Shakespeare was lied to or he was lying,' as Greenblatt admits.[13] So was he 'disinterested, or was he a schemer?' wondered Dennis Kay: 'Was he duplicitous or naive?'[14] Peter Levi feared the moneymen were 'too sharp for him'; and René Weiss thinks him too 'casual'; but Park Honan accepts his 'wish to protect the value of his assets' with the tired excuse that 'he had earned some rest'.[15] Likewise, while allowing that enclosure would be in his financial interests, Peter Ackroyd exonerates his reluctance to align himself as the result of a temperamental ambivalence: 'He seems to have been incapable of taking sides and remained studiedly impartial in even matters closest to him'.[16] Thus, as Greenblatt sums up a sorry story, 'Shakespeare stayed out of it, indifferent to its outcome perhaps. He did not stand to lose anything, and did not choose to join in a campaign on behalf of others who might be less fortunate'.[17]

If the spy Marlowe was transfixed by how much theatrical and political *plotting* had in common, the property-owner who called England a 'blessed plot' (*Richard II*, 2,1,50) liked to pun on the *topos* that made his old plays exchangeable for a New Place. So his ambiguity over this plot of green fields has become an epitome for his biographers of Shakespeare's famed disinterestedness. Yet it is the *interest* in his disinterest that is a focus of the most unforgiving treatment of the business, when a suicidal Shakespeare is portrayed in Edward Bond's 1973 drama *Bingo*. 'You read too much into it,' Bond's playwright tells William Combe, as though addressing his later critics: 'I'm protecting my own interests. Not supporting you, nor fighting the town'. The banker knows, however, that Shakespeare's covert indemnity means he will never lift a finger against the plan. Thus, 'Be noncommittal', Combe slyly urges, 'or say you think nothing will come of it. Stay in your garden. It pays to sit in a garden'.[18] Bond sets his play in the bleak midwinter of the Christmas after Shakespeare struck his deal, when the town council begged him and other freeholders to prevent 'the ruin of the borough', and the confrontation turned violent as two aldermen mandated to fill the ditch were roughly thrown into it by Combe, who 'sat laughing on horseback and said they were good football players' but 'puritan knaves'.[19] In *Bingo* one of the protestors who cry for liberty is shot dead in the snow, while Shakespeare frets about the ice in his own soul: 'I must be very cold… Every writer writes in other men's blood'.[20] These winter words may well be melodramatic, but they underline Bond's message, which is that Shakespeare's creative freedom, as the sovereignty of an artist who sits serenely cultivating his own garden, is the aesthetic interest earned from a deadly non-commitment:

> I howled when they suffered, but they were whipped and hanged so that I could be free. That is the right question: not why did I sign one piece of paper… Stolen things have no value. Pride and arrogance are the same when they're stolen. Even serenity.[21]

'It pays to sit in a garden': for Bond Shakespeare's serenity in his country garden was the stolen fruit of a ruthless privatisation. From the opposite ideological perspective Jonathan Bate agrees it was this private place, and the selfishness of 'keeping to oneself', that sustained the public plays. Just as Montaigne retreated from the French court 'to read books in his tower and cultivate his vegetables', observes Bate admiringly, so 'the key to Shakespeare' is that he 'kept his counsel and retired – possibly a great deal earlier than most biographers imagine – to his garden at New Place'. This eco-critic therefore salutes 'Shakespeare the Epicurean' as a follower of the philosopher Epicurus, whose 'garden was private property' and whose quiet advice to 'hide thyself' disconnected happiness from citizenship. If the refusal to participate in civic life was what the Greeks termed *idiocy*, Shakespeare was the greatest 'militant idiot', enthuses Bate.[22] The insistence here that an autonomous and autotelic literature grounded in private property is nevertheless *non-political* calls to mind Baudelaire's characterisation of 'art-for-art's-sake' as a 'puerile utopia'.[23] But it also reinforces Hawkes' point that the really pressing question prompted by the steely self-containment portrayed in *Bingo* is not the naïve one about how a man who wrote such plays about the tragedy of sovereign self-centredness could 'behave as he did in the face of suffering humanity. The more probing enquiry asks how could he not?'[24]

'How long have I been dead?' asks Bond's Shakespeare before he kills himself. It is a question that haunts every biography of a writer who, in the closing words of James Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, 'held the keys that opened the hearts and minds of others, even as he kept a lock on what he revealed himself'.[25] W.H. Auden thought a poet ought to 'Sing of human unsuccess / In a rapture of distress'.[26] But in Shakespeare's case his indifference to unsuccess is the more unsettling in the enclosure conflict because of the social relief organised by his neighbours, who mustered on behalf of the protests the festive 'welcome and protection' (*Lear*, 3,6,85) he invoked in his plays when they 'paid the participants, furnished them with food and drink, and provided music for their amusement'.[27] Thus the draper Arthur Cawdrey assured Combe 'he would never consent without the Town', and 'had rather lose his land than their good wills'.[28] The Cawdreys were recusants with cause to regret 'No night is now with hymn or carol blessed' (*Dream*, 2,1,102). But the 'good will' they mobilised did in fact defeat the enclosers, when a day after their men had been mocked a carnival troop of women and children marched out at night and levelled the ditches. Combe persisted in depopulating Welcombe; but the Borough lodged a staying-order, and in April 1616 he was finally vanquished when the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Coke, commanded him to 'set his heart at rest, he should neither enclose nor lay down his common arable land so long as he [Coke] served the King'.[29] Shakespeare, or the human shell in which the writer resided, passed away on April 23, leaving nothing at all in his will to his Greene 'cousins', yet bequeathing grasping Combe his ceremonial sword. And Katherine Duncan-Jones concludes that this 'selfish landowner's view' was of a piece with his minimal bequest to the poor and failure to set up a charitable trust.[30] Truly, the hospitable name of Welcombe was a misnomer for the frosty scene of Shakespeare's own farewell.

2. Silence in court

We are all familiar with the Proustian notion that the artist puts the best of himself into his art; but the shock of the Welcombe controversy is that this possible glimpse of the worst side of Shakespeare provides such a contrast to the way we like to picture the man whose plays speak to us so urgently of the plight of 'poor naked wretches' and the hospitality owed to 'houseless poverty' (*Lear*, 3,4,26-9). It does, however, contextualize the problem his plays confront of squaring sovereignty with democracy. As the entrepreneurial investor operates behind scenes as an invisible agent, the episode even seems to be a paradigm of Shakespearean dramaturgy, where an almost modernist investment in the aesthetic in terms of a decision that never comes is consistently foreclosed, as this case was decided by the Lord Chief Justice, via recourse to the archaic power of the king. The very name of Welcome figures in this sense a tension that drives so many Shakespeare plays, between the symbolic *representation* of some impersonal abstract ideal and the embodied *presence* of a concrete personal reality. That Coke, the great champion of the normative Common Law, upheld the community by invoking the exception of royal prerogative therefore only confirms the mysterious workings of the political theology that, in the eyes of recent critics, the whole of Shakespearean drama is designed to adumbrate: 'that what is abolished internally, the *shelter* of the rule of law, returns in the real of the exception as *exposure* to the pure force of law'.[31] Thus, though it looks as if Shakespeare died playing for time in the greatest conflict of his age, sympathetic commentators can take heart from the fact that this delaying tactic proved shrewd: thanks to the sovereign decision of the Lord Chief Justice, in the end there would indeed be 'nothing done' at all.

'There will be nothing done': taken out of context Shakespeare's words read like a premonition of Samuel Beckett's 'Nothing to be done'. So in *Bingo* they are ironized when the dramatist dies repeating the question, 'Was anything done?' And Bond's bitter aftertaste is shared by biographers, who are forced to concede that while the battle for Welcombe was a 'victory for the men, women and children of the borough who rose against a rapacious local grandee' it was the owner of New Place who did nothing at all.[32] Such is the fastidiously *refraining* Shakespeare, too, of Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger*: a searching study of the only other extant documentary record of the Bard's own voice, his testimony in the 1612 Mountjoy case, when he withheld the facts from the Court of Requests with a similar taciturnity or tact. The stakes in this Jacobean French farce were not nearly so high: a dowry he had brokered for the 1604 marriage of his London landlord's apprentice to a daughter of the Huguenot house. But his testimony in the courtroom, when he claimed under oath not to be able to remember the sum, was flatly contradicted by a subsequent witness, who stated he had gone recently 'to Shakespeare to understand the truth', and learned that 'as he remembered' it was 'about £50', to leave the identical suspicion that (as the judge solemnly advised the jury on a similarly uncomfortable occasion when Beckett himself took the stand) the dramatist 'does not strike one as a witness on whose word one would place a great deal of reliance':[33]

> He went 'to Shakespeare to understand the truth': something many have done since… This seems to imbue [Shakespeare's] deposition with a note of betrayal, a refusal to involve himself. He was probably the only person who could swing the court… But he does not. Caution prevails: a man must be careful what he says in a court of law. In his failure to remember, his shrug of non-involvement, he sides with the unforgiving father and against the spurned daughter. And so the deposition, a unique [*sic*] record of Shakespeare speaking, contains also this sour note of silence. He follows the example of his own Paroles… whose last words are, 'I will not speak what I know'

(*All's Well, 5,3,263*). 'Mr Words' has spoken enough.[34]

'He can say nothing touching any part or point': for Nicholl, this last entry in the legal record sums up not merely Shakespeare's excessive obedience in the Mountjoy proceedings to the customary order, 'Silence in court', but the cold-hearted detachment that characterises all his deeds and works, an indifference sealed in the hurried, perfunctory signature appended to his deposition: 'Willm Shaks'. It is with this 'frozen gesture' of a scrawl 'abruptly concluded with an omissive flourish' that Nicholl opens and closes *The Lodger*, since its carelessness seems to him to epitomise the callous aloofness of the unsatisfactory witness he calls 'the gentleman upstairs': 'The pen blotches on the 'k' and tails off… It will do. It will get him out of that courtroom, away from all these questions and quarrels… The signature attests his presence at that moment, but in his mind he is already leaving'. In an earlier study the biographer had expressly praised Christopher Marlowe as a 'non-commitant', who belonged 'to both sides, and to neither'; but here his last glimpse of a busy Shakespeare bidding curt good day to the litigants evokes an entire lifetime of emotional and moral withdrawal: 'He walks down to the wharf at Westminster Stairs to catch a boat downriver. He does not know if he will see them again, and we do not know if he did'.[35] But Nicholl is, of course, not alone in discerning in Paroles his creator's self-portrait as the 'actor with nothing inside'.[36] His picture of a calculating non-combatant matches the image of 'Ungentle Shakespeare' that has become standard ever since Bond's play was produced, of the shifty tax-evader in that upstairs room, who has seen and heard everything but lives out the artful dodging of Matthew Arnold's sonnet: 'We ask and ask – Thou smilest and art still, / Out-topping knowledge'.[37]

In 1975 Samuel Schoenbaum could still pity the genius 'of superhuman powers' as a 'baffled mortal' when faced by the 'sordid and mercenary' scandal in the court of law.[38] But Ackroyd reflects a recent impatience when he complains that the Mountjoy case shows how whenever he is called to account Shakespeare stays non-committal, immunising himself from queries with studied neutrality: 'He withdraws; he becomes almost invisible'.[39] Thus it sounds here as though the dramatist was again simply happy to repeat whatever was put to him. So he regularly features in biographies now as an 'Unpolitical Man', whose shirking of the weight of his own time is a slipperiness that could only serve what Bond calls 'the Goneril society'.[40] Shakespeare's playing dead to his interrogators has become the biographical equivalent, in fact, of his most famous character's hesitation about killing Claudius, and in hostile critiques, of Hamlet's sadistic postponement of revenge until he can 'trip him that his heels may kick at heaven' (*Hamlet*, 3,4,93). As Margreta de Grazia writes, the question 'great minds have been asking' for centuries is 'How could this diabolic desire be reconciled with the nobility and decency of Hamlet's character?' But the analogy with his Prince of Hesitation also associates Shakespeare's depersonalization with the answers that 'our most sophisticated literary critics' devise when they recast the old question, and account for Hamlet's delay 'in terms not of his inability to perform his dead father's command, but of his inability to *refuse* to do so'.[41] Then the poet's silence in court could be heard as a key to a dramaturgy stalled by the weight of such responsibility, like the self-suppressing reticence his editors ascribe to Beckett:

> … as if so much suffering witnessed had put a cap forever on a merely personal expression… as if, perhaps, the sight of so much brutal activity had confirmed him for ever in his inclination to a – however paradoxically rigorous and positively charged – *passivity*.[42]

Like John Donne preaching to startled congregations that he was not all there, Shakespeare's seemingly characterological absenteeism has become the ironic hinge connecting the author to his works.[43] Yet as Greenblatt remarks, the notion of his superhuman invisibility has to reckon with the fact that this writer famous for anonymity ended his last unaided play with a magus abdicating his art to return home not to lord over his neighbours but to die, and that in contrast to Machiavelli or Montaigne, he never did retreat in his writing onto the Olympian heights of some ivory tower, nor ever 'showed signs of boredom at the small talk, trivial pursuits, or foolish games of ordinary people'.[44] His, in every sense, *ruling idea* that the world is but 'A stage where every man must play a part' (*Merchant*, 1,1,78), never meant Shakespeare ceased to dream of a freedom stripped of sovereignty over others, or of a service without servitude. And his withdrawing 'bearing' does take on a less reprehensible quality in light of theoretical debates about the decision, the aesthetic and the political, and the tension between action and acting that he himself prefigures whenever he has the player in the middle of a speech explain how he 'must pause till it come back' (*Julius*, 3,2,104). Then Shakespeare's active passivity can be seen to underpin an entire *dramatics of attention*, dedicated to the proposition that, as Derrida demurred, undecidability does not mean indecision, but the 'suspense and suspension that freely decides to apply – or not – a rule' according to the infinite task of an impossible justice yet to come. What J. Hillis Miller says about Derrida's own *refrain* of 'don't count me in' has, indeed, a Shakespearean resonance:

> Derrida expresses the concept of an absolute right not to answer, associated by him especially with democracy and with its concomitant, literature, in its modern sense as the right to say or write anything and not be held responsible for it… This gesture of refraining is Derrida's fundamental and defining act, his ground without ground.[45]

3. Our humble author

A poststructuralist criticism that follows the unstoppable Derrida and Gilles Deleuze in ruminating upon Herman Melville's scrivener Bartleby for continually responding 'I would prefer not to' finds in Shakespeare's actively passive 'inability to refuse' a decision to be undecided that *neither refuses nor accepts anything*, yet that thereby amounts, as Giorgio Agamben says of the cussedness of the refraining pen-pusher, to a 'formula of potentiality'.[46] It therefore seems apt that the document that places Shakespeare nearest the action in a world of power is the Treasurer's account of the payment of the King's Men for 'waiting and attending on His Majesty's service', hanging about in the wings, at the epoch-marking 1604 Somerset House peace negotiations with Spain, for which, biographers infer, he was paid with the silver bowl he entrusted to his daughter Susanna in his will.[47] For like Kafka in Walter Benjamin's critique, Shakespeare's default position is truly that of a *waiter*: always gesturing to the other, or hovering on the threshold in 'prostrate and exterior bending' (*Henry V*, 4,3,276), with Jain-like deference lest he cause inadvertent harm, he is 'at home in distorted life', since 'even if he did not pray – and this we do not know – he still possessed in the highest degree… "the natural prayer of the soul": attentiveness'.[48] That attentiveness is the subject of one of the most brilliant recent works of criticism, *Shakespeare in Parts*, where in 'a history of the cue' Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern show how the practice of distributing Elizabethan actors with cue-scripts consisting only of roles generated a veritable 'thinking in parts', and subordination of the individual to the play. To a Shakespearean actor, far more than to his modern successor, we are reminded, the cue is his

'approaching moment, it is a call to arms'. The fact that early modern actors were therefore so acutely reliant on cues, produced, these critics argue, a contingent sense of timing and a partible conception of succession uncannily like those of our own post-modern philosophers of *l'attente*:

> Shakespeare's sense of what made a role might be is conditioned by his experience of playing parts, and so by a repeated confrontation with suddenness… that strange nervousness that comes from knowing that 'something' is coming, but not quite knowing what or when it will arrive.[49]

Like an heir in a pre-modern system of tanistry, or partible inheritance, Shakespeare 'in parts' knows his own place. So, in the radical negativity of the master / slave dialectic that informs recent interest in sovereign power and bare life, his actor's punctual acceptance that 'Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither' (*Lear*, 5,2,9-10) is perhaps a symptomatic expression of that pleasure-in-pain which Lacan referred to as 'jouissance', and Georges Bataille as the miracle of an incumbency weighed down so profoundly it becomes 'relieved of the heaviness that the world of utility imposes, of the tasks in which the world of objects mires' it.[50] Such an impossible attentiveness would indeed seem 'to render one without personality, without the very qualities upon which relations with the other are grounded'; yet read in the context of the inoperative power of *attendance*, as one after another Shakespearean lover or tyrant demands to know 'What revels are in hand? Is there no play / To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?' (*Dream*, 5,1,36), it is as if the official cover for the Elizabethan playhouse – that it was essential for the actors 'to use and practice stage plays' so 'they might be better prepared to show such plays before Her Majesty' – was the vital grit that irritated this writer into creation.[51]

Recent studies like Shapiro's *1599* have returned us to the old idea of Shakespeare as a veritable *gentleman in waiting*, who wrote for specific court occasions; while Leeds Barroll even infers that he *only* wrote on official assignment, and that if he received no commission 'simply did not wish to write plays.'[52] Thus in *Hamlet* the actors oblige their domineering Maecenas rehearsing the marmoreal *Dido, Queen of Carthage* Marlowe composed for the Children of the Chapel as his only coterie production and 'caviare to the general' (2,2,418). But as Robert Weimann comments, the evasiveness of the Player's response to the Prince's condescending ordinance about 'reforming' the troupe's old tendency to 'split the ears of the groundlings' – 'I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir' – cues the 'unworthy antics' of their eventual court appearance, which far from abiding by Hamlet's order for 'temperance', 'smoothness', 'modesty' and 'discretion', is its opposite: 'miching *malecho*', or *bad echo*, with 'inexplicable dumb-shows', and such a 'whirlwind of passion… strutted and bellowed' that to the exasperation of their host, 'The players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all' (3,2,1-32;124-8).[53] The echo, Derrida taught us, is the place of 'la différance', that supplementation produced in an interval of space and time that Heidegger reined back into the 'finally proper name' where he insisted being was situated.[54] So nothing in Shakespeare more fully reveals his critical resistance to his given situation in the economy of the sovereign and the servant, nor better vindicates, against Derrida's reservations, Judith Butler's performative theory that speech will always exceed the censor by which it is constrained, than this irrelevantly echoing 'impertinence':

> Speech is constrained neither by the specific speaker nor its originating context…. (but) has its own temporality in which it remains enabled precisely by the contexts from which it breaks. This ambivalent structure at the heart of

> performativity implies that the terms of resistance and insurgency are spawned by the powers they oppose.[55]

As Polonius earlier expostulated, such histrionics are 'too long' for a play (2,2,478). So, like Heidegger recuperating being from time, Erne proposes that it is the sheer linguistic excess of later Quartos and Folio that constitutes their sovereign *literariness*, confirming Shakespeare as a master who only intended such embarrassing riches for the page.[56] Yet the problem with such a recuperation is how it defines authorship in the intentionalist and textualized terms of the novel; whereas what the collision of humanist 'matter' and popular 'impertinency' (*Lear*, 4,6,168) in the character of Hamlet himself seems to mark, as Weimann shows, is the 'bifold authority' (*Troilus*, 5,2,144) of a play-maker who is always a player, a company sharer who is only incidentally a printed poet, even as he lives out the tensions between successive regimes of presence and representation. Above all, what the restored Victorian portrait of the Bard as self-serving literary entrepreneur ignores is how this 'willing over-supplier of words' Jonson likewise installed 'for all time' as a monarch of wit, remained 'our humble author' (*2Henry IV,* Epi. 23), whom it suited to take his bow in the anonymity of the collective line-up as a punctual servant of the age's residual authorising powers. For Shakespeare, it seems, resigning the ownership of his own meaning founds an alternative notion of agency in the decommissioned power of weakness, a limited liability that recognises how the one who acts does so to the extent that 'he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints': 'My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good night, and so kneel down before you – but, indeed, to pray for the Queen' (28-30).[57]

'If you look for a good speech now, you undo me; for what I have to say is of mine own making, and what indeed I should say will, I doubt, prove mine own marring': it is the self-deconstructing posture of Shakespeare's claim to be the maker and purveyor of his own meaning that it advances in self-cancelling reverse, backing into the limelight by harking back to service in the great house, as cap-in-hand on the doorstep it proffers 'First my fear, then my curtsy, last my speech' (1-6). Thus, Douglas Bruster and Weimann discuss how with his threshold prologues and epilogues Shakespeare honoured the group dynamics of the great hall, imaging the troupe 'capitalizing on the good will that the performances' leading actors generated by having these actors continue on through the closing of the dramatic frame.'[58] So, although first among equals, he nonetheless affirmed that, as Stanley Wells reminds us, he would remain the pre-eminent *company man*, who worked 'exceptionally closely with fellow actors… for no other dramatist had so long a relationship with a single company,' nor such amiable relations with other writers. Wells' roguish *Shakespeare & Co.* therefore concludes that to situate this good companion in his theatrical neighbourhood 'only enhances our sense of what made him unique'.[59] Likewise, Bart Van Es pinpoints *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the watershed where Shakespeare realised the supreme advantage of his *collective identity*, in being at once a player, sharer, and writer in a communal fellowship exempt from market pressure. So, like the king with two bodies, Shakespeare's sovereignty arose, on this view, from his dispersed and multiple personality in a corporate organisation, and from the golden opportunity the 1594 Lord Chamberlain's warrant afforded him, to be seen, whether writing singly or with others, as, in Knapp's words, 'many in one'.[60]

As Emerson wrote, Shakespeare proves 'the greatest genius is the most indebted.'[61] Such accounts are similar to Bourdieu's thesis that reconstructing the professional world of the artist 'allows us to understand the labour he had to accomplish, both against these determinations and thanks to them, to produce himself as the creator, that is, the *subject* of his own creation.'[62] But

the question they prompt is also Bourdieu's, about what it was the writer gained from merging his individual interest in the faceless impersonality of a corporate brand. Scholars usually interpret his resistance to the 'intrusion of the author' onto the stage as proof he was so comfortable working in the collective ethos of the theatre that he was simply 'indifferent to such individuation'.[63] But as Erne reminds us, this dramatist was still keenly aware of literary property, concerned about reputation, proud of his name.[64] So what, again, was Shakespeare's interest in disinterestedness? The answer the plays supply is that it was *the escape from his own sovereignty* that gave him limitless ability and freedom to write as he liked. In a cooperative where for one of the band to roar too loudly, his Peter Quince solemnly warns, 'were enough to hang us all' (*Dream*, 1,2,72), mutual 'good will' between performers and patrons was secured by subduing the writer's intentions and identity to his métier 'like the dyer's hand' (Sonnet 111); by 'our good Will', the implied personality behind the scenes, never stepping out of collective line: 'If we offend it is with our good will. / That you should think we come not to offend / But with good will' (*Dream*, 5,1,108-10). For as John Davies of Hereford poeticised in a salute of 1610 to 'Our English Terence' that remains the most acute analysis of the queer cultural politics of Shakespearean sovereignty, this 'reigning Wit' governed as a benevolent constitutional monarch in the pre-modern textual polity, precisely by exercising the power of weakness with his waiting, and like the gentleman-usher that he literally was, letting others take credit for his words:

> Some say (good *Will*) which I, in sport, do sing,
> Had'st thou not played some Kingly parts in sport,
> Thou had'st been a companion for a *King*;
> And been a King among the meaner sort.
> Some others rail; but, rail as they think fit,
> Thou hast no railing, but, a reigning Wit:
> *And* honesty *thou sow'st, which they do reap;*
> *So, to increase their* Stock *which they do keep.*[65]

Shakespeare displaced his authorial sovereignty 'in sport', if this encomium is to be believed, and by excelling so much in the 'Kingly parts' of moribund monarchy, like Julius Caesar or Old Hamlet, this 'reigning wit' was able to maintain the fiction that 'All for your delight / *We are not here*' (114-15). For if texts began to have authors, as Foucault theorised and Quince fears, to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, Shakespeare's signature vanishing-act, his reduction to the missing person who is a cipher of the world's 'good will', also records the coincidence that (as Derrida countered) the 'Strange Institution' of literature commenced around 1600 as 'the right to say everything'. Thus, if this originator of modern authorship insured freedom of expression by depersonalization, hiding his face in the crowd, or being dragged to the chair, this modesty finessed the problem that prior to the instauration of a modern public sphere the literary field had no ground of authorisation other than royal or aristocratic patronage. For 'How is it possible to answer for literature?' if it now bows to no sovereign authority yet demands by definition a 'charter as the wind' (*As You*, 2,7,48): 'A paradox: liberation makes it an institution that is an-institutional, wild and unconditional.'[66]

4. With printless foot

To Lacan's accusation of irresponsibility in 'not recognising the impasse he himself attempts on the Other by playing the dead man', Derrida proposed that modern literature's claim to the

sovereign silence of a privileged secrecy entailed not irresponsibility but rather a mutation in the concept of responsibility.[67] And it is the vertigo of this process that does seem to be negotiated in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play above all that identifies interpersonal 'good will' and the power of weakness as preconditions of a self-constituting literature, when in its closing pact with the audience the actor playing Puck takes upon his fictive persona responsibility for a text that is 'No more yielding' to authority 'than a dream.' On the understanding that the 'play needs no excuse' if its creator is presumed 'dead' (5,1,341-3; Epi, 15-16), Shakespeare's 'powerless theatre' thus leaps its own aesthetic groundlessness to assert the 'right to say everything, if only in the form of a fiction.'[68] So, although Woolf conjectured that Shakespeare marks the point when, because 'the playwright is replaced by the man who writes a book', he personifies the cultural discovery that 'Anon is dead', the pretence that 'We do not come… We are not here', suggests that for the artisanal playmaker who was author of the *Dream* there was life in the old Anon yet.[69]

In Shakespeare's Athens free speech is gained by absenting authorial presence, since '*We do not come*, as minding to content you, / Our true intent is' (5,1,113-14): 'Therein lies literature's secret, the… power to keep undecidable the secret of what it says… The secret of literature is the secret itself… "the play's the thing" (*Hamlet*, 2,2,581)'.[70] So, if it is secrecy about its origins and intentions that grants literature a permit 'to say everything', that freedom may well explain why Shakespeare's self-deconstruction extends to the paradox that he was too *self-interested* a company man, with too much at stake in corporate identity, to push his name, too privileged by ties that went beyond a contractual framework to be the single author of any constraining book, as Richard Dutton infers.[71] The early modern system of textual patronage exalted aristocrats as presumed readers; so perhaps Shakespeare did fret that the religion of the book might be not only subjectifying but 'inherently elitist', as Knapp argues, and instead offered up his own literary sovereignty as a Eucharistic sacrifice to the 'mass entertainment' of the democratic stage.[72] For true sovereignty 'must subordinate no one', as Derrida put it, 'that is to say, be subordinated to nothing or to no one': it must 'lose all memory of itself and all the interiority of itself'.[73]

Whatever the political theology, by playing dead to literary sovereignty in a perpetual postponement, like his own Black Prince, Shakespeare escaped the dangers as well as the obligations of his royalties; and the one occasion he claimed author's rights was to signal he was 'much offended' with William Jaggard, the printer of the Folio, for publishing a volume in his name.[74] Such desubjectivization is not quite the same as the Hölderlin-like auto-deconstruction we associate with Eliot's modernist doctrine that all art is 'an escape from personality'. But nor is it merely a type of *cosmesis*, a strategy to survive by the trivializing of oneself.[75] For if we take 'our good Will' to be one of the founders of the modern institution of authorship, we have to recognise that what happens in this writing is also a form of *creative* unselfing: 'a continual surrender of himself to something more valuable… a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'.[76] That is to say, Shakespeare's writing already goes beyond literary authorship, as if in answer to Derrida's injunction that 'What must be thought… is this inconceivable and unknowable thing, a freedom that would no longer be the power of a subject, a freedom without autonomy': 'Marry, if he that writ it had… hanged himself… it would have been a fine tragedy' (*Dream*, 5,2,342-4).[77]

Luke Wilson has intriguingly recounted how, when confronted by unproven murder accusations, Elizabethan juries habitually shifted liability from the accused to a fictional killer named after the offending weapon, such as Thomas Staff, or simply after non-existence, like William Nemo; which sounds the perfect alias for Shakespeare.[78] With his own lethal-sounding

surname, the dramatist's self-erasure, his drive to hide himself in full view, has indeed been decoded by Greenblatt as a burial 'inside public laughter' of the terror which gripped him of an actual trial and condemnation. Having been traumatised by witnessing public hangings and eviscerations at Tyburn, the 'genially submissive' yet 'subtly challenging' writer staged his disappearance, on this view, 'to ward off vulnerability.'[79] Thus, in contrast to Caravaggio, who paints his own decapitation in picture after picture, the death of the author serves here a purely symbolic effacement, for 'given enough rope to hang himself, Shakespeare submits instead to an aesthetic closure.'[80] There are parallels in such interpretations, between this particular William Nemo and a modernist writer such as Thomas Mann, who also put his guilt in plain view. Thus, 'How he terrifies me', wrote Rilke of the author of the Epilogues, 'This man who draws the wire into his own head, and hangs himself / Beside the other puppets, and henceforth / Begs mercy of the play'.[81]

The William Nemo known as Shakespeare hides his own responsibility behind a show of non-existence. Such ludic self-annulment is enacted by the fictional Williams of the plays and poems, 'self-deprecating cameos like Hitchcock's brief appearances in his films', a crafty procession, typified by the bumpkin of *As You Like It*, in which Shakespeare associates the shy volunteering that 'My name is Will' (Sonnet 136) 'with inarticulate, humble life obliterated by the textualized world of his betters', as Phyllis Rackin remarks[82] Yet Mark Thornton-Burnett also notes the persistence of an illiterate underclass that 'agitates for proper acknowledgment' in these texts; and such is the creaturely resentment implied when these sweet Williams cheek their masters, accuse the king to his face, or skive at Hinkley fair (*2Henry VI*, 5,1,21).[83] For what these winking Wills all personify is the truant evasion of the textualized world of authority that Shakespeare makes the story of his life: the great refusal that underlies his recalcitrance towards the sovereignty instituted in the printed fix of literary authorship itself. So, as A.D. Nuttall concludes in his own eloquently posthumous book, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, while Shakespeare's name did become a selling point, because the public certainly cottoned on to 'the fact that Shakespeare was the man behind the plays', the writer himself appears to have feared his own typographic afterlife as a deadly freezing, 'a cryogenic perpetuation' of something he had imagined to be 'mobile' and alive.[84]

'When he is gone, and his Comedies out of sale', warned the 1609 Quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* darkly, 'you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition'.[85] Assuredly, Shakespeare was the author of his own authorship, who produced himself as the 'subject of his own creation'; but this inquisitorial metaphor hints how he also had cause to see himself as the 'tongue-tied unlettered clerk', mumbling 'Amen' to every 'form of well-refinèd pen' (Sonnet 85). And so far from being indifferent to the coming 'paper machine', he littered his texts with sinister references to the tyrannical violence of penning, imprinting, impressing, branding, binding, and engraving: the morbid techniques of publishing that, as Goldberg argues, 'throw into question any identification of the *system* with a sovereign author', and mark aversion to the inscription of a name in *characters*.[86] 'Remember / First to possess his books', Caliban therefore reiterates, when plotting to assassinate his master, 'for without them / He's but a sot… Burn but his books' (*Tempest*, 3,2,86-90). Prospero's other slave Ariel then diverts the plotters by distracting their 'catch' (112) with one of his 'sounds and sweet airs' (131), an echo-song that seems caught up, however, in the infinite recession of the dramatist's own mimetic relations with the invisible hand of bookish sovereignty, and the actorly readiness with which his 'sweet sprites bear / The burden' (1,2,383), seeing that the words they 'troll' (3,2,112) – 'Thought is free' (*Twelfth Night*, 1,3,59) – are also the opening line of the first poem of the premiere publication of his own royal master, King James:[87]

STEPHANO (*Sings*): Thought is free.
CALIBAN: That's not the tune.
ARIEL *plays the tune on a tabor and pipe*.
STEPHANO: What is this same?
TRINCULO: This is the tune of our catch, played by the picture of Nobody. (*Tempest*, 3,2,118-22)

Though he called upon him only sparingly, the old legal figment of Nobody, a subject without an identity, was much on Shakespeare's mind as an Odysseus figure for the disavowal of subjective authorial responsibility, recent critics show.[88] The slipperiness of Nobody, for a culture poised between presence and representation, was that he was always busy becoming Somebody; and when he was gone Shakespeare would himself fast mutate into just such a sovereign entity: 'an institutionalized residue' coating a proper name, pressed by the 1623 *Works* 'into the author he never was or wanted to be'.[89] But this waiting writer who dreaded the definitiveness of the book as his tombstone, like those brass-lettered graves which spell 'the disgrace of death' for the bookmen of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1,1,1-3); and who blackened his most bookish character with the 'inky cloak' (*Hamlet*, 1,2,78) of the letter that kills, avoided 'the Graver' come to 'outdo the life' until the very last.[90] And even as his 'project gather[ed] to a head' (*Tempest*, 5,1,1), when the forthcoming Folio was in his head as 'a book of all that sovereigns do,' he fretted that 'He's more secure to keep it shut than shown' (*Pericles*, 1,1,137-8). 'O, like a book of sport thou'lt read me o'er,' Shakespeare seemed reluctantly to foresee; 'But there's more in me,' he also knew, 'than thou understand'st' (*Troilus*, 4,7,123-4). So, until the very end, the creator of 'the world's volume' (*Cymbeline*, 3,4,137), who was such an unsatisfactory witness in his time, aborted his 'birth' as an author by deconstructing his own sovereign selfhood, intent on nothing more wilfully than that 'Deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book' (*Tempest*, 5,1,56), as though to truly measure out his lines upon the shore 'with printless foot' (34), or 'like a face drawn in sand on the edge of the sea'.[91]

Notes

[1] Thomas Greene, memorandum September 1615, repr. in E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare* (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), vol. 2, p. 143. Chambers thought the 'I' of the note was Greene himself; but the consensus is that it refers to Shakespeare, since as Edgar Fripp logically objected: 'Why should Shakespeare tell John Greene, Thomas Greene's brother, what John Greene had long known and Shakespeare perfectly well knew was known to him? And why should Thomas Greene, in his confidential note-book, then enter such an inane memorandum?': Edgar Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist* (2 volumes, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), vol. 2, p. 814, n. 4.

[2] Thomas Greene, quoting William Combe, memorandum December 10 1614, quoted Mark Eccles, *Shakespeare in Warwickshire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 137 (not in Chambers).

[3] Maurice Hunt, 'Old England, Nostalgia, and the "Warwickshire" of Shakespeare's Mind', *Connotations*, 7 (1998), 159-80, here 177: quoting John Russell Brown in conversation.

[4] For the details of Shakespeare's 1602 purchase of the 107 acres in Old Stratford and Welcombe, see Màiri Macdonald, 'A New Discovery about Shakespeare's Estate in Old Stratford,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 (1994), 87-9.

[5] Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson, ed. Richard Marius (London: Dent, 1994), pp. 26-7.

[6] Terence Hawkes, 'Playhouse-Workhouse', in *That Shakespeherian Rag: essays on a critical process* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 10-11.

[7] Jacques Derrida, 'This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida', trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, in *Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-75, here p. 59; cf. Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 2; Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1976), pp. 2-3: 'failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'.

[8] Hawkes, op. cit. (note 6). p. 21.

[9] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 155.

[10] Thomas Greene, memorandum November 17 1614, repr. in Chambers, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 142-3.

[11] Thomas Greene, memorandum December 10 1614, rpr. ibid., p. 143.

[12] Antony Holden, *William Shakespeare* (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1999), p. 315.

[13] Greenblatt, op. cit. (note 9), p. 383.

[14] Dennis Kay, *William Shakespeare: His Life and Times* (New York: Twayne, 1995), p. 27.

[15] Peter Levi, *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 334; René Weiss, *Shakespeare Revealed: A Biography* (London: John Murray, 2007), p. 347; Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 389-90.

[16] Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), pp. 478-480.

[17] Greenblatt, op. cit. (note 9), p. 383.

[18] Edward Bond, *Bingo* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974) scene 1, pp. 6-7. For Shakespeare's deployment of the 'plot' metaphor, see Roy Eriksen, *The Building in the Text: Alberti to Shakespeare and Milton* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 112-17.

[19] Thomas Greene to Arthur Mainwaring, December 23 1614 quoted in Holden, op. cit. (note 12), p. 314; Eccles, op. cit. (note 2), p. 137.

[20] Bond, op. cit. (note 18), scene 5, p. 42.

[21] Ibid., scene 6, p. 48.

[22] Jonathan Bate, '"Hide thy life": the key to Shakespeare', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, August 6 2009, 40-2, here 42. For this critic's uncomplicated celebration of the separation of the aesthetic from reality, see also *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997), pp. 320-1.

[23] Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in modern poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1982), p. 5.

[24] Hawkes, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 21-2.

[25] Ibid., scene 6, p. 50; James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 373.
[26] W.H. Auden, 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats', in *W.H. Auden selected by the author* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 67.
[27] Roger Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 90-1.
[28] Eccles, op. cit. (note 2), p. 61.
[29] Manning, op. cit. (note 27), p. 92; Eccles, op. cit. (note 2), p. 138.
[30] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Thomson Learning, 2001), p. 262.
[31] Eric Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 24. For an acute account of the surprising interactions of equity and the common law in the Shakespearean period, see Lorna Hutson, 'Not the King's Two Bodies: Reading the "Body Politic" in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Parts 1 and 2', in *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Victoria Kahn and Lorna Hutson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 166-98.
[32] Bond, op. cit. (note 18), scene 6, p. 50; Weiss, op. cit. (note 15), p. 348.
[33] Justice O'Byrne summing up in Sinclair v Gogarty, *The Irish Times*, 24 November 1937, quoted in James Knowlson, *Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p. 259.
[34] Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), pp. 271-2.
[35] Ibid., pp. 3 & 272-3; 'non-commitant': Charles Nicholl, 'Faithful Dealing: Marlowe and the Elizabethan Intelligence Service', in *Marlowe, History and Sexuality*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), p. 11..
[36] Nicholl, op. cit. (note 34), p. 267.
[37] 'Ungentle Shakespeare': Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (note 30); Matthew Arnold, 'Shakespeare', in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth and Miriam Allott (London: Longman, 1965), pp. 48-9.
[38] Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 213.
[39] Ackroyd, op. cit. (note 16), p. 464.
[40] Cf. Thomas Mann's 1918 'Reflections of an Unpolitical Man', with its disastrous defence of German spiritual inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*); Bond, 'Introduction', op. cit. (note 18), p. ix.
[41] Margreta de Grazia, *'Hamlet' without Hamlet* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 158-9 & 170-1.
[42] Dan Gunn, 'Introduction', *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume II: 1941-1956* (Cambride: Cambridge University Press, 2011),
[43] John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 10 vols., 1953-1962), vol. 3, p. 110.
[44] Greenblatt, op. cit (note 9), p. 389.
[45] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"', in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 253-4; Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 27; J. Hillis Miller, '"Don't Count Me In": Derrida's Refraining', in Allison Weiner and Simon Morgan Wortham, eds., *Encountering Derrida: Legacies and Futures of Deconstruction* (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 55 & 57.
[46] Herman Melville, 'Bartleby, the Scrivener', in *Tales, Poems, and Other Writings*, ed. J. Bryant (New York: Modern Library, 2002); Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), pp. 74-81, here p. 75; Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Hellert-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 235. For a commentary, see Arne de Boever, 'Agamben and Marx: Sovereignty, Governmentality, Economy', *Law and Critique*, 20: 3 (2009), 259-79. For Deleuze's admiration of Bartleby, see David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 9-10. By contrast, Slavoj Žižek

sees only 'passive aggressivity' in Bartleby: see *The Parallax View* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), p. 384,

[47] Repr. in Schoenbaum, op. cit. (note 38), p. 199. For Shakespeare as a 'waiter', see Ernest Law, *Shakespeare as a Groom of the Chamber* (London: G. Bell, 1910): "All things considered, everything points to the main function of Shakespeare and his fellow actors having been very much what is said to be that of the modern gentleman-usher at the court of St. James – to stand about' (p. 31).

[48] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 133-4.

[49] Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 84 & 121. For the psychological implications of the Elizabethan reliance on the 'cue-line', see Murray Cox and Alice Theilgard, *Shakespeare as Prompter: The Amending Imagination and the Therapeutic Process* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994), pp. 110-11 et passim.

[50] Lacan quoted and discussed in Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) p. 39; Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1993), p. 243. For an incisive commentary on the aptness to Elizabethan literature, and specifically to the Petrarchan sonnet sequence, of Bataille's notion of sovereign abjection as 'a force folded back on itself probing the limits of its own mode of existence', see Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, *Bataille* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 53-67 (here p. 56).

[51] 'To render one without personality': David Rieff, *Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir* (London: Granta, 2008), p. 100; Privy Council minute, February 19 1598, *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed. J.R. Dasent (32 vols., London: H.M.S.O., 1890-1907), vol. 28, p. 327.

[52] Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague and Shakespere's Theater* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 17.

[53] Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 153 & 161.

[54] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 13 & 27.

[55] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 40 & 129.

[56] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 234-41.

[57] 'Willing over-supplier': Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14; Ben Jonson, 'To the memory of my beloved, the author,' repr. in William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 3352; Butler, op. cit. (note 55), p. 16.

[58] Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologue to Shakespeare: Performance and liminality in early modern drama* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 40 & 153. See also Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 116.

[59] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare & Co.* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), pp. 4-5, 27 & 231. The collaborative and even intermarried guild-like mutuality of Shakespeare's company has likewise been emphasised by Roslyn Knutson in *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and by William Ingram in 'Neere the Playe Howse: The Swan Theater and Community Blight', *Renaissance Drama*, 4 (1971), 53-68; and 'The Globe Playhouse and its Neighbours in 1600', *Essays in Theatre*, 2 (1984), 63-72.

[60] Bart Van Es, 'Company Man: Another crucial year for Shakespeare,' *Times Literary Supplement*, February 2 2007, pp. 14-15; Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare Only* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 33.

[61] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*, ed. Pamela Schirmeister (New York: Marsilio, 1995), p. 188.

[62] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emmanuel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 104.

[63] 'Intrusion': Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 108; 'indifferent to such individuation': David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 78.

[64] Erne, op. cit. (note 56), p. 2.
[65] John Davies of Hereford, 'To our English Terence, Mr. Will. Shake-speare', repr. Chambers, op. cit. (note 1), vol. 2, p. 214.
[66] Derrida, op. cit. (note 7); Jacques Derrida and Elizabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow… A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Ford (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 127.
[67] Jacques Lacan quoted in Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Philosophy in Turbulent Times: Canguilhem, Sarte, Foucault, Akthusser, Deleuze, Derrida*, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 150. See also Benoît Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography*, trans. Amdrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 169.
[68] 'Powerless theatre': Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 12-13 & 21; Jacques Derrida, 'The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition (Thanks to the "Humanities" what could *take place tomorrow*),' in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 27. The claim that the aesthetic groundlessness of Shakespearean theatre ushers in the condition of modernity as a permanent crisis of meaning had been made by Hugh Grady in *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
[69] Virginia Woolf, 'Reading at Random: Anon' (1940), quoted in Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), p. 750.
[70] Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahac (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), pp. 18-19.
[71] Richard Dutton, 'The Birth of the Author,' in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, eds. Cedric Brown and Arthur Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997, pp. 153-78, here p. 161.
[72] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 54.
[73] Jacques Derrida, 'From Restricted and General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 265.
[74] Thomas Heywood, 'Epistle' (to the printer Nicholas Okes), *An Apology for Actors* (London: 1612), quoted in Schoenbaum, op. cit. (note 38), pp. 219-20.
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[77] Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Briault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 152.
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[79] Greenblatt, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 152 & 155.
[80] Richard Wilson, 'The Kindly Ones: The Death of the Author in Shakespearean Athens,' *Shakespeare and French Theory: King of Shadows* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 160.
[81] Rainer Maria Rilke, 'The Spirit Ariel (After reading Shakespeare's *Tempest*),' in *Rilke: Selected Poems*, trans. J.B. Leishman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 74. For Thomas Mann's strategic 'hiding in full view', see Michael Maar, *Bluebeard's Chamber: Guilt and Confession in Thomas Mann*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2003).
[82] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 244; 'ironically self-deprecating cameos': Meredith Ann Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 139.
[83] Mark Thornton-Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1997), p. 147.
[84] A.D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare The Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 377-8.

[85] 'A never writer to an ever reader', 'Preface', *Troilus and Cressida* (London: 1609). For the implications, see in particular Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 26-9.
[86] Jonathan Goldberg, *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 97.
[87] 'Thought is free': James VI and I, 'Song, the first verses that ever the King made' (1582), in *The Poems of James VI of Scotland* (2 vols., Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1955-8), vol. 2, p. 132.
[88] See Wilson, op. cit. (note 78), pp. 259-60; and Richard Halpern, '"The Picture of Nobody": White Cannibalism in *The Tempest*', in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, ed. David Lee Miller, Sharon O'Dair and Harold Weber (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 262-92.
[89] 'Institutionalised residue': Terry Cochran, *Twilight of the Literary: Figures of Thought in the Age of Print* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 232; 'the author he never was': Davbid Scott Kastan, *Shakspeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 71. See also Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 166 et passim: 'The notion of the individual author may indeed be "mythical", then as now, but early modern England was no more immune than we are to the creation of myths'.
[90] 'To The Reader,' repr. in William Shakespeare, op. cit. (note 57), p. 3346: 'This figure, that thou here seest put, / It was for gentle Shakespeare cut; / Wherein the Graver had a strife / With Nature, to outdo the life…'
[91] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. anon. (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. 387.