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SHAKESPEARES WAKE

Appropriation and Cultural Politics in Dublin, 1867-1922

by

Adam Putz

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INTRODUCTION

KENT If but as will I other accents borrow,
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness.

—*King Lear*, 1.4.1-4¹

What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking.

—Samuel Beckett, *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1958)²

To the extent that appropriation is a performance of identity, it offers possibilities for cracking the codes of ideology and provides glimpses of realities that as yet have no name.

—Christy Desmet, *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999)³

APPARITIONS

William Shakespeare has led a rich and varied afterlife in Ireland. That this history documents the development of distinct Shakespeares in circulation during different periods also reveals unique possibilities for understanding the relationship between the literatures of England and Ireland at particular cultural moments. *Shakespeares Wake: Appropriation and Cultural Politics in Dublin, 1867-1922*, interrogates the ways in which the contentious Anglo-Irish cultural politics that obtained in Dublin between the Fenian and Easter risings shaped the Shakespeares of Matthew Arnold's lectures *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), Edward Dowden's *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875), and the early essays of W. B. Yeats first collected in *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903) and *The Cutting of an Agate* (1912). But James Joyce's own (ab)use of the Shakespearean text in *Ulysses* (1922) underscores the instability of the binary oppositions with which Arnold, Dowden, and Yeats had each constructed their appropriations, demonstrating the pernicious manner in which the terms of

¹ Act, scene, and line numbers are, unless otherwise indicated, keyed to *The RSC Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: Random House, 2007).

² Samuel Beckett, *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 85.

³ Christy Desmet, 'Introduction', in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-12 (p. 10).

Anglo-Irish cultural politics had come to mediate the relationship between the colonial reading subject and its object in Dublin during the late nineteenth century. Joyce's Shakespeare in this way marks the point where the discourse of literary history ends and that of the literary as such starts.

Shakespeare's plays first appeared on the Irish stage in the seventeenth century, on the Irish page along with his poetry in the eighteenth, and remained almost exclusively part of cultural life in the Pale until the nineteenth. In short, Shakespeare's Irish afterlife has been inextricably linked to the British colonial presence in Ireland during most of the nearly four hundred years since his death in 1616. Despite the burgeoning correspondence between both the print and theatre cultures of Dublin and London from the seventeenth century forward, Ireland's aspiring poets and playwrights writing in English and Irish have struggled, as Yeats did himself, with the complexities of trying to reconcile a love of Ireland with admiration for English literature and, specifically, Shakespeare. Yeats associated passion with such tragic figures as Hamlet and Lear. After seeing Sir Henry Irving play Hamlet in London as a boy, Yeats had a precedent by which he would measure other Shakespearean performances. And he later drew on these figures—actor and character alike—to endow his own plays and poetry with pathos. By contrast, Dowden, the preeminent Shakespearean of his generation, first chair of English literature at Trinity College, Dublin, and certainly no stranger to Irving or his acting emphasised the strictly Anglo-Saxon sensibilities of Shakespeare's figures throughout his long academic career. In his essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon' (1901), Yeats redeploys Arnold's 'Celtic note'—a concept that stemmed, in part, from Arnold's Liberal unionism—to attack Dowden's privileging of English over Irish literary culture, associating Dowden and his then influential readings of Shakespeare with the utilitarian values of imperialism and positivism, materialism and pragmatism.

Joyce takes on the debate between Yeats and Dowden—considered at the time a debate between nationalism and cosmopolitanism—not only in *Ulysses*, but broadly in his early critical writings on the tensions between aesthetics and politics. Yeats's hope that dramatic literature could help to liberate Irish literary culture from the hegemony of English sensibilities figures prominently in the bawdy 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode of *Ulysses*. Various antipathies between

writers either associated with or antagonistic towards Yeats and the Revival open the episode, referencing his row with Dowden over the proper relationship of Irish to English literature. Joyce places Stephen Dedalus and his *Hamlet* theory at the centre of this debate in the National Library between, amongst others, the prominent mystic and poet A.E.—George Russell—and the literary critic John Eglinton—William Kirkpatrick Magee—both of whom considered themselves Irish nationalists of one sort or another. The dispute over the right way to read Irish literature in relation to English would become for Joyce a debate largely about how best to read the Shakespearean text in Dublin during the Revival.

Shakespeare's plays and poetry provide perhaps the finest examples of the lyrical beauty that distinguishes the Renaissance from other periods in English literary history while also providing perhaps the primary icon of English cultural and political hegemony in Ireland. The Irish playwright Frank McGuinness has remarked of his initial naïveté regarding the political import to appropriating the Shakespearean text in Ireland by observing that he once believed 'as an act of faith that in these plays I would come face to face with a Catholic dissident, marvelously subverting the insecurities of Protestant England'.⁴ McGuinness highlights here the difficult position that Shakespeare occupies in Irish literary history by bracketing the question of his Irish reception in terms of Catholic and Protestant, republican and unionist readings. It remains clear from Irish theatre history in particular that control of Shakespeare's reception has routinely changed hands since the earliest Restoration performances in Dublin, and his plays occupy a prominent place in the repertoires of companies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic to this day. Shakespeare's reception in Ireland proves difficult to pin down without attending to the unique contexts informing the performance and publication of his plays and poetry. Little wonder McGuinness highlights the fact that the Shakespearean text continues to captivate the Irish literary imagination despite the perplexing cultural position that he and his works inhabit. But the conditions of as well as under which McGuinness has written appear substantially different from those that prevailed during other periods in Irish literary history.

⁴ Frank McGuinness, 'Foreward', in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. by Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. xi.

Specific anxieties over the aesthetics and politics of the Shakespearean text in Ireland have indeed appeared at previous cultural moments. Yet these are not necessarily the same anxieties in every instance, as *Shakespeares Wake* attempts to clarify. Recent scholarship on Shakespeare in Ireland has analyzed attempts by Irish literary figures to come to terms with the English cultural and linguistic inheritance that Shakespeare and his works have come to represent. For example, the essays in Mark Thornton Burnett's and Ramona Wray's collection, *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, examine constructions of 'Ireland' by Shakespeare and other English writers of the early modern period—in particular, the poet and Munster plantation owner Edmund Spenser—both as a material phenomenon and metaphorical device, the divergent Shakespeares generated by Irish performances of his plays in both Britain and Ireland, and the impact of colonial policies in Ireland on later generations of Irish writers as made especially evident by their divergent interpretations of Shakespeare's works. As Burnett argues in his introduction to the collection, 'Three centuries of reading, production and appropriation testify to the vexed but integral place of Shakespeare in the Irish imagination'.⁵ Likewise, Janet Clare's and Stephen O'Neill's recent collection of essays, *Shakespeare and the Irish Writer*, establishes a framework for understanding the multiple forms of influence that the Shakespearean text has taken in Ireland for those writers working in either linguistic tradition. 'Focusing specifically on the work of Irish writers, modernist and contemporary, and their responses to Shakespeare, this collection seeks to build on earlier work devoted to the larger question of Shakespeare and Ireland', Clare and O'Neill point out:

In contrast, the present volume shifts the focus to the reciprocal relationship between Shakespeare and the Irish writer.

Shakespearean texts have stimulated Irish writing, while Irish writers in their appropriations of and responses to Shakespeare have given a great deal to Shakespeare studies. The enlargement of meaning that

⁵ Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, p. 1.

Irish writing has afforded Shakespeare's plays constitutes a legitimate form of Shakespeare criticism.⁶

All the same, as Clare and O'Neill observe, recent studies have rarely situated the Shakespearean text within Irish literary history to reflect terms situated as at once cultural and material as well as political.

By overlooking the benefits that a more dynamic approach affords, critics have often presented an asymmetrical view of Shakespeare's reception in Ireland as simply political. In other words, scholarship on the various appropriations of the Shakespearean text in Ireland under the Union that reflects the postcolonial turn in Irish Studies has principally focused on the ways in which Irish nationalists of various stripes have redeployed his words and works in their campaign against the British cultural and political establishment.⁷ Robin Bates has recently taken Declan Kiberd's influential line in *Shakespeare and the Cultural Colonization of Ireland* to situate the Shakespearean text as 'their cage and yet their key'.⁸ The Irish, represented by Bates as a relatively uniform population during the early modern period, have historically found themselves 'pressed' by English writers into service as the other against which to construct a British identity in and through the English language and, for Bates, Shakespeare would appear no exception. His 'use of Irish characters as belongings of the empire and his attribution of Irish characteristics to those who fall providentially for the benefit of the empire is part of the larger scheme to press the Irish culturally into the service of British imperial writing'.⁹ Likewise, Rebecca Steinberger has recently privileged a rather free and direct model of the 'writing back' accomplished 'through reinscriptions of Shakespeare's drama' in the plays of Sean O'Casey and Brian Friel.¹⁰ But the current application of this approach has offered more often than not a reductive account of the fight against these

⁶ Janet Clare and Stephen O'Neill, 'Introduction: Interpreting Shakespeare in Ireland', in *Shakespeare and the Irish Writer*, ed. by Janet Clare and Stephen O'Neill (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010), pp. 1-23 (p. 1, p. 2).

⁷ See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 268-85.

⁸ Robin E. Bates, *Shakespeare and the Cultural Colonization of Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Rebecca Steinberger, *Shakespeare and Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Conceptualizing Identity and Staging Boundaries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1.

constructions of Irish identities, if not the identities themselves, by failing to position subversive Irish appropriations—these dissident reinscriptions—of the Shakespearean text in conversation with extant criticism and scholarship on Shakespeare either ‘foreign’ or ‘domestic’.

Shakespeares Wake salvages some of that dialogue. With his essay ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’, Yeats does indeed leverage the ‘racial’ distinction between Celts and Anglo-Saxons explored at length by Ernest Renan in *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Essays* (1854), echoed by both Arnold and Dowden, and parodied by both D. P. Moran and Joyce. But Yeats also subjects the Shakespearean text to appropriation in this way just as surely as he does the Continental critics and scholars upon whom Arnold and Dowden had both relied for their own readings, whether these be idealist or materialist, Celtic or Anglo-Saxon, nationalist or unionist, Catholic or Protestant. While rehearsing their arguments in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’, Joyce stresses the instability of these binary oppositions to breaking, offering Stephen—an agent constituted in and through the act of rereading *Hamlet*—as an alternative to the colonial reading subject and an answer to the crisis of authenticity undermining Revivalist appropriations of Shakespeare as an honorary Celt, if not an Irishman.

APPROPRIATIONS

Michel Foucault concludes in ‘What is an Author?’ that such ‘discourses are objects of appropriation’ in themselves.¹¹ He suggests, then, that writing cannot claim a uniform, fixed status for all time, ‘all one, ever the same’. The volatility of the text, its capacity for ‘variation or quick change’ keeps it on the run, its readers on the chase. Applying this insight to the Shakespearean text in particular, Jean Marsden has argued that a focus on ‘appropriations’ can generate ‘a view of Shakespeare embedded not only in his own culture but in ours, forcing us to consider both the impact we have on the plays and the impact they have on us’.¹² This approach points up how the appropriating artist takes possession of

¹¹ Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow and trans. by Josué Harari (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101-20 (p. 108).

¹² Jean I. Marsden, ed. *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 8.

Shakespeare, making his words and works their own by putting these to their own use in a creative and often coercive exercise of authority over the past in and for the present. ‘Associated with abduction, adoption and theft, appropriation’s central tenet is the desire for possession’, Marsden observes. ‘It comprehends both the commandeering of the desired object and the process of making this object one’s own, controlling it by possessing it. Appropriation is neither dispassionate nor disinterested; it has connotations of usurpation, of seizure for one’s own uses’. But this poststructuralist plot thickens as the creativity of the critic comes to the fore.

‘Appropriation studies of Shakespeare thus begin with a contradiction’, Graham Holderness has recently observed:

We can only know the work by reinventing it, by appropriation. But such reinvention is conceived as a violent assault on the work’s original identity, expropriation. Yet the work has no original identity. Or rather this “identity” is alternately denied and assumed, erased and recuperated. Writing has no meaning other than what we make of it. Yet we believe that the meanings ascribed by our appropriations are different from other meanings of the work. “Different from” predicates a comparator; there can be no difference without another. But we find ourselves no longer able, with any confidence, to relocate that elusive and inscrutable stranger.¹³

While addressing this paradox, Christy Desmet has recently revisited Marsden’s approach by delineating different types of appropriation. ‘The word “appropriation” implies an exchange’, Desmet observes, ‘either the theft of something valuable (such as property or ideas) or a gift, the allocation of resources for a worthy cause (such as the legislative appropriation of funds for a new school)’.¹⁴ Desmet has attempted to negotiate a middle way through the ‘mean *by*’ model of Terence Hawkes, concluding that critics cannot reduce the Shakespearean text to their own appropriations of it. Instead, Shakespeare remains an exceptionally inexhaustible source of new meanings, perhaps unique

¹³ Graham Holderness, “‘Dressing Old Words New’: Shakespeare, Science, and Appropriation’, *Borrowers and Lenders* 1.2 (Fall/Winter, 2005), § II. This section owes much to his discussion of the many recent studies of Shakespeare appropriation also referenced here.

¹⁴ Desmet, p. 4.

in English literary history as such: “Terence Hawkes, in a misunderstood phrase, says that Shakespeare does not mean; rather “*we mean by Shakespeare*”. The point is not that Shakespeare has no meaning, but that because meaning changes with context, he has, if anything, more meanings than we can yet imagine’.¹⁵ Of course, to make her point Desmet must appropriate Hawkes’s ‘misunderstood phrase’. But this reformulation of the Shakespearean text as containing ‘more meanings than we can yet imagine’ is entirely consistent, as Holderness insists, with the poststructuralist argument that Shakespeare appears ready—perhaps, too ready—to lend his works to divergent rereadings. Within the complex web of Anglo-Irish cultural politics that obtained in Dublin during the late nineteenth century, the Shakespearean text could read as, at least, Catholic *and* Protestant, nationalist *and* unionist, Irish *and* English, Celtic *and* Anglo-Saxon. An examination of four satirical cartoons published in the popular Irish press during and after the parliamentary debate over the Government of Ireland Bill 1886 reveals that, for example, although the editorial policies of *United Ireland* and *The Union* dictated different views on Home Rule, the Shakespearean text could lend support to both sides of the Anglo-Irish division over the issue.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁶ *United Ireland* started out inauspiciously enough in Irish political life as *Flag of Ireland*, one of Richard Pigott’s newspapers. Pigott was a devout Irish nationalist. He was, for example, found guilty of seditious libel and imprisoned for his reports on the trial of the ‘Manchester Martyrs’, a handful of Fenians—members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood—executed on 23 November 1867 for their violent attack on a police van in Manchester, which resulted in the deaths of several officers. His own prosecution made him a nationalist hero for a time and in 1868 electors from the city of Limerick asked him to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming election to gain Fenian support. Pigott accepted but polled last just the same. He was also a notorious lout who found himself in dire financial straits after embezzling money and serving another prison term for contempt in 1871. When Charles Stewart Parnell, the first President of the Irish Land League and the leader Irish Parliamentary Party from 1880, recognised the need to have a loyal news outlet on side after otherwise nationalist papers like *The Nation* and *Freeman’s Journal* failed to consistently support the advanced party line, he worked with his lieutenants to approach Pigott about his papers. In 1881, Patrick Egan, treasurer of the league, negotiated with Pigott—by this time an outright pariah in nationalist circles—for the official sale of his papers to the Irish Parliamentary Party. Pigott gave over for £3000, and the firebrand William O’Brien took up the editorship at £400 a year. The *Flag* would retain its new title *United Ireland* from 13 August 1881 until the papers was suppressed by British authorities in December 1890. From 15 December to 24 January 1891 it would appear as simply *Insuppressible*, then as *Suppressed United Ireland* before returning to publication as *United Ireland* later that month. Throughout its twenty years in print, *United Ireland* remained the standard bearer of constitutional Irish nationalism, the mouthpiece of the Parnellites even after Parnell’s fall, and persisted, in part, as the sort of outlet against which *The Union* could position itself. But *The Union*’s much shorter publication history also testifies to the smaller market in Dublin for unionist publications, where commercially viable news organisations like the *Express* and the *Mail* competed for mainstream readers, many of whom read at least one paper in the morning and another at night. But *The*



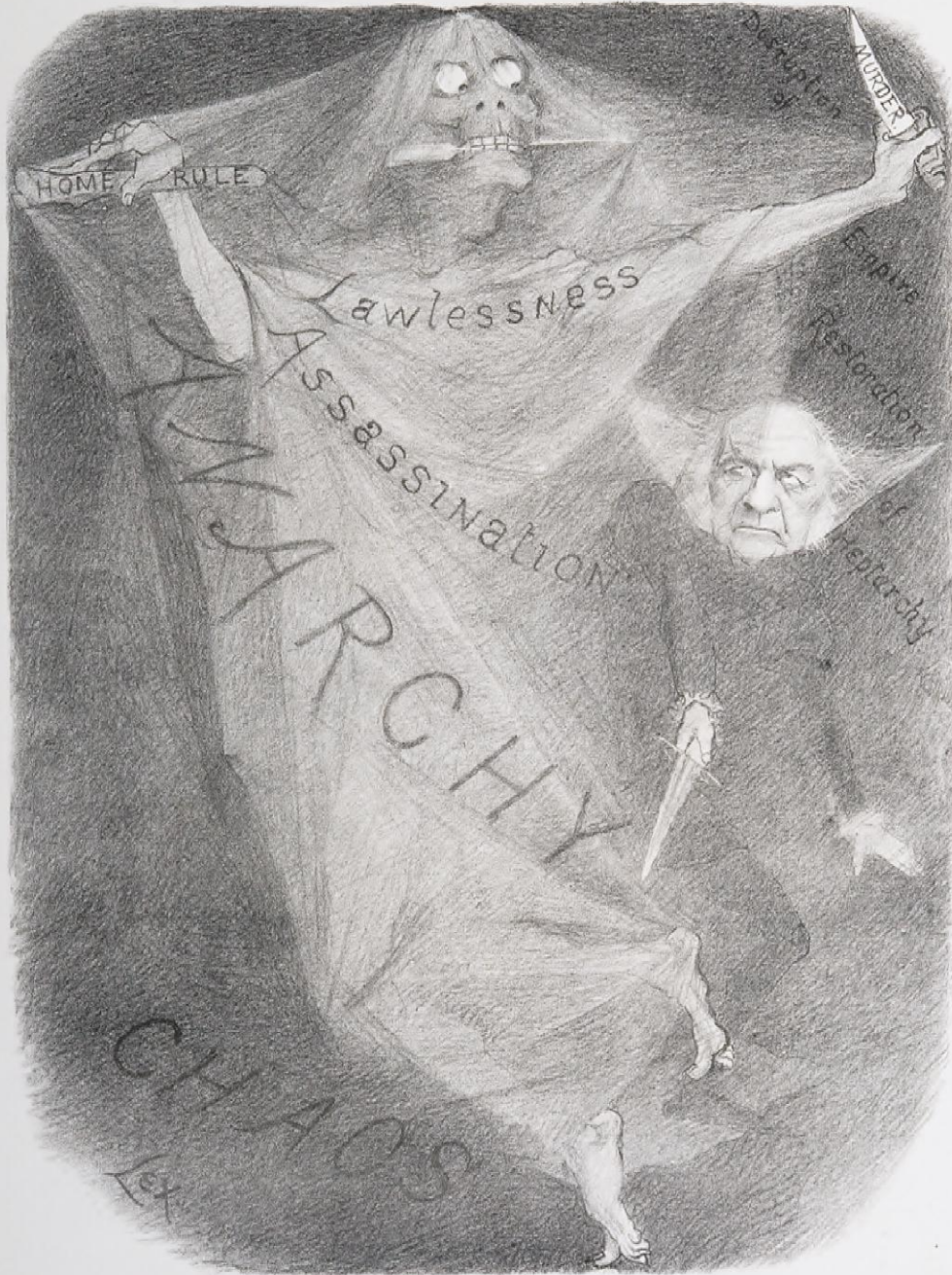
Union retained its circulation from 29 January 1887 until 5 April 1890. Then it continued as *England and the Union* from 12 April until 20 June 1891, when it changed names again, this time to just *England* until 6 August 1892. *England and the Union* resurrected a week later and would continue under this title until the paper folded entirely in June 1895.



Supplement Gratis with

THE UNION.

Saturday, August 13th, 1887.



HAMLET.—I say, away!—Go on, I'll follow thee.

HAMLET, Act I, Scene IV.

Supplement Gratis with

THE UNION.

Saturday, March 24th, 1888.

43. UPPER O'CONNELL STREET. 43.



OTHELLO'S OCCUPATION'S GONE.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE!

‘On the one hand, there are the large-scale colonizations of Shakespeare by some dominant ideology’, Holderness concludes, ‘on the other, more local, individual, particular acts of rewriting that share a common revisionist agenda’,¹⁷ or ‘individual acts of “re-vision” that arise from love or rage, or simply a desire to play with Shakespeare’, as Desmet has it. And here her approach to appropriation points to a much more productive take on the interaction at issue between the Shakespearean text and its potential meanings in Dublin during the late nineteenth century, as it acknowledges the dialectic between Shakespeare and his Irish critics as always already at play and accepts that meaning by Shakespeare means, to a significant extent, meaning by extant interpretations as well. Holderness argues that Desmet’s position nevertheless ‘encounters the same difficulty in defining exactly what the driver of that counter-appropriation is; what of the work exists beyond its multiple appropriations’. Even though the critic remains stuck with extant interpretations of a given Shakespearean text in an expanding universe of meanings, Holderness wants to explain the Big Bang that started this universe of Shakespearean discourse going. He concludes after Gary Taylor, then, that studying Shakespeare from a blinkered, contemporary vantage point alone looks a lot like studying a cultural ‘black hole’. As Taylor argues:

If Shakespeare has a singularity, it is because he has become a black hole. Light, insight, intelligence, matter—all pour ceaselessly into him, as critics are drawn into the densening vortex of his reputation; they add their own weight to his increasing mass. The light from other stars—other poets, other dramatists—is wrenched and bent as it passes by him on its way to us. He warps cultural space-time; he distorts our view of the universe around him [...] But Shakespeare himself no longer transmits visible light; his stellar energies have been trapped within the gravity well of his own reputation.¹⁸

Taylor provides a terrifying image of the negative influence of Shakespeare on literary history here, to be sure, and one that Linda Charnes has tempered with an analogy drawn from a different branch of the sciences, biology.

¹⁷ Holderness, § III.

¹⁸ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, from the Restoration to the Present* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), p. 410.

While observing that DNA collected from different parts of a forest in the American state of Michigan were ‘clones of the same genetic being’, biologists concluded that a subterranean fungus weighing more than 100 tons must live beneath the forest floor. Charnes argues that, like the fungi found above ground, appropriations of the Shakespearean text look a lot like outcrops of that greater underground growth, ‘their presence reassuringly enables us to “infer” that underneath all the historical “debris”, behind the fragmenting claims and postures of “postmodernity”, there is still “a there there”; something – like the vanishing mediator – that we cannot actually see but whose presence must nevertheless be posited’.¹⁹ Charnes certainly provides a reassuring example, if Shakespeare does indeed prove the ‘there there’, the ‘Something Big. Something Other. Something that Matters’ behind the words of his works. She certainly does not, if it turns out to be context that makes for meaning after all.

The tension between these competing sources of meaning drives the argument of *Shakespeares Wake*. Its chapters are organised around but not focused exclusively on the appropriating artists acting as critics whose names serve as the title to each, an application of the ‘author function’ as Foucault has it. In the first section of the opening chapter on Arnold, his appropriation of the Shakespearean text in his lectures *On the Study of Celtic Literature* features as an effort compounded as much by his own concern with Anglo-Irish politics in the aftermath of Fenian attacks in Britain, Ireland, and North America as his overarching project to isolate the function of criticism. In the subsequent section, Arnold’s appropriation of Shakespeare in essays, letters, and prefaces written in the late 1870s points to a break in the continuity of his approach to the Shakespearean text. During the Land War, his position on Ireland would shift from one principally of cultural conciliation to coercion as he sought not only to place the Irish political philosopher Edmund Burke atop the cannon of English prose, but also his edition of Burke’s *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs* (1881) in the hands of influential English politicians involved with Home Rule, including Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone.

¹⁹ Linda Charnes, ‘We Were Never Early Modern’, in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. by John Joughin (London: Routledge, 2000), 51-67 (pp. 65-6).

For Dowden in Dublin, pushing the Arnoldian critical project forward meant lauding English over Irish literary culture and redeploying the Shakespearean text as his chief example of its 'high seriousness', its 'stern fidelity to fact'. In the opening section of this chapter, this dynamic is shown to play itself out in Dowden's influential *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*. In the subsequent pair of sections to this chapter, the continuity of this dynamic in Dowden's approach to Shakespeare comes under scrutiny as the focus shifts briefly to his literary primer *Shakspeare* (1877) and his editorial work on the earliest Arden editions with a view to the role that his efforts as an organizer for the Irish Unionist Alliance had in entrenching his position.

Yeats displaces the famously 'infinite variety' of the Shakespearean text, making room for the singularity of his own aesthetic theory of 'tragic joy'. He argues his case over and against Dowden's own in the essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. In the first and second sections of this chapter, Yeats's own interest in Shakespeare is sourced first to his father, J. B. Yeats, then to his sympathy with the anti-materialism of Morris and Ruskin, and finally to his interest in the idealism of Blake and Shelley. In the subsequent section, Pater's Aestheticism and Arnold's Celticism combine to inform what Yeats himself calls 'Shakespeare's myth'. A confluence of critical perspectives emerges as the driving force behind Yeats's appropriation of the Shakespearean text. The last section of this chapter examines changes in Yeats's thinking about Shakespeare that culminate in his essay 'The Tragic Theatre' (1910-11), wherein J. M. Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1909) figures for Yeats as an example of the poetic reverie which he thought that Shakespeare 'discovered' with *Richard II*.

A brief chapter on the Irish polemicist D. P. Moran bridges the gap between Yeats's and Joyce's approach to the Shakespearean text by examining the satirical use of *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Moran's weekly review, *The Leader*, in 1904. By overlooking the ideological mooring of Arnold's Celticism to his Liberal unionism, Yeats left himself open to regular abuse from some Irish nationalists, not least Moran himself. Throughout the final chapter, Joyce's development of the 'algebra' behind Stephen's *Hamlet* theory reveals that his effort to engage with the singularity of the Shakespearean text outstrips Yeats's own. Moreover, this project forced Joyce to forge a productive

relationship with contemporary biographical criticism. In the first section, his reflections on drama feature alongside his other early critical writings on aesthetics and politics to signal his initial break with Yeats and Celtic revivalism. The subsequent section interrogates the impact of Joyce's own nomadic exile from Ireland and his research for the lectures on *Hamlet* that he delivered in Trieste on the Shakespeares that feature in 'Scylla and Charybdis'.

This approach to these appropriations privileges the intertextuality of any appropriation, emphasising its participation in multiple discourses. *Shakespeares Wake* in this way challenges the critical commonplace that the proper focus for the study of Shakespeare in Ireland is the problematic place of Ireland in Shakespeare, an anxiety perhaps more of the contemporary moment than any that has come before it. The terms of Anglo-Irish cultural politics mediated the relationship between the colonial reading subject and its object in Dublin during the late nineteenth century. Arnold's own position participated, for example, in the mounting public anxiety on both sides of the Irish Sea over the deteriorating political situation in Ireland. But he also brought trends in Continental thinking to bear on the Shakespearean text to an unprecedented extent. Dowden's own approach grew out of his engagement with Romanticism, English as well as German. Yeats also redeployed the racialised discourse on national literatures—given a systematic treatment at midcentury by the French critic Hippolyte Taine in his *History of English Literature* (1864)—that Arnold and Dowden also exploited in their criticism, to position the Shakespearean text in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. But Joyce would reject the accounts of Shakespeare's progress towards total self-possession in and through his art that contemporary biographical criticism championed. In 'Scylla and Charaybdis', he resists the terms of Anglo-Irish cultural politics and redeploys anecdote to write a history of representations in which Shakespeare features against a colourful Elizabethan backdrop. Joyce does not offer an appropriation of the Shakespearean text proper. Rather, he redeploys this history of representations to undermine the dichotomies rooted in Anglo-Irish cultural politics that Arnold, Dowden, and Yeats had each used to construct their own appropriations of the Shakespearean text. Joyce complicates the divide, then, that separates fictional representations

of Shakespeare—not least, his own—from their nonfictional counterparts to enclose a third space for criticism, one that Stephen both inhabits and defends.

1. MATTHEW ARNOLD

VOLUMNIA Making the mother, wife and child to see
The son, the husband and the father tearing
His country's bowels out.

—*Coriolanus*, 5.3.110-13

If it be permitted us to assign sex to nations as to individuals, we should have to say without hesitance that the Celtic race, especially with regard to its Cymric or Breton branch, is an essentially feminine race. No other has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by it. It is a sort of intoxication, a madness, a vertigo.

—Ernest Renan, *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Essays* (1854)¹

O'NEILL It really is a nicely balanced equation. The old dispensation – the new dispensation. My reckless, charming, laughing friend, Maguire – or Our Henry. Impulse, instinct, capricious genius, brilliant improvisation – or calculation, good order, common sense, the cold pragmatism of the Renaissance mind. Or to use a homely image that might engage you: pasture – husbandry. But of course I'm now writing a cliché of history myself, amn't I? Because we both know that the conflict isn't between caricatured national types but between two deeply opposed civilisations, isn't it? We're really talking about a life-and-death conflict, aren't we? Only one will survive. You wouldn't disagree with that, would you?

—Brian Friel, *Making History* (1989)²

CELTIC LITERATURE

In the spring of 1863, James Byrne, a reverend in the Anglican Church of Ireland, offered a racialised theory of national poetics as his contribution to the first series of 'Afternoon Lectures on English Literature'. From the 'unsectarian'³ setting of Dublin's Museum of Industry on College Green, he observed a hard-and-fast distinction between the peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland by locating the quick-witted, emotional sort that he called 'Celts' largely on the latter side of the Irish Sea, and the

¹ Ernest Renan, *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Essays*, trans. by William G. Hutchinson (London: W. Scott, 1896), p. 8.

² Brian Friel, *Making History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 28.

³ See the 'Preface' to *The Afternoon Lectures on English Literature*, 1st series, ed. by Robert Henry Martley and Richard Denny Urlin (London: Bell and Daldy; Dublin: Hodges, Smith and McGee, 1863).

dim-witted, rational sort that he called 'Anglo-Saxons' largely on the other.⁴ Byrne tracked the intersections and traced the subdivisions of these types to build his case for an English literary lineage that starts with Spenser and Shakespeare, excludes Milton, but includes the Scots poet Robert Burns, the exquisite natural details of his verse representing an irrefutably English literary quality inherited strictly on the Anglo-Saxon side of Byrne's divide. From Dryden through Cowper to Wordsworth, Byrne extended the Anglo-Saxon line to include Tennyson at the end of what he considered an unbroken chain that linked the Victorian present to the Elizabethan past. Shakespeare rather than Milton served as the supreme example of 'English characteristics' in this context:

In Milton, on the contrary, there is a striking absence of English characteristics. There is no elaboration of details, no deficiency of general effect. His characters indeed are admirably drawn, and his descriptions shine with the light of genius, but we are struck rather with the poetry and truthfulness of the whole than with the life and fidelity of the particular touches. He had in common with all the born kings of human thought, the divine gifts by which they hold their universal and eternal dominion over the soul of man, but in him those gifts were specialized not as national but as individual.⁵

Milton exceeds the 'English characteristics' that had otherwise constrained Shakespeare's verse to fit the national type and, for Byrne, makes Shakespeare instead of Milton England's national poet.

As professor of poetry at Oxford in 1865, Matthew Arnold delivered the first of his four lectures on Celtic literature. The series marked a return to the subject for Arnold. He had lectured on 'The Claim of the Celtic Race, and the Claim of the Christian Religion, to Have Originated Chivalrous Sentiment' in 1861 as part of his lecture series on 'The Modern Element in Literature'. Significantly, he would preserve, whether he knew of it or not, Byrne's basic distinction between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon characteristics. But Arnold would

⁴ See James Byrne, 'On the Influence of the National Character on English Literature', in *The Afternoon Lectures on English Literature*, 1st series, pp. 3-40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

also break with Byrne in two influential ways. First, Arnold genders the distinction between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon as feminine and masculine just as Renan had in his collection *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Essays*. Second and more important to understanding appropriations of the Shakespearean text in Dublin during the Revival, Arnold situates Shakespeare as a figure who straddles this national divide. Yet not without controversy did Arnold point up English literature as essentially Anglo-Celtic in nature.

The Cornhill Magazine, a London literary periodical perhaps more famous for its serialised novels, featured each of his new lectures on Celtic literature from March to July 1866. Arnold provided an introduction and saw these pieces into print as a single volume in 1867, a year that also witnessed an increase in Fenian activity in Ireland alongside violent attacks in Britain and North America. A transatlantic organization composed largely of émigré Irish men and women with connections to the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Ireland, the Fenians had appropriated the legendary Fianna army from the medieval saga of Fionn Mac Cumhail. As Roy Foster has observed, the Fenians' 'importance was to sustain republican separatism as part of the political language of mid-nineteenth century Ireland; and, in a sense, to make it respectable'.⁶ With a rising in Ireland already foiled in 1865, Fenians in the United States ran raids on British forts and customhouses in Canada between April and June 1866, pressuring Westminster on independence for Ireland.⁷ 'At the present day there is probably no people on earth who are more pronounced in their opinions, more faithful to their traditions, or more mindful of the marked peculiarities which go to make up national character, than the Irish people', one observer remarked in *The Irish People*. The Fenians proudly represented a recalcitrant element within Irish nationalism, 'notwithstanding the fact that the English policy has, especially during the past decade, been of a character to completely denationalize the Irish, it has been utterly powerless to damp those ardent national characteristics which belong to the Celtic race'.⁸ But Arnold thought he might have an answer to the

⁶ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 395.

⁷ See Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 2006), pp. 179-92.

⁸ *Irish People*, 20 January 1866. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 180.

problem of separatist violence that the Fenians posed.

‘The moment is altogether one of surpassing interest’, Arnold wrote excitedly to his mother in July 1866, ‘What I have said in one of my Celtic lectures,—the idea of *science* governing every department of human activity—is the root and heart of Prussia’s success at this moment. [...] I should not wonder if Ireland were the fatal difficulty of the present Government: what L[or]d Derby says about it is not promising. Not that the late Gov[ernment]t did any good there, but the Tories are more dangerous’.⁹ It comes as little surprise, then, that an unsigned article in the January 1866 number of *Cornhill* on ‘The Ancient Fenians and Fenian Literature’ cites the narrative history of Ireland, *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*—written by the Catholic theologian and Irish scholar Geoffrey Keating in the 1630s—in order to challenge contemporary Fenians to satisfy the seven articles of the Fianna army.¹⁰ The article serves as a fitting complement in this way to Arnold’s own problematic blend of literary and political interests in Ireland, as he did not conclude his last lecture by reiterating the distinction between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon characteristics that he began by examining. Rather, Arnold concludes by distinguishing between Celts and Fenians in terms of cultural politics. He suggests that the Fenians are simply a byproduct of ‘the Philistines, who among their other sins are the guilty authors of Fenianism’. Arnold recommends as a solution to this hopelessly middleclass problem of political mismanagement in Ireland the founding ‘at Oxford [of] a chair of Celtic, and to send, through the gentle ministrations of science, a message of peace to Ireland’.¹¹ In 1877, Oxford established this chair and Welsh scholar Sir John Rhys served as its first occupant. But Arnold’s conceit that institutionalising the study of Celtic cultures, languages, and literatures would pacify those men and women willing to fight and die for a politically independent Ireland misdiagnosed the problem.

⁹ *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996-2001), III, p. 55.

¹⁰ ‘The Ancient Fenians and Fenian Literature’, *Cornhill Magazine*, January 1866, pp. 121-8 (p. 121, p. 125).

¹¹ Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), III, 291-386 (p. 386). Indeed, these are the last words of Arnold’s lectures to his Oxford audience.

Rachel Bromwich nevertheless observes in *Matthew Arnold and Celtic Literature: A Retrospect, 1865-1965* that 'Arnold's attempts to define the characteristics of the Celtic literary tradition had an influence which increased rather than diminished during the latter half of the nineteenth century'.¹² She identifies 'two separate forms' that this influence took. The first developed out of the immediate impact that Arnold's ideas registered 'upon critics and poets writing in English'. Bromwich then points up 'the Celtic Renaissance at the end of the century' as evidence of Arnold's influence on the Revival, an influence that Yeats would qualify with his essay on 'The Celtic Element in Literature' (1897, 1902). 'The second, and the more fruitful and permanent result of his lectures', she argues, 'was that he inaugurated in this country [England] a dispassionate and scholarly attitude towards Celtic Studies, which made possible their acceptance here as a serious academic discipline'. Not surprisingly, Bromwich focused her retrospective on this latter effect. She delivered 'The O'Donnell Lecture' at Oxford in 1964 as 'Lecturer in Celtic Languages and Literature in the University of Cambridge', and her assessment of Arnold pays predictable lip service to what remains a difficult legacy in Irish literary history, however many forms his influence took.

Arnold's examination of Celtic literature neither appears 'dispassionate' nor its influence on the Revival straightforward, much less something to pass over in the name of adopting a 'scholarly attitude towards Celtic Studies'. His ideas influenced not only the subsequent debate about Irish literary history and Shakespeare's place in it, but also the debate about Anglo-Irish politics and literature's place in it. Even though Arnold fondly recounted 'the inimitable Celtic note' in works by English authors and, more importantly, heard it sound in Shakespeare at a time when his works were more often considered the paragon of a literary tradition that had helped to define a strident British Empire, he also aggressively redeployed Shakespeare in arguments for sustaining that empire nearer to home by preserving the political union with Ireland through conciliation, coercion and, if necessary,

¹² Rachel Bromwich, *Matthew Arnold and Celtic Literature: A Retrospect, 1865-1965* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p. 1.

the suspension of civil liberties. Arnold's appropriation of the Shakespearean text as a composite of the best of Britain's Celtic and Anglo-Saxon racialised characteristics registers the tensions of Anglo-Irish cultural politics during a period of heightened Fenian activity.

Newspapers ran lurid stories about the Fenian threat during the late 1860s and early 1870s, suggesting that 'Fenian fever' still ran hot amongst readers on both sides of the Irish Sea three years after the dramatic attack in 1867 on a police van in Manchester and the explosion at Clerkenwell gaol in London brought the Fenians to public prominence. An editorial in the *Irish Times*—far from committed to Irish nationalism of any sort at the time—condemned the violent actions in England:

The Clerkenwell outrage surpasses in reckless and fiendish cruelty anything that has been perpetrated for many years. To explode a barrel of gunpowder in a densely crowded neighborhood – to maim and blind and hurl to sudden destruction innocent, unconscious victims – to deal the felon stroke of murder and of life-long mutilations worse than death on men, women, and children who, even in a state of open war would have been sacred amid the fury of battle – this is a crime the turpitude of which cannot be expressed in words.¹³

Often the outraged response to the Fenians' actions did not take the form of words at all. Political cartoonists regularly depicted wild, simianised men stalking the hills of Ireland. The notorious cartoon "The Irish "Tempest"" ran in *Punch* on 19 March 1870.¹⁴ It depicts the beastly 'Rory of the Hills', a halter—the rope or strap used to control livestock—wrapped around his torso, holding his weapons in place as he threatens the wilting beauty 'Hibernia', his right hand clenched in a fist, while with his left hand laid open he begs compensation for past injuries from Prime Minister Gladstone, a figure robed and carrying a staff marked 'IRISH LAND BILL'. In other words, Caliban bares his teeth as Miranda takes shelter under her father Prospero's sturdy left arm. Beneath the image a caption reads: 'CALIBAN (RORY OF THE

¹³ *Irish Times*, 16 December 1867. Quoted in English, pp. 181-2.

¹⁴ Reproduced in Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1789-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 171.

HILLS). “THIS ISLAND’S MINE BY SYCORAX MY MOTHER, WHICH THOU TAK’ST FROM ME.”—Shakspeare’. Such depictions of the ‘Celtic Caliban’, as Michael de Nie has recently called the simianised Irishman of political cartoonists in his study of the Irish identities constructed by the British press during the nineteenth century, depended on a set of stereotypes that successfully exaggerated cultural and religious as well as physiological differences with the Irish.¹⁵ Rory’s halter indeed marks him as Catholic in the extreme, as it reads ‘ULTRAMONTANE’. His halter also binds him not only to agricultural labour, but also to papal authority. Yet “The Irish “Tempest”” backfired. The *Spectator* argued that the ‘cartoon this week, painting the typical Irishman in the character of Caliban, makes the type hardly distinguishable from the gorilla. These are the kinds of insults which no race ever yet forgave’.¹⁶ Letters from the public also echoed this mixture of disgust and fear. ‘If Rory of the Hills has earned a halter’, an angry reader complained, ‘it does not follow that he is Caliban in body and mind’.¹⁷ Frequently appropriated by the press in its running commentary on Anglo-Irish politics, Shakespeare provided a source of cultural capital tapped into by polemicists throughout this period of heightened tension. But Shakespeare also served as a source for the cultural capital that an English critic like Arnold needed to appropriate for his own project of isolating the function of criticism.

As Joep Leerssen has recently observed of Arnold’s critical agenda, his lectures on Celtic literature serve as the ‘first sign of the gradual de-Saxonization of English public opinion and self-image, as well as an important blow to the unalleviated realism and moralism of Victorian literature in favour of something altogether more elfin’.¹⁸ And these lectures do indeed form an integral part of Arnold’s larger critical project to bring ‘sweetness and light’ to his materialist countrymen. As Seamus Deane has observed in *Celtic Revivals*, ‘Gaelic poetry was widely thought to be in itself a guarantee of authentic feeling with the corollary, felt since the 1760s, that English

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Spectator*, 19 March 1870. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁷ *Spectator*, 26 March 1870. See also issues for 2 and 9 April, 28 May 1870.

¹⁸ Joep Leerssen, ‘Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold’, *European Journal of English Studies*, 10.1 (2006), 63-79, (p. 74).

literature could well do with a new access of “primitive” energy to restore to it a lost, pristine vigour’.¹⁹ Moreover, Arnold asserted the need for England to realise an Anglo-Celtic poetic in defiance of the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture of the period. With these lectures in particular, Arnold wanted to indicate what of Celtic literature might ‘offer matter of general interest, and to insist on the benefit we may all derive from knowing the Celt and things Celtic more thoroughly’.²⁰ He confirmed his intention in a letter to Sir Edward Hamer Carbutt, an engineer and later Liberal MP of Monmouth, on 3 April 1866:

I am only trying to call attention to the subject, in the hope of getting a Celtic chair established in the University of Oxford. Therefore to indicate the chief sources of information and the chief lines of treatment is all I can attempt. [...] My position, however, is, simply, that every educated person should know more about Celtic matters than they now do, and I do not pretend to speak as a Celtic student myself, but merely as one of the crowd of educated persons who want instruction.²¹

Although Arnold stresses the ‘provisional character’ of his propositions here, his lectures recommend the comingling of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon cultures to strengthen Irish unity with England, marrying the study of Celtic literature to the practice of Anglo-Irish politics.

Certainly, Arnold could not have appropriated the cultural capital of a more loosely and yet biographically more suggestively representative English author in this endeavour than Shakespeare. ‘Shakespeare’s birthplace, Stratford upon Avon, is an appropriate point of origin for a writer acutely aware of Roman and Celtic influences on his nation and state’, Willy Maley has recently observed. ‘It takes its name from a Romano-Celtic amalgam of “Stratford”, a Roman *straet* or thoroughfare fording the “Avon”, the Celtic word for river being *afon*. Even the word “bard” is Celtic in origin, so the Bard

¹⁹ Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880-1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 14.

²⁰ Matthew Arnold, ‘Introduction to *On the Study of Celtic Literature*’, in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), III, 387-95 (p. 393).

²¹ Arnold, *Letters*, III, p. 29.

of Avon is fittingly and tellingly a writer who builds bridges between Britain's past, present and future'.²² Arnold hoped that by pointing up the historical instance of an Anglo-Celtic poetic in Shakespeare, his lectures might in some small way help to preserve the tenuous political unity of Britain. As Leerssen has noted, Arnold's concern for 'true unity' translates into a desire for integration across the 'racial' divisions of the British Isles: "'Englishness' was seen, not so much as a composite of subdued Anglo-Saxons and Norman-French conquerors, but as the conquering Germanic element within the British Isles: the offspring of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, as opposed to various non-English ('Celtic') aboriginals: Welsh, Highlanders and Irish'.²³ Culturally grafting the last of these 'races' onto the whole looked the most difficult and yet most necessary of all to Arnold.

By challenging conventional wisdom on the relationship between England and the Celtic countries fringing it, Arnold also effectively challenged conventional wisdom on Shakespeare and the 'Celtic note in him'.²⁴ For Arnold, Shakespeare the Celt—genealogical considerations aside—cools the conflict heating up between national and regional identities within the British Isles under the Union. Of course, Arnold also makes a political play in this way and does nothing to tone it down: 'in England the Englishman proper is in union of spirit with no one except other Englishmen proper like himself. His Welsh and Irish fellow-citizens are hardly more amalgamated with him now than when Wales and Ireland were first conquered, and the true unity of even these small islands has yet to be achieved'.²⁵ Arnold wanted this 'true unity' and thought it the pressing cultural as well as political project of the period. In particular, he envisioned a lasting union between England and the Celtic countries fringing it forged through an Anglo-Celtic national poetic. This amalgam of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic characteristics could produce a spiritual union stronger than the precious little that he thought politics alone had

²² Willy Maley, 'British Ill Done?: Recent Work on Shakespeare and British, English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Identities', *Literature Compass* 3.3 (2006), 487-512 (p. 493).

²³ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', p. 65.

²⁴ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 378.

²⁵ Arnold, 'Introduction to *On the Study of Celtic Literature*', p. 393. See Seamus Deane, 'Arnold, Burke and the Celts', in *Celtic Revivals* (pp. 21-7) for a discussion of how Arnold drew on Edmund Burke's political writings in these lectures and his *Irish Essays* (1882).

already achieved.

Arnold opens his argument to this end by trumping up the stereotype that Celtic cultures are fundamentally 'sentimental'.²⁶ 'The Greek has the same perceptive, emotional temperament as the Celt', Arnold observes, 'but he adds to this temperament the sense of *measure*'.²⁷ Measure might have given the Greek success in the 'plastic arts', but Arnold identifies 'the very point of transition from the Greek note to the Celtic' in English literary history with Shakespeare's 'Look how the floor of heaven | Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold' (*The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.64-5).²⁸ 'Shakspeare', Arnold argues, 'in handling nature, touches this Celtic note so exquisitely, that perhaps one is inclined to be always looking for the Celtic note in him, and not to recognise his Greek note when it comes'. He parses the subtle difference between the two by putting 'the Greek clearness and brightness' to one side, leaving 'the Celtic ærialness and magic coming in' on the other.²⁹ It comes as little surprise, then, that Arnold invokes the need for an acknowledged Celtic influence on English literary culture 'to give us delicacy, and to free us from hardness and Philistinism' of measure alone.³⁰ Arnold aligns his influential Hellenism to Celticism here against the rigid Hebraism of puritan, middleclass sensibilities.

As Philip Edwards has wryly observed, however, 'The discovery that the pillar of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition was in fact a Celt was of course an Anglo-Saxon discovery', one that Arnold observes almost in passing.³¹ Arnold did indeed reason along the lines of John Morley, the Liberal MP, subsequently Viscount Blackburn, that without a Celtic element, 'Germanic England would not have produced a Shakespeare'.³² Ironically, Arnold also echoes a very 'Saxon' sense of scholarship to make his case for the 'true unity' of Anglo-Saxons and Celts here. He lets it creep into his lectures much earlier,

²⁶ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, pp. 339-49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 379.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 378, p. 379.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

³¹ Philip Edwards, 'Shakespeare and the Politics of the Irish Revival', in *The Internationalism of Irish Literature and Drama*, ed. by Joseph McMinn, Irish Literary Studies Series 41 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1992), pp. 46-62 (p. 51).

³² Quoted in Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 340-1.

in fact, than his stated debt to Morley. ‘One thing, and one thing alone, led to the truth’, he explains of German philologist Johann Zeuss and his groundbreaking study *Grammatica Celtica* (1853), ‘the sheer drudgery of thirteen long years spent by Zeuss in the patient investigation of the most ancient Celtic records in their actual condition, line by line and letter by letter’.³³ ‘Philology, however, that science which in our time has had so many successes’, he later argues, ‘has brought, almost for the first time in their lives, the Celt and sound criticism together. The Celtic grammar of Zeuss, whose death is so grievous a loss to science, offers a splendid specimen of that patient, disinterested way of treating objects of knowledge, which is the best and most attractive characteristic of Germany’.³⁴ Of course, this approach cannot remain as ‘disinterested’ as Arnold the poet turned literary critic would have it.

For Arnold, the Shakespearean text displays the ‘natural magic’ of Celtic poetry, ‘the indefinable delicacy, charm, and perfection of the Celt’s touch’ in ‘the beauty of expression, unsurpassable for effectiveness and charm, which is reached in Shakespeare’s best passages’. And he offers just a handful of touchstones that in Shakespeare’s handling of nature display the ‘inimitable Celtic note’. First, Arnold draws attention to Titania’s charged words for Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, reproduced from his published lectures here:

“Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea” — [2.1.84-6]

Lines from a play by Shakespeare that features fairies and mischievous magic seems an obvious enough choice for a discussion of an Anglo-Celtic poetic, but Arnold makes no mention here or anywhere else in his lectures of the royal couple of fairyland as representative of the ‘fairy-dew’ that he finds elsewhere in Shakespeare. Instead, for the last, longest, and his favourite of these extracts, Arnold again gleans from *The Merchant of Venice*, reproduced from his published lectures here:

³³ Ibid., p. 299, note.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 328.

[LORENZO] “The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
 When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
 And they did make no noise, in such a night
 Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls—
 [JESSICA] “in such a night
 Did Thisbe fearfully o’ertrip the dew—
 [LORENZO] “in such a night
*Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
 Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
 To come again to Carthage.”* [5.1.1-4, 7-8, 11-4]³⁵

Arnold ends the example at this point, but their conversation takes an interesting turn as Lorenzo draws his lover’s attention to their own romantic situation:

In such a night
 Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew
 And with an unthrift love did run from Venice
 As far as Belmont (5.1.18-22)

The doubly self-referential quality of these lines and those above still seems strikingly modern, even Modernist, in the way Shakespeare’s classical sources and the other plays that they inform—*Troilus and Cressida* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* being only the most obvious of them—burst simultaneously from the play into the present through the references to Troilus, Thisbe, and Dido as well as Jessica and Lorenzo in a bid by Shakespeare to bind these classical tales of love and loss suffered in the process of nation formation together. The references pile one ‘and’ atop another, as Terence Hawkes might have argued, building up to the present ‘and’ of Jessica’s escape into the night with her ‘unthrift love’. As Hawkes has argued in *Meaning by Shakespeare*, ‘repetition, or the generation of more of the same, itself becomes the basis for change and the construction of difference’.³⁶ But Arnold also kept something else in mind, seeing it emphatically pronounced in Shakespeare’s image of Dido bidding her lover Aeneas to come back to Carthage. ‘And those lines of all are so drenched and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 379, Arnold’s italics.

³⁶ Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 22.

intoxicated with the fairy-dew of that natural magic which is our theme', he concludes, 'that I cannot do better than end with them'.³⁷

That Shakespeare colours his plays with classical references, even if these also leave audiences seeing double or triple or nothing in particular—at least, when unacquainted with an allusion—neither appears to surprise nor matter altogether much to Arnold here. Animation of the night, however, waving as it does in the trees as if at the behest of Dido's wand-like willow, struck him as solid Celtic and Shakespearean gold. For Arnold, 'Shakespeare's greatness is thus in his blending an openness and flexibility of spirit, not English, with the English basis'.³⁸ Shakespeare seems the consummate compositor of styles to Arnold. But he overlooks in this context the problematic parallels between *infelix* Dido's Carthage, which Aeneas abandons to found Rome and, by extension, its empire and 'unhappy' Ireland, an integral part of the British Empire as a source of capital and labour as well as difference. Perhaps the idea came from too close to home for Arnold to see it at work in Shakespeare. The *Pax Romana* of Virgil's epic *Aeneid* informed the *Pax Britannia* given new vigour in public schools by Arnold's own father, the headmaster of Rugby school.³⁹ Dr. Arnold would see that the reformed public school serve as a maker of men, each of them a 'brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a Christian'.⁴⁰ As the English linguist John Honey has observed in his study *Does Accent Matter?: The Pygmalion Factor*, 'Along with improved discipline, they [public schools] became more effective in both their teaching and, to an even greater degree, in the hold they had on their pupils' attitudes and values'.⁴¹ The classics would remain at the centre of the new curriculum of empire.

Dr. Arnold regarded the Greek and Latin languages as 'given for the very purpose of forming the human mind in youth'.⁴² In this way, he wished to revisit the humanistic tradition of Erasmus. Rather than asking his

³⁷ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 380.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

³⁹ To distinguish between Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) and his son Matthew (1822-88), I refer to the former as Dr. Arnold, for his doctorate in divinity, and the latter as simply Arnold.

⁴⁰ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (London: Dent, 1957), p. 65.

⁴¹ John Honey, *Does Accent Matter?: The Pygmalion Factor* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 26.

⁴² A. P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, 2 edn, 2 vols (London: Fellowes, 1844), I, p. 105.

students for a literal ‘construe’ of a passage, though, Dr. Arnold insisted that they try to reproduce the nuances of meaning and the style of an author in English, for ‘every lesson in Greek and Latin may and ought to be made a lesson in English’.⁴³ In his essay ‘Rugby School—Use of the Classics’, which first appeared in the *Quarterly Journal of Education*, Dr. Arnold called construing a ‘mere folly’, favouring instead translations that ‘see the force of the original’.⁴⁴ The maligned *viva voce* would now reflect idiomatic meanings in English rather than a word-for-word recitation by rote. The student might fail for literally translating the passage in question, entirely missing its potential meanings. But the student might also speak improperly, making accent the issue. Marks of class or regional identity on accent would need working out, he argues. Although he did not think of the result of this process as Received Pronunciation, as Honey has argued, Dr. Arnold nevertheless deserves credit for increasing ‘the effectiveness of teachers as models for pupils’ behaviour and accent’. Dr. Arnold’s emphasis on learning Greek and Latin bears the marks of utility, as he insisted on their study as a means to thinking, speaking, and writing better in English so that others should recognise the student as having attended a public school.⁴⁵ ‘It was the public school system in this new sense’, Honey suggests, ‘which made possible the extension of RP throughout the top layers of British society’.⁴⁶ Dr. Arnold’s reforms not only helped to cultivate leaders capable of running an empire, but also of being easily recognised as entitled to do so.

Dr. Arnold influenced changes in the British system of public education throughout the nineteenth century, including how the civil service examined students for positions in colonial administration. As cultural critic and Arnold biographer Stefan Collini has observed, Dr. Arnold ‘thereby had an incalculable influence on world history, indirectly staffing an empire, and helping to shape, perhaps to stifle, the emotional development of a governing class for several

⁴³ Arnold Whitridge, *Dr. Arnold of Rugby* (London: Constable, 1928), p. 103.

⁴⁴ Thomas Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold, Collected and Republished* (London: Fellowes, 1845), p. 355.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁴⁶ Honey, p. 27.

generations'.⁴⁷ As an inspector of schools, his son later got in on the act. With tongue in cheek, Arnold wrote to his mother in July 1864 that 'For three mortal hours I have been asking young gentlemen (chiefly from Ireland) particulars of the Norman Conquest and Milton's Paradise Lost, and presently I return to the same delightful work again'.⁴⁸ The imperial undercurrent of Dr. Arnold's pedagogy combined with an absolute belief that divine revelation showed history to register a divine process, which he viewed as cyclically determined by the stages of a nation's life, following laws of natural, historical progress. Law, therefore, ruled history. It applied by analogy, then, that history taught moral as well as political lessons. He believed that the natural destiny of a nation lived and died with its democratic institutions, the chief feature of a citizen their practice of Christianity.⁴⁹ The Carthage of *infelix* Dido maps in this way onto Ireland, her melancholic femininity onto the Celt's easy sentiment, as Arnold understood it himself, while Dr. Arnold's reforms had brought the old *Pax Romana* to bear on the new *Pax Britannia*.

Provocatively, his son adds in his lectures on Celtic literature that 'no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret'.⁵⁰ Not only do the Irish in Arnold's assessment play the fool, they do so with disarming feminine charm. As Declan Kiberd has detected in Arnold's influential diagnosis, 'if John Bull was industrious and reliable, Paddy was held to be indolent and contrary; if the former was mature and rational, the latter must be unstable and emotional; if the English were adult and manly, the Irish must be childish and feminine'.⁵¹ Unfortunately Arnold, while attempting to wrest Shakespeare from the Anglo-Saxon grip of Victorian criticism, also forced a debilitating dose of sentimentality into the discourse of Celticism. Yet Arnold tried to temper his father's attitude. He had lived through the revolutionary year 1848, and he did

⁴⁷ Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 19.

⁴⁸ Arnold, *Letters*, II, p. 329.

⁴⁹ A. J. H. Reeve, 'Arnold, Thomas (1795–1842)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004)

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 347.

⁵¹ Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 30.

not oppose the growth of democracy as such. 'I cannot believe that the mass of people here [in England] would see much bloodshed in Ireland without asking themselves what they were shedding it to *uphold*. And when the answer came— 1. a chimerical Theory about some possible foreign alliance with independent Ireland: 2. a body of Saxon landlords—3. a Saxon Ch[urch] Estab[lishmen]t their consciences must smite them', Arnold wrote to his friend and fellow poet Arthur Clough in April 1848:

I think I told you that the performance of Polyeucte [a play by Corneille on the conversion of Romans and Armenians to Christianity] suggested to me the right of large bodies of men to have what article they liked produced for them. The Irish article is not to my taste: still we have no really superior article to offer them, which alone can justify the violence offered by a Lycurgus or a Cromwell to a foolish nation, as unto Children.—It makes me sick to hear L[or]d Clarendon [Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1847-52] praised so; as if he was doing anything but cleverly managing the details of an imposture.⁵²

The complexities of Arnold's attitude towards Irish nationalism emerge in this early letter. On the one hand, he saw within democracy a tendency towards anarchy and the 'worship of freedom in and for itself', which he later came to fear as simply 'doing as one likes'.⁵³ On the other hand, he also understood the dubious grounds for suppressing the Young Irelanders and felt sure the English public could not countenance violence against the fledgling movement. The son resembled the father in his fear of freedom devoted to no greater purpose, and yet Arnold saw no end to separatist movements forming in Ireland. But he also resembled his mother in a much more literal sense.

Mary Penrose's family came from Cornwall, and this fact mattered greatly to her son in his later years. She was a Celt, and her marriage to 'that Teuton of Teutons' looked to him like a miniature of the political union between Celts and Anglo-Saxons that helped to make for his own hybrid identity, like that of

⁵² Arnold, *Letters*, I, p. 105.

⁵³ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), V, *passim*.

Britain's 'best self', a rich composite of cultures the better for having met.⁵⁴ In 1859, Arnold traveled to France in his capacity as an inspector of schools on a Royal Commission that would report to the Duke of Newcastle of '*what Measures, if any, are required for the Extension of sound and cheap elementary Instruction to all Classes of the people*'.⁵⁵ While there, he met literary and political luminaries he had long admired, including Renan himself as well as Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, François Guizot, and Victor Cousin. The trip lured Arnold into the arena of social criticism for the first time in his career as he addressed the question of extending the educational provision to children from the lower and middle classes on both sides of the Irish Sea along French lines.⁵⁶ This task almost immediately developed into a careful consideration of the distinctive features of modern culture in general. Arnold filed his report to the Newcastle Commission, and then published it in 1861 under the title *The Popular Education of France*. For publication, Arnold appended an introduction entitled, simply, 'Democracy'. It comes as little surprise, then, that he focuses his attention throughout the essay on the issue of how to maintain in an undiminished capacity precisely those cultural and political institutions that traditionally depended on the existence of an aristocracy with the wealth and leisure to patronise them. 'The difficulty for democracy', he writes in the introduction to his report, 'is how to find and keep high ideals'.⁵⁷ It was an issue that would never cease to nag at him. Arnold found the dissemination of 'high ideals' too important a cultural task to be left to public provision, and thus he took a hard line against the official British educational policy throughout the 1860s. His concerns would remain, moreover, with the way a system of education might realise an open conception of the state

⁵⁴ Leerssen in 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold' (p. 71) has suggested the same, but places the inflection on the conflict between Arnold and his father. The balance, therefore, tilts towards the Teutonic in Leerssen's estimation of Arnold's ancestry.

⁵⁵ E. H. Coleridge, *Life and Correspondence of John Duke Lord Coleridge, Lord Chief Justice of England*, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1904), I, p.124.

⁵⁶ The Education Act of 1870 made attending school compulsory and universal across the United Kingdom. For its effect on the popularity of the Shakespearean text with the expanded reading public, see Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People: Working-Class Readers, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

⁵⁷ Matthew Arnold, *The Popular Education of France*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), II, p. 17.

as the embodiment of a national life.⁵⁸ Arnold would himself attempt to add a felt sense of national culture with his conception of an Anglo-Celtic poetic.

But by doing so, Arnold also echoes his father's view—common at the time—of a racial polarity between Celts and Anglo-Saxons, repeating his tendency to identify cultural patterns with these national types at the expense of the former. As Frederic Faverty concluded, 'Dr. Arnold and then Renan exerted the greatest influence on Matthew Arnold's literary criticism based on race'.⁵⁹ Arnold took serious issue with his father's legacy as a 'Celt-hater', however, and in at least one instance he genders the Celt as masculine by seamlessly shifting the referent of the pronoun in the third-person singular from his father to the Celt. 'I do not think papa thought of the Saxon and the Celt mutually needing to be completed by each other', Arnold wrote his mother in May 1866, 'on the contrary, he was full of the sense of the Celt's vices, want of steadiness, and want of plain truthfulness, vices to him particularly offensive, that he utterly abhorred *him* and thought *him* of no good at all'.⁶⁰ Arnold challenged his father's assertion that the Teutonic peoples had 'the soundest virtues' in modern Europe.⁶¹ He had learned from his father's *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* delivered at Oxford in 1841 and 1842 that the Teutonic peoples would serve as 'the regenerating element in modern Europe' because, for Dr. Arnold, they possessed 'the soundest laws, the least violent passions, and the fairest domestic and civil virtues'.⁶² Elsewhere, Dr. Arnold asserted that the recently established Prussian government was 'the most advancing ever known'.⁶³ Not surprisingly, many knew Dr. Arnold as one of the leading Anglo-Saxonists of his generation both for a great affection for the Teutonic roots of English culture and a disdain for Britain's Celtic traditions. But his sense of Anglo-Saxonism juxtaposed two different antagonists.

On the one hand, Leerssen has pointed out, Dr. Arnold followed his

⁵⁸ Stefan Collini, 'Arnold, Matthew (1822-1888)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

⁵⁹ Frederic E. Faverty, *Matthew Arnold, the Ethnologist* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1951), p. 48.

⁶⁰ Arnold, *Letters*, III, p. 18, my italics.

⁶¹ Stanley, II, p. 377.

⁶² Thomas Arnold, *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1842), pp. 44-6.

⁶³ Stanley, I, p. 411, note a.

contemporaries in finding that the Anglo-Saxons best contrasted with an older, hackneyed reading of the 'Norman yoke' of feudalism and an arbitrary monarchy with French connections. On the other hand, a more recently established a binary opposition that involved a Celtic counterpart. When considered against the example of the Normans, then, the 'Anglo-Saxons counted as demotic, tribal-democratic natives; when contrasted with Britain's indigenous Celts, they were seen as stalwart invaders ousting a primitive race of underdeveloped aboriginals. Ethnocentric attitudes towards the non-British subjects of the Empire thus reverberated within this Saxon-Celtic opposition: the Celtic Other tended to be vested with a sense of primitive uncouthness, and was thus aligned with colonial natives'.⁶⁴ But against this background, Arnold's own 'discovery' of the Celtic roots of English literary history cannot help but have a familial analogue in the marriage of his parents, with their progeny, he and his eight brothers and sisters, representing the resulting Anglo-Celtic unity of the British Isles. Although not without exception, Arnold reinforces this arrangement by insisting on a gendered conception of the binary opposition that classifies the Celts as 'an essentially feminine race', the Anglo-Saxons their masculine complement, with their union resounding in Shakespeare's 'Celtic note'.⁶⁵

Significantly, Arnold also had the chance on his 1859 tour of French schools to visit Renan's beloved Brittany. This leg of his journey certainly reminded him not only that he was Cornish on his mother's side, but also that this fact meant he was also Celtic on that side. 'I could not but think of you in Brittany', he wrote to his mother from Paris on 8 May 1859:

with Cranics and Trevenecs all about me—and the peasantry with their expressive rather mournful faces—long noses and dark eyes—reminding me perpetually of dear Tom [his brother] & Uncle Trevenen—and utterly unlike the French. And I had the climate of England—gray skies and cool air—and the gray rock of the north, too, and the clear rushing water. One is haunted by the name *Plantagenet* there—the moment one enters Anjou, from

⁶⁴ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', p. 65.

⁶⁵ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 347.

which the family came, the broom begins—and Brittany seems all in flower with it, with furze mixed.

More importantly, Arnold points out in the same letter to his mother that ‘I am convinced more & more—of the profoundly democratic spirit which exists among the lower orders, even among the Breton peasants. Not a spirit which will necessarily be turbulent or overthrow the present government—but a spirit which has irrevocably broken with the past, and which makes the revival of an aristocratic society *impossible*’.⁶⁶ Later that year, Arnold extended the family resemblance of Britain to Brittany from its rough landscapes and royal lineages to cover its common Celtic identity in a letter written to ‘K’, his sister Jane:

I have read few things for a long time with more pleasure than [Renan’s] ‘Sur la poésie des races celtiques’—I have long felt that we owed far more, spiritually and artistically, to the celtic [*sic*] races than the somewhat coarse Germanic intelligence readily perceived, and been increasingly satisfied at our own semi-Celtic origin, which, as I fancy, gives us the power, if we will use it, of comprehending the nature of both races. Rénan [*sic*] pushes the glorification of the Celts too far—but there is a great deal of truth in what he says, and being on the same ground in my lecture, in which I have to examine the origin of what is called the ‘romantic’ sentiment about women, which the Germans quite falsely are fond of giving themselves the credit of origination, I read him with the more interest.

Arnold hits upon his political interest in Celtic cultures here as he moves from the narrow circle of his siblings with their hybrid ancestry to Britain itself. Both Renan and Arnold construct the Celts in terms of melancholy, sentiment, and spiritual fancy. To this list of characteristics, Arnold adds a spirit of anti-materialism similar to the sensibilities that would inform *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). But both Renan and Arnold attempt to validate—albeit in the name of scientific philology—geographic margins that the cultural politics of the period had successfully come to denigrate amongst the public.

⁶⁶ Arnold, *Letters*, I, p. 446, p. 447, Arnold’s italics.

Moreover, Arnold had taken the tendency of learning to degenerate ancient languages into antiquarianism and pedantry to task with *On Translating Homer* (1861), a riposte to the newest translation of the *Iliad* by F. W. Newman, one of Cardinal John Henry Newman's brothers. He insists here that criticism needed a heightened level of responsiveness to the literary properties of the poetry in question as well as what he called critical 'tact': 'to handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it'.⁶⁷ Arnold remained curious to learn, then, what Celtic literary traditions might provide him as he endeavored to 'inculcate *intelligence* [...] upon the English nation, as what they most want'.⁶⁸ He would situate himself as a mediator in this way between the dominant, pedantic Anglo-Saxon culture of Britain—the 'somewhat coarse Germanic intelligence' of England writ large—and the sensitive intelligence of its Celtic side located on the margins: Cornwall, Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, and Wales.

The Celtic characteristics that Arnold offered up for scrutiny in these lectures would matter rather little to Irish nationalists such as D. P. Moran, however. In 1905, he sarcastically concluded of Shakespeare's 'Celtic note' in particular that 'At last we had found the missing gulf, the missing something that separated us from the dull Saxon hind, and rejoiced accordingly. We now knew the difference between English literature and Irish literature, and satisfied ourselves that Shakespeare was demonstrably a Celt'.⁶⁹ The observations of those who could not speak Irish—specifically, Arnold and Yeats—did not impress Moran. The 'Celtic note' sounded like just so much static keeping the issue weighing most heavily on Moran's mind from getting out: the impossibility of identifying Ireland along English lines, no matter how sympathetically drawn. Thomas MacDonagh would echo Moran's conclusion in *Literature in Ireland: Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish*, published just

⁶⁷ Matthew Arnold, *On Translating Homer*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), I, 97-216 (p. 174).

⁶⁸ Arnold, *Letters*, I, p. 516, Arnold's italics.

⁶⁹ D. P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, ed. by Patrick Maume (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006), p. 104. From 1898 to 1899, the essays that would feature in *Irish Ireland* initially appeared in the *New Ireland Review*.

after his execution in 1916 for his role in the Easter Rising as commander of a contingent of the Irish Republican Brotherhood garrisoned at the Jacob's biscuit factory near Dublin Castle and as a signatory of the proclamation of the provisional Irish government. MacDonagh dismissed the 'Celtic note' in favour of the term 'Irish mode'. He argued, then, that Irish literature written in English not only deployed race and nationality, but it also registered the patterns and rhythms of speech and song native to Irish literature in Gaelic.⁷⁰ It remained as 'inimitable' as Arnold had claimed, but now it also accrued value as a matter of nationalist identity politics.

Nevertheless, Arnold did not deploy his racial categories as literally as Moran and MacDonagh had claimed. He speaks as a critic and a poet on the subject, not as an anthropologist or a philologist. As Leerssen points out, the labels 'Celt' and 'Saxon'—like 'barbarian' and 'philistine' in *Culture and Anarchy*—serve as 'a toolkit of predicative metaphors, not a taxonomy. Ethnic nomenclature merely describes, even invokes culture, it does not classify it'.⁷¹ Attacks on his position must—and, with Dowden and Yeats, would—make their first move from the critical grounds that Arnold had sanctified himself. Much as he does in 'The Function of Criticism', with these lectures Arnold asserts the need for literary criticism to proceed in a 'disinterested' manner in order to encourage 'true unity'. Arnold's appropriation of the Shakespearean text in his explication of an Anglo-Celtic poetic extends this 'disinterested' brand of cultural and literary criticism. 'And how is criticism to show disinterestedness?' he wonders in that essay:

By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily *refusing* to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps it ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to

⁷⁰ Thomas MacDonagh, *Literature in Ireland : Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish* (Dublin: Talbot, 1916), pp. 47-8, p. 110.

⁷¹ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', pp. 69-70.

do with.⁷²

As Collini has observed, Arnold's disinterested criticism—whether of culture or politics—does not make the dubious epistemological claim with which it often gets saddled: Arnold does not claim that criticism can come by an absolute, objective knowledge. Rather, he means to make the point that the critic ought to carry nothing forward in the way of what would now be called 'political baggage', a frame of mind or state of intention that perpetuates a particular interpretative agenda.⁷³ As Arnold famously repeats as the mantra of *Culture and Anarchy*, criticism seeks 'simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas'.⁷⁴ But Arnold betrays his own agenda at work here, and it appears just as political in scope as that at work in his discussion of Shakespeare in his lectures on Celtic literature.

He commends the *Revue des Deux Mondes* as 'having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not'.⁷⁵ To illustrate this point, he dismisses various newspapers and periodicals of the day based on their political affiliations: the *Edinburgh Review* for 'the old Whigs', the *Quarterly Review* for 'the Tories', the *British Quarterly Review* for 'the political Dissenters', and the *Times* for 'the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman'. Arnold includes last in this list of publications the *Dublin Review*, which 'subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives'.⁷⁶ The *Dublin Review* once served as an organ of Daniel O'Connell's successful campaign for Catholic Emancipation, and Arnold sympathises with its politics and its subsequent support of the movement to disestablish the Church of Ireland altogether. Arnold largely agreed with his father on the Catholic cause in

⁷² Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism', in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), III, 258-85 (p. 270), my italics.

⁷³ Collini, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism', p. 270.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270-1.

Ireland.⁷⁷ But he articulates the meaning behind calling these organs out to mark the territory that he would rather see a disinterested criticism cover:

It must needs be that men should act in sects and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

On the one hand, Arnold sounds a clarion call here for a critical organ of his own like the Modernist reviews *The Criterion* and *The Egoist* of the early twentieth century. He had to settle for *The Cornhill Magazine* and *Pall Mall Gazette*. On the other hand and, perhaps more to the point, Arnold wants to rewrite ‘the retarding and vulgarising’ effect of the ‘polemical and practical criticism [that] makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice’.⁷⁸ In order to reinvigorate literary criticism, however, he would need fresh literary sources upon which to draw. He would have to appropriate.

Paradoxically, Arnold remains in this way a central figure in the rise of European national literatures during the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Leerssen has parsed this process of forging a national literature into two parts, the first involving a ‘manifesto’ that cultivates ‘a new literary historicism, which sees the rootedness and growth of literature taking place, not in a cosmopolitan-universalist canon of “literature-at-large”, but in nationally distinct traditions, each linked to its own language of expression’. The second part of the process involves ‘a deliberate nationalist stance on the part of authors, whose ambition it is to become the spokesman of their nation’. The nineteenth century registered the rise of many ‘national poets’ as a result of this process

⁷⁷ See Thomas Arnold, ‘The Christian Duty of Conceding the Claims of the Roman Catholics’, in *The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold*, pp. 9-84.

⁷⁸ Arnold, ‘The Function of Criticism’, p. 271.

⁷⁹ See Leerssen, ‘Literary Historicism: Romanticism, Philologists, and the Presence of the Past’, *Modern Languages Quarterly* 65.2 (2004), pp. 221-43, and ‘Ossian and the Rise of Literary Historicism’, in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 109-25.

in figures like Goethe in Germany and Thomas Davis in Ireland. Leerssen figures Arnold amongst English literary nationalists, citing his lectures on Celtic literature. And Arnold had indeed taken a prescriptive, nationalist approach to English criticism. His 'disinterested' stance appears very 'interested' in cultivating a suitably national literature by 'creating a current of true and fresh ideas' from which English authors might draw inspiration, including the literature of their 'Celtic Other'.

Significantly, his conception of the critical function marks a point of departure from the English Romantic tradition in which the poet leads the critic along. Romantic nationalism from the late eighteenth century had long appropriated a national self-image for political purposes, effecting a proliferation in national 'types' during the subsequent century.⁸⁰ As the nation understands its character as articulated in and through the national language employed by the poet, literature written in that language develops out of this character. 'That is the message, repeated again and again', Leerssen has observed, 'of the many literary manifestos, which in the course of the nineteenth century call for the cultivation of a "national" literature'.⁸¹ Even though Arnold goes to great lengths explaining the likely deficiencies of a direct role for the critic in politics, his own conception of the critic as completely emptied of political and practical interest retains the marks of the Romantic model writ backwards: where once the critics followed the poets, now they would lead the poets to 'new and fresh ideas'. Indeed, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' involves little other than fleshing out this conception of the disinterested critic as thoroughly interested in refreshing the nation's literary culture. This conception of criticism anticipates the 'best self' of *Culture and Anarchy* and the figure of the philologist in his lectures on Celtic literature. But Arnold finds himself here as elsewhere in a rather tight spot: the domestic culture of England cannot yield to his mind the ideas that this new criticism requires. He thought it utterly sapped, and thus he needed to turn elsewhere for the raw materials with which to build his culture, his alternative authority.

⁸⁰ See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 103.

⁸¹ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', p. 74.

Arnold concludes to little surprise, then, that, ‘as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign’. France serves as one fecund font of ‘fresh ideas’ for the taking, Germany another. What is more, for Arnold the Celtic countries that fringe England seemed to spring eternal. Arnold subordinates his ‘*disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world*’ in order to replenish a sapped domestic culture with the superabundant resources of other national literatures. At the very least, ‘if the endeavour to learn [...] the best that is known and thought in the world’ in fact proves ‘disinterested’, then just as surely the ‘endeavour’ of the critic to ‘propagate’ that knowledge, ‘and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas’ upon which the new national poet might then draw, requires an entirely different frame of mind to Arnold’s conception of the critic as emptied of all political and practical interests. Arnold’s criticism puts to use all of the tools at the disposal of the polemicists and the propagandists that he derides. Collini has called this tone ‘the Arnoldian voice’, and it runs the risk of putting people off his project.⁸² But something much more problematic issues from the Arnoldian voice that rings through the light touches of irony that Henry James admired so much.⁸³

Arnold’s appropriation of the Shakespearean text in his lectures on Celtic literature—like those of his later years on Irish politics—point up the problems that contested national identities place on his conception of the critic. His lectures on Celtic literature outline an English literary agenda by addressing the uneasy combination of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon literary traditions within Britain as these rubbed up against the classics in his example of England’s preeminent literary imagination, Shakespeare. The touchstones taken from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and, particularly, *The Merchant of Venice* in Arnold’s lectures on Celtic literature, serve as examples of his conception of an Anglo-Celtic poetic in a bid to show the historical roots of English literature as fully fused into a ‘true unity’ of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon identities. As Leerssen concludes, these lectures form ‘part of an ongoing

⁸² Collini, p. 16.

⁸³ See Henry James, ‘Matthew Arnold’ (1884), in *Literary Criticism*, ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson, 2 vols (New York: Library of America, 1984), I, 719-31 (p. 728, p. 731).

battle against stolid Victorianism, and as the starting point of Celticism in the British Isles. It should also be read as a programmatic manifesto for the cultivation of literary Englishness. Rather than perpetuating an ingrained usage of the ethnic German-Latin opposition in order to label moral and temperamental aspects of Englishness, Arnold places English culture in a polarity between German and Celtic ethnotypes'.⁸⁴ As Leerssen has overlooked, however, Arnold reiterates from his essay on 'the Function of Criticism' that a culturally unifying criticism must also precede the new Anglo-Celtic poetic 'of literary Englishness'.

To spark it off himself, Arnold provides a poignant counterpoint to the 'clap-trap' of the staunchly Anglo-Saxon criticism of his contemporaries in the form of a 'French nursery-maid'. She bursts onto the scene early in his first lecture while he relates his experience of a stroll along the Welsh seashore. Arnold observes that 'this Gaulish Celt moved among her British cousins, speaking her polite neo-Latin tongue, and full of compassionate contempt, probably, for the Welsh barbarians and their jargon. What a revolution was here!' Even though he can understand the maid, Arnold finds the French language that she speaks 'the badge of the beaten race, the property of the vanquished' Celts of France.⁸⁵ Arnold subtly thrusts Shakespeare's Shylock—'suffrance is the badge of all our tribe' (1.3.107)—before his audience here and, as he does openly later in his lectures, *The Merchant of Venice*, to situate the Celt as a stranger as much within as without the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture of Victorian England.

In anticipation of the entry of the French maid, Arnold establishes some hard-and-fast distinctions between the English tourists and the Welsh bards at the Eisteddfod in Llandudno, juxtaposing the view east to Liverpool, 'that Saxon hive', and west to the coastline of Anglesey, 'the sea, a silver stream'.⁸⁶ Remarkably, Arnold makes no mention of Liverpool's population of Irish immigrants. Neither does he mention that it served as a port of call for those leaving Ireland for destinations further afield. Rather, he conscientiously structures his encounter with a resurgent Celtic culture in Wales along a

⁸⁴ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', p. 63.

⁸⁵ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, pp. 292-3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

binary opposition of 'dynamism vs. quietude, materially-minded pragmatism vs. other-worldly dreaminess'. He situates himself between Anglo-Saxon and Celt, addressing an audience of 'My brother Saxons', and attempts to instill in them a certain interest in 'the Celtic genius'. He stands before them, after all, as an embodiment of the two. To identify with his audience at Oxford, though, Arnold calls 'the Celtic genius' a thing of the past.⁸⁷ As Leerssen has argued, progress towards achieving national unity will also render 'the Celtic genius' inert as an animating force in Britain. Arnold almost relishes this effect of modernity, however:

I must say I quite share the opinion of my brother Saxons as to the practical inconvenience of perpetuating the speaking of Welsh. It may cause a moment's distress to one's imagination when one hears that the last Cornish peasant who spoke the old tongue of Cornwall is dead; but, no doubt, Cornwall is the better for adopting English, for becoming more thoroughly one with the rest of the country. The fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogeneous, English-speaking whole, the breaking down of barriers between us, the swallowing up of separate provincial nationalities, is a consummation to which the natural course of things irresistibly tends; it is a necessity of what is called modern civilisation, and modern civilisation is a real, legitimate force; the change must come, and its accomplishment is a mere affair of time. The sooner the Welsh language disappears as an instrument of the practical, political, social life of Wales, the better; the better for England, the better for Wales itself.⁸⁸

Arnold gives over to his detractors here, letting the view that Welsh should serve only a culturally decorative function overmaster this section of his lectures. 'These sentiments are proffered by Arnold as an echo of the commonsensical public opinion of the time', Leerssen has observed. 'We recognise an ethnocentrism that imposes absorption, assimilation and loss of identity on other cultures in the name of a "historical progress" or "march of

⁸⁷ Leerssen, 'Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold', p. 66.

⁸⁸ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, pp. 296-7.

history” which is vested in the English nation’.⁸⁹ Although Arnold rarely backed out of a fight with the popular press, he had on this occasion he an excuse since one of his more vociferous opponents simply asserted that he did not, in fact, believe what he claimed about the importance of the English language or the detriment inflicted by Welsh on Wales.

An unsigned article in *The Times* had asserted in response to Arnold’s lectures on Celtic literature that the ‘Welsh language is the curse of Wales. Its prevalence and the ignorance of English have excluded, and even now exclude, the Welsh people from the civilization, the improvement, and the material prosperity of their English neighbours’. Language appears here as the mark of not only national identity, but also of civilization. Material prosperity in this way stands as the only sure sign of the success of a particular language. The occasion for this attack stemmed only in part from Arnold’s lectures, however. The writer responds more immediately to a letter that Arnold had written to Sir Hugh Owen, in which he declined the organisers’ invitation to speak at the annual Eisteddfod. Arnold’s letter had appeared in both *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, exposing a level of hypocrisy in Arnold’s own position to his detractors. *The Times* attacked Arnold for ‘one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated’. Arnold’s ‘penchant’ for Welsh poetry seemed to *The Times* a sign of weakness that smacked of cultural treason, even though he could only read it in translation. The article concludes that until the Eisteddfods, Welsh ‘was giving way [to English], but has since taken another false start [...] As for Welsh literature, it may be left to antiquaries and historians, and to critics who have nothing more solid to occupy them. The literature is curious, no doubt, and interesting in its way, but it is rather too absurd to send us to Ossian and Taliesen for mental culture’. In this critic’s estimation, the Celtic literature that Arnold had examined in his lectures amounted to little more than poetry in the dead languages of defeated nations, its verses ‘as original and valuable as the Latin verses of the public school’.⁹⁰ Perhaps a jab directed as much at Arnold in his role as a

⁸⁹ Leerssen, ‘Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold’, p. 66.

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 8 September 1866, p. 8.

school inspector as his father for the emphasis placed on the classics at Rugby, this bit of criticism appropriates the staunch Anglo-Saxonism of the latter all the same. A writer for the *London Quarterly Review* did indeed lead with this connection in October 1868, observing that ‘Never surely did Nemesis play a merrier trick than when she made the son of that Teuton of Teutons, the Celt-hating Dr. Arnold, indulge in this expansive if not somewhat exaggerated praise of the literature of the older race’.⁹¹ But such criticism did not put the former off his belief in an Anglo-Celtic poetic.

Understanding the hostile position of his critics, Arnold correctly concludes of his ‘brother Saxons’ that they ‘will have nothing to do with the Welsh language and literature on any terms [and] would gladly make a clean sweep of it from the face of the earth’. And yet, Arnold effectively erases differences between Ireland and Wales himself, despite his lofty claim to the contrary:

I, on certain terms, wish to make a great deal more of it than is made now; and I regard the Welsh literature,—or rather, dropping the distinction between Welsh and Irish, Gaels and Cymris, let me say Celtic literature,—as an object of very great interest. My brother Saxons have, as is well known, a terrible way with them of wanting to improve everything but themselves off the face of the earth; I have no such passion for finding nothing but myself everywhere; I like variety to exist and to show itself to me, and I would not for the world have the lineaments of the Celtic genius lost.⁹²

Although Arnold admirably chastises the strident Anglo-Saxonism of his detractors, he champions variety by erasing ‘the distinction between Welsh and Irish, Gaels and Cymris’. It proved a crucial move for Arnold’s thesis. To unite Anglo-Saxon England to its Celtic neighbours in national spirit, Arnold needed play down the differences between as well as within England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In this way, he could much more easily devote the remainder of his lectures on Celtic literature to showing the cultural,

⁹¹ ‘Folk-lore: Myths and Tales of Various Peoples’, *London Quarterly Review*, XXXI, 48 (October 1868).

⁹² Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, pp. 297-8.

historical, and philological importance of a consolidated 'Celtic genius' in Britain as evidenced by the Shakespearean text, amongst others, in order to demonstrate that some of the great achievements of literature in English display a Celtic sense of fancy and idealism amidst the Anglo-Saxon sense of materialism and realism.

For Arnold, the French maid points the way towards a shared heritage with the supplanted Celtic cultures represented by the bathers on the beach that day. She marks a point-of-no-return in the process of recovering an Anglo-Celtic poetic for English literature and 'true unity' between England and the Celtic countries fringing it. As Matthew Campbell has recently observed, 'she is incontrovertibly "Gaulish," unknowingly a representative of the Celts who thrived – the French – in the midst of those who are facing extinction – the Welsh'.⁹³ Arnold holds her up as an example for his audience: the forgotten history of a Celtic genius that once suffused all aspects of life in Britain with a 'natural magic' forever lost but amongst those conscious that they live on the margins. But here, as in 'The Function of Criticism', he has in mind more than just the Celtic countries on the edge of England, Anglo-Saxonism's stronghold. Fixing his sights back on Britain from Brittany and, more importantly, on Britishness, Arnold finds the maid's history at work in regions where Anglo-Saxon culture had almost wholly supplanted the Celt. At 'home' those like Wragg and the French maid—the *unheimlich* within the *heimlich*, as Hawkes has observed, appropriating a Freudian distinction—colour Arnold's Anglocentric ideas with what the sociologist Michael Hechter calls 'internal colonialism', the situation which obtains 'for regions that are simultaneously economically disadvantaged *and* culturally distinctive from the core regions of the host state'.⁹⁴ Remarkably, Arnold includes Shakespeare amongst this latter group of outsiders on the inside. At once situated at the centre of the Anglo-Saxon culture of Victorian England, Shakespeare nevertheless sounds a 'Celtic note' to Arnold, for whom the Bard of Avon sings softly still the swansong of Britain's Celtic past. To point up the

⁹³ Matthew Campbell, 'Letting the Past be Past: The English Poet and the Irish Poem', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2004), pp. 63-82 (p. 67).

⁹⁴ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Transaction, 1999), p. xiv.

Celtic characteristics of Shakespeare's poetic, Arnold echoes Renan's insistence on the 'the timidity, the shyness, the delicacy' of the Celts in Brittany.⁹⁵ But he must also work much more directly against the Anglo-Saxonism of Thomas Carlyle's image of the humble Will from Warwickshire, Shakespeare the 'Stratford Peasant'.

Published in 1841, Carlyle's essay 'On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History' famously catapulted Shakespeare's status to that of Victoria's crowning jewel, regardless of what might be said of India's importance to her regalia:

Well; this is our poor Warwickshire Peasant, who rose to be Manager of a Playhouse, so that he could live without begging [...] consider what this Shakspeare has actually become among us. Which Englishman we ever made, in this land of ours, which million of Englishmen, would we not give-up rather than the Stratford Peasant? There is no regiment of highest Dignitaries that we would sell him for. He is the grandest thing we have yet done. For our honour among foreign nations, as an ornament to our English Household, what item is there that we would not surrender rather than him? Consider now, if they asked us, Will you give-up your Indian Empire or your Shakspeare, you English; never have had any Indian Empire, or never have had any Shakspeare? Really it were a grave question. Official persons would answer doubtless in official language; but we, for our part too, should not we be forced to answer: Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakspeare! Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakspeare does not go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakspeare!⁹⁶

As Leerssen has pointed out, not long before Arnold delivered his lectures on Celtic literature did Germany found the first Shakespeare society in Europe, the broadly Teutonic virtues that Carlyle saw professed by Shakespeare made the German claim to him almost appear sanctioned by Britain as a sort of

⁹⁵ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, pp. 342-3.

⁹⁶ Thomas Carlyle, 'On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History', in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by H. D. Traill, 30 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-9), V, p. 113.

‘true unity’ between the two countries.⁹⁷ Arnold had an uphill climb ahead of him, should his claim that the Shakespearean text represented an Anglo-Celtic poetic hope to pass muster.

Little wonder, then, that Shakespeare’s Celtic streak runs only so deep for Arnold. Neither does it surprise when he appears to abandon his belief in the possibility of forging an Anglo-Celtic union after the Land War started in 1879. Arnold never assigns to Shakespeare the ‘stubborn rebellion against the despotism of fact’ that he asserts throughout his lectures as the supreme Celtic quality.⁹⁸ Indeed, he argues that such ‘rebellion’ had precluded Celtic cultures from achieving the economic and political organization and, consequently, the national strength that the English now enjoyed, a point that he concedes to his critics, though, not without noting it with some regret later in his career.⁹⁹ ‘If his rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt even in spiritual work’, Arnold concludes, ‘how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics’.

IRISH POLITICS

From his home in Surrey on 30 October 1879, Arnold wrote to a favourite of his many political correspondents, Lord Coleridge, chief justice of the common pleas since 1873 and a longtime family friend of the Arnolds. In his letter, Arnold comments on the Irish university question in a decidedly more conciliatory tone than he later adopted in response to the deteriorating situation in Ireland during the Land War and, later, the parliamentary debates over Home Rule:

⁹⁷ Leerssen, ‘Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold’, p. 71. Rather ironically, the Dublin Shakespeare Society was founded in 1907 as a branch of the British Empire Shakespeare Society (BESS), established in London six years earlier. Both the German and Irish versions of the Shakespeare Society remain in operation, but no British Empire, no BESS. For a brief history of Bess, see Maley ‘British Ill Done?’, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁸ Arnold indeed uses ‘rebellion against fact’ and ‘chafing’ or ‘react[ion] [usually qualified as ‘vehement’ or ‘passionate, turbulent, indomitable’] against the fact’ repeatedly. He assigns the idea to a ‘great friend’ of the Celt, ‘Monsieur Henri Martin, whose chapters on the Celts, in his *Histoire de France*, are full of information and interest’ (*Celtic Literature*, p. 344, note).

⁹⁹ See Arnold, ‘Preface to *Irish Essays*’, in *English Literature and Irish Politics, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, pp. 312-7.

I have read [James] Hannen [on the Irish Universities Bill] with interest. It is quite true that the Roman Catholics ask for more than they have any reasonable claim to, but that is no reason against negotiating with them to see whether they will not consent to accept what is fair and reasonable; I think, if they felt they were dealing with a strong government which they could trust, and not with a government always looking round to see if the prejudices of its middle class supporters did not warn it to back out, they might deal with and would prove reasonable. I know Lord Emly [William Monsell] thinks so, very strongly. As to Home Rule, other parts of the kingdom have not Home Rule, but they have Universities of the kind that Ireland asks for and we refuse to her.¹⁰⁰

Arnold had long supported the endowment of an Irish university for Catholic students just as he had long supported the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, but his letter to Lord Coleridge also raises two other positions that defined his stance on Irish politics during the last decade of his life. First, Arnold understood that Irish nationalists needed to realise a working relationship with an independent government in place at Westminster, a government that, significantly, did not draft its policies in order to court the English middleclass or, above all, those who would rather see Ireland ruled as 'a Crown colony'.¹⁰¹ Second, that Home Rule for any part of the United Kingdom—not least, Ireland—remained out of the question. Arnold still believed for a time that a stronger union between England and Ireland could be achieved through acts of cultural conciliation, as his defending a firm position on endowing an Irish university for Catholics and disestablishing the Church of Ireland both illustrate. But when he wrote to Lord Coleridge again, this time from the offices of the Education Department on 12 October 1881, he had recently returned from a visit to Ireland. The end of the Land War looked a long way off yet, its flames fanned recklessly by the Irish press, in his opinion, to the detriment of progress by Gladstone's

¹⁰⁰ *Letters*, V, p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Matthew Arnold, 'The Incompatibles', in *English Literature and Irish Politics, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, 238-85 (p. 239).

Liberal Government towards meeting the Irish National Land League's demands midway. He now felt conciliation an ineffective tactic, at least for the time being:

As to Ireland, I must not begin on that subject now. The Irish press was a new thing to me; it is like the Jacobin press in the heat of the French revolution; I don't see how Ireland is to settle down while such stimulants to the people's hatred and disaffection are applied every day. But our English pedants will continue to believe in the divine and saving effect, under all circumstances, of right of meeting, right of speaking, right of printing. As long as it is a game of words between Gladstone and Parnell, the English constituencies may be delighted, but the temper of Ireland will be neither cowed nor improved.¹⁰²

The 'game of words' would end the next day with Parnell's arrest, and yet Ireland appeared neither 'cowed nor improved' during the weeks that followed.

Gladstone's concessions to the Land League in the form of his Second Land Act, proposed that August, had pushed Parnell to keep up the agitation or face losing the long-term fight for Home Rule.

In response to fresh protests, authorities formally suppressed the activities of the Land League just five days after jailing Parnell. One 'week later Sir William Harcourt [Gladstone's home secretary]', reported the *Annual Register*, speaking 'at Glasgow, made an elaborate reply to the criticism of the Conservative leaders, taunting them with being in political destitution and on the political tramp, and forced to pick up a Home Rule seat in North Durham and a Protectionist seat in North Lincolnshire [...] and [...] contended that the repression of the Land League had become necessary'.¹⁰³ But Harcourt had it figured the wrong way, as the Liberals had effectively exacerbated the problem by suppressing the Land League. From Kilmainham, Parnell issued the 'No Rent Manifesto' drafted by William O'Brien, editor of the League's newspaper *United Ireland*, and signed by the League's jailed leadership: Parnell, T. A. Dillon, Andrew Kettle, Tom Brennan, and Thomas Sexton. The 'Manifesto' encouraged Irish farmers to withhold rent payments until Westminster ended its coercive

¹⁰² *Letters*, V, p. 170.

¹⁰³ *The Annual Register a review of public events at home and abroad, for the year 1881* (London: Rivingtons, 1864-1954), pp. 192-3.

policies in Ireland, such as the ineffective 'Peace Preservation' Act for Ireland passed on 21 March 1881 and designed to permit greater martial authority in the suppression of agrarian violence.¹⁰⁴ The Liberals' handling of the Land League—at times through conciliation, at others through coercion—had produced political gridlock in both England and Ireland.

Earlier that year, Arnold had again tried to add a greater historical and literary perspective to the public debate on government policies in Ireland with an edition of Edmund Burke's writings on Irish politics, *Letters, Speeches, and Tracts on Irish Affairs*. He had hoped that the volume would help policymakers avoid such an impasse with the Land League. And Arnold indeed presents in its preface an argument that points up Burke's signal importance to understanding the situation as it now stood between Gladstone and Parnell, leveraging both Shakespeare and Milton to do so. In order to remind his readers of Burke's undiminished relevance—cultural as well as political—Arnold asks his readers to consider carefully the enduring historical and literary legacies of Shakespeare and Milton as national poets. 'In both cases', he observes, 'the unacquaintance shuts us out from great sources of English life, thought, and language, and from the capital records of its history and development, and leaves us in consequence very imperfect and fragmentary'. Arnold places Shakespeare alongside Milton and a long way from where he had him situated in his lectures on Celtic literature, and this Shakespeare instead stands in here as a much more narrowly English poet and playwright—indeed, rather conventionally as a national institution—alongside Milton. But Arnold would have Burke enjoyed alongside his countryman Jonathan Swift as part of this institution for the quality of his prose. Moreover, he would also have Burke's identity as an Anglo-Irishman—born to a Catholic mother from County Cork and a Protestant father from Dublin—understood as significantly contributing to his authority to speak on Irish affairs to Arnold's English audience. It appears, then, that Arnold would

¹⁰⁴ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp. 328-32. As Bew notes, Gladstone's government turned away from coercive measures once it clear that these proved ineffective. After the 'Peace Preservation' Act went into effect, for example, authorities reported three agrarian murders. 'Between April and June 1881 the figure rose to seven', Bew notes, 'between July and September 1881 there was a drop to one, but in the autumn the figure rose dramatically again. Between October and December 1881 there were eight murders; this upsurge in crime continued into March 1882; between January and March 1882 there were six murders'. All the while, Parnell sat locked in his cell (p. 332).

have his readers achieve a measure of conciliation with Irish nationalists by agreeing to fix Burke firmly atop the canon of English prose as the genre's very own Shakespeare.

Arnold blames the number of collected volumes that are both 'dear and inaccessible' for Burke's relative obscurity from 'our mind's circle'. He bemoans the fact that as a result Burke does not occupy a position of similar privilege to that of Shakespeare and Milton. 'Shakespeare and Milton we are all supposed to know something of', he reminds his readers. But what about Burke demands similar attention from an English audience to that paid Shakespeare and Milton, Arnold wonders. 'Such an occasion offers itself', he concludes, 'for Burke, in the interest about Ireland which the present state of that country compels even the most unwilling Englishman to feel. Our neglected classic is by birth an Irishman; he knows Ireland and its history thoroughly'. For Arnold, Burke amounts to an informer on Anglo-Irish cultural politics, a rather articulate outsider on the inside, and thus in a position similar to the one that Shakespeare enjoys in his lectures on Celtic literature. Burke's writings on Irish affairs show that 'He is the greatest of our political thinkers and writers'. Yet Arnold's grand assessment of Burke does not come without a caveat. He would not unseat Thomas Hobbes or John Locke without qualifying Burke as in his own way flawed, for 'his political thinking and writing has more value on some subjects than on others; the value is at its highest when the subject is Ireland'. Arnold credits Burke with a unique insight on Irish affairs, particularly those grievances that had remained in the rhetoric of Irish nationalism since Burke's death in 1797:

The tyranny of the grantees of confiscation [under the Penal Laws]; of the English garrison; Protestant ascendancy; the reliance of the English Government upon this ascendancy and its instruments as their means of government; the yielding to menaces of danger and insurrection what was never yielded to considerations of equity and reason; the recurrence to the old perversity of mismanagement as soon as ever the danger was passed,—all these are shown in this volume, the evils, and Burke's constant sense of their gravity, his constant struggle to cure them.

Not a bad pitch for Burke as a seer of sorts or for Arnold as his latter-day prophet, especially at a time when Ireland vexed English politicians and the public alike but, what is more, Arnold cites injustices that Burke would have hardly struggled to recognise and upon which Arnold had frequently enjoyed occasion to comment. 'But all that I have attempted to do in the present volume', he humbly protests, 'is to arrange chronologically the writings and speeches on Irish affairs'. And yet, the politicians and the public cannot meet with Burke without also meeting with Arnold in his role as Burke's mediator to contemporary audiences, his prefatory argument for an appreciation of Burke as a national institution in English prose serving as little more than window dressing for a fitting recommendation of his political insights on Ireland.

Arnold circulated the edition amongst his political acquaintances over the summer of 1881, attempting in effect to enter his views on Burke into the debate on Ireland alongside those of Burke himself. With Parnell imprisoned at Kilmainham and the Land League outlawed, correspondence concerning his edition of Burke started to pour in from all sides that autumn. The Liberal MP John Bright—in the past, a vocal opponent of Arnold on cultural issues in the name of the working class, and so to little surprise a favourite target in *Culture and Anarchy* as a voice for the radical, vulgar 'populace'—thanked Arnold for his copy. As Bright observed in his reply to Arnold, 'We are paying heavily for the sins of the generation against which or whom Burke contended [...] I have preached a Gospel of Ireland during the last 30 years. I suspect that my faith in this matter is not at variance with that of Burke. I hope now we are at or near the end of Irish insurrections'.¹⁰⁵ On Ireland's importance and Burke's relevance to Anglo-Irish politics, these old foes certainly agreed. To conclude his prefatory remarks on Burke, however, Arnold cites Bright as saying just 'the other day in the City' that 'you do not suppose that the fourteen members of the Government spend days and weeks in the consideration of a measure such as the Irish Land Bill without ascertaining in connexion with it everything everybody else can know'. Bright passes Gladstone's plans off as paved in good intentions alone even as Arnold reminds his readers that 'English Governments' had since Burke's day more often than not thought that they understood Ireland and failed there all the

¹⁰⁵ See *Letters*, V, pp. 151-3, for further remarks of his correspondents on the edition.

same. Arnold would instead see that English politicians understand what Burke knew and what he had himself argued elsewhere. ‘Our normal mental condition’, Arnold glosses Burke, appeared a ‘non-thinking one’ on Ireland to the Irish themselves.¹⁰⁶ In its pitiless tone, Arnold’s conclusion seeks to close the case on Burke as a critic of that hopelessly philistine section of England—the materially minded middleclass—prejudiced against Ireland and with whom he had himself contended throughout his career.

Arnold certainly sympathised with Burke’s sceptical assessment of British policies in Ireland as well as with Burke on the validity of Irish grievances for past injustices. A Protestant and firmly against disestablishment in England, Arnold nevertheless criticised, *pace* Burke, the Protestant Ascendancy, the Church of Ireland, and the exploitative practices of Anglo-Irish landowners towards their Irish tenants. Moreover, Arnold had long approached Catholicism with a view to changing English attitudes about its practice in Ireland. As Collini has noted of Arnold’s position on this especially difficult issue, however, the ‘aesthetic richness and close ties to the European cultural tradition he anyway found more appealing than most forms of Protestantism’. Collini does well to take his assessment to its logical conclusion, as Arnold’s ‘sympathy for the Irish cottier comes as much from a sense that he is a fellow-victim of English puritan bigotry as from any closer understanding of his economic hardships’.¹⁰⁷ Arnold had indeed supported the doctrine of ‘force till right be ready’ in Ireland, extending this measure against the rural ‘anarchy’ of the Land War to cover the suspension of civil liberties. ‘It seemed to me, when I was in Ireland the other day, that the *press* was the most serious difficulty’, he wrote to Harcourt on 25 October 1881, ‘I don’t see how the minds of a people who feed daily on such a press are to become quiet and healthy. But hardly any one in England knows what this press is’.¹⁰⁸ Should they and, Arnold thought, the public would certainly support any measure to suppress it. But Arnold could not convince all

¹⁰⁶ Matthew Arnold, ‘Preface [to *Burke’s Letters, Speeches, and Tracts on Irish Affairs*],’ in *English Literature and Irish Politics, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, 286-89 (p. 289).

¹⁰⁷ Collini, p. 89.

¹⁰⁸ *Letters*, V, p. 173.

of his correspondents of Burke's relevance to understanding the present state of Ireland nor of his status as the Shakespeare of English prose.

Harcourt replied to Arnold with a copy of Burke's *Letters, Speeches, and Tracts on Irish Affairs* 'in which I have collected the extremely *disjecta membra* of his tracts and letters about Ireland'. The Prime Minister also received a copy from Arnold and wrote in reply that he 'was going to send a volume on Irish matters which I have just collected from Burke' had Arnold's eager publisher, Macmillan, not already sent him the edition. Instead, Gladstone gave Arnold a volume of Byron's poetry as a gesture of thanks. But Gladstone did not comment on the quality of Burke's political insights on Irish affairs, neither did he give an opinion of Arnold's argument about Burke's accomplishments as an English prose stylist.

Cardinal Manning thanked Arnold for his editorial work in a frank letter dated 19 October 1881. 'The state of mind of my English and even Catholic friends towards Ireland is a pain & a perplexity to me', Manning confessed to Arnold. 'Ever since I was 20 I have had a deep sympathy with Ireland. It is a people which has been pollarded & stunted by England. We have never been able to civilize it, and we have refused to let it civilize itself. "Salwa Imperii compage," there is no domestic administration I would not give Ireland. The present state is deplorable'. In postscript, he nevertheless added that 'I feel very much for Forster. But had rather see him in Ireland than any other man'.¹⁰⁹ Cardinal Manning—like Cardinal Newman himself, not ordained a Catholic priest until middle age—understood from early on that the political problems in Ireland had cultural roots running very deep. William Forster, Gladstone's appointment to chief secretary of Ireland in 1880 and Arnold's own brother-in-law, resigned from his position after negotiations over the Kilmainham Treaty resulted in the release of Parnell from prison. Yet Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, marquis of Salisbury, serving at the time in the House of Lords as a powerful Conservative opponent of the Liberals' Irish land legislation, and Granville George Leveson-Gower, Earl Granville, then serving in Gladstone's Foreign Office, each received copies Arnold's edition of Burke and found nothing to his writings worth comment, let alone compliment. Edward Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby and a

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

reluctant convert to the Liberals in 1882, remarked in a letter dated 21 October 1881 of Burke's 1790 speech at Bristol that 'He pelts his opponents with pearls instead of pebbles; and the pebbles would have been more effective!' But Arnold could not have come up with a better image to recommend Burke as the Shakespeare of English prose. As Collini has observed, Arnold appreciated above all else the apparent magnanimity of Burke's politics as manifested in his prose style.¹¹⁰ Arnold would try to bring what he read in Burke as a sense of fair play to his next effort at writing on the situation in Ireland.

While working on his edition of Burke, Arnold had also started to apply Burke's conclusions in his own writing on contemporary Irish politics. His article 'The Incompatibles' appeared in two halves, with each part earning him £50 when the *Nineteenth Century* published the first in April and the second in June of 1881. As Arnold had already made clear in his essay 'Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism', he viewed British Liberals and Irish nationalists as strange bedfellows. He would attempt to open the debate on Ireland up to a wider audience of opinion when his *Irish Essays* appeared the following year. But he would also send the volume on its rounds to political acquaintances. Gladstone got his copy along with a letter from Arnold on 3 April. 'The strictly Irish Essays are meant rather for those who have [time] in quietness to form their way of thinking about Ireland', he clarifies for the Prime Minister, 'than for those who have the immediate obligation to act and govern there'. Arnold indeed intended his opinions about Ireland for a general audience, and so he lets Gladstone know that 'It is for "Copyright" and the "Speech at Eton" that I venture to trouble you with this volume'.¹¹¹ Arnold hoped to impact policy initially, but now he also endeavoured to do so via the polity with this collection.

He opens 'The Incompatibles' with an appeal to the widespread public interest in Irish politics, observing that 'even the most insignificant Englishman, and the least connected with Ireland and things Irish, has a deep concern, surely, in the present temper and action of the Irish people towards England, and must be impelled to seek for the real explanation of them'.¹¹² Arnold felt compelled to explain the present state of Ireland, and thus he proceeds from the 'real

¹¹⁰ Collini, p. 91.

¹¹¹ *Letters*, V, p. 199.

¹¹² Arnold, 'The Incompatibles', p. 238.

explanation' of differences between English and Irish cultures as well as the persistent suffering of the Irish themselves as the sources of political problems, echoing the conclusion drawn in his lectures on Celtic literature. Unlike 'Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall', Arnold observes, 'the island quite near to us, and which we have governed since the twelfth century' has never 'really blended in national feeling with us'.¹¹³ 'I say', he continues after sampling some passages on Ireland from Spenser, Swift, and Colonel Gordon, 'where there is this misery going on for centuries after a conquest, acquiescence in the conquest cannot take place'. For the subsequent publication of this article in his *Irish Essays*, however, Arnold would appropriate Shakespeare ahead of these sources of received wisdom on Ireland to describe the difficulty of trying to make it 'become quiet and healthy'.

'In order to attach Ireland to us solidly', Arnold begins, 'English people have not only to *do* something different from what they have done hitherto, but also to *be* something different from what they have been hitherto'. He states in deceptively plain language the controversial position that the 'normal mental condition' of the 'non-thinking' English must become more, not less, like that of the Irish themselves. But Arnold makes little of the distinctions between rural and urban, Catholic and Protestant, the lower and middleclass populations in Ireland, just as surely as he lumps the English together without recourse to his infamous distinctions between 'barbarians', 'philistines', and 'populace' from *Culture and Anarchy*. In this essay, at least, the English dwell without 'sweetness and light' together: 'As a whole, as a community, they have to acquire a larger and sweeter temper, a larger and more lucid mind. And this is indeed no light task, yet it is the capital task now appointed to us, and our safety depends on our accomplishing it: to *be* something different, much more, even, than to *do* something different'.¹¹⁴ The doing implied here, which Arnold glosses as a failure at '*healing*' Ireland, is the 'Irish Land Act'. Even if 'the Irish tenants profit by it', he wonders, what 'will be their gratitude to the Government?' The fair rents that the Land Courts would try to establish, he feared, Irish tenants simply could not

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 241.

¹¹⁴ Matthew Arnold, 'Preface to *Irish Essays*', in *English Literature and Irish Politics, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, 312-7 (p. 312).

appreciate as an attempt by Westminster to deliver some measure of justice after years of doing quite the opposite. Rather, he argues that ‘we shall get little or no gratitude for it’. Arnold does not disagree with a negative reaction on the part of Irish tenants as such. He felt sure that he understood the grounds for Irish grievances against the English from reading Burke. Indeed, he also understood that his English audience would not likely appreciate that it means the Government ‘shall be said to have done it [lowered rents for Irish tenants] without intending it. Our measure is not likely, therefore, of itself to avail to win the affections of the Irish people to us and to heal their estrangement’.¹¹⁵ The likelihood of misunderstanding seemed insurmountable to Arnold.

Trying to communicate just how unlikely Irish tenants would be to appreciate the Government’s overtures, Arnold ushers Shakespeare back onto the page:

May not a people be in such a state that Shakespeare’s words
hold true of it—

[CAIUS MARTIUS] “Your affections are
A sick man’s appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil?” [*Coriolanus*, 1.1.159-61]

And may not it be affirmed, that if ever those words seemed true of
any people, they seem true of the Irish at this hour?¹¹⁶

With these lines from the opening scene of the play, Arnold muddles his meaning by Shakespeare. *Coriolanus* certainly confronted Arnold’s contemporaries with the ‘multitudinous’, the rabble, the teeming masses of the working classes. After all, the play opens with a group of angry and, more importantly, armed Roman citizens entering a public place, ‘all resolved rather to die than to famish’ (1.1.3). But by sending Shakespeare out to stir up such conventional fears of the mob, Arnold seeks to save his readers the trouble of confronting a real rabble of Irish tenants hardened by the recent Land Wars, dissatisfied by the Land Acts that he derides in this piece, and so come for freedom from their real landlord, the imperial parliament at Westminster. More importantly, though, Arnold also cautions his readers that the Irish cannot ‘at this hour’ form healthy affiliations—

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

the inflection that his appropriation gives Shakespeare's 'affections'—that would otherwise serve the best interests of all parties. Where once they supported the Fenians, the Irish now support the Land League at their peril in Arnold's mind. He conjures up an image of Ireland as a brainsick state, punctuating his point about the unlikelihood of Irish tenants appreciating the Government's most recent effort at conciliation. But this move introduces its own problems to his argument. Arnold raises the spectre of famine alongside the recent coercion acts, policies passed by the patricians in parliament in the name of *Pax Britannia*. 'If they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome', Shakespeare's First Citizen reminds all assembled, 'we might guess they relieved us humanely: but they think we are too dear: the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance: our sufferance is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes' (1.1.11-5). The entrance of Caius Martius, 'chief enemy to the people' (1.1.5), does not calm the anger of the hungry citizens. Only war stops the rioting in Rome, and thus the difficulty of appropriating *Coriolanus* against the backdrop of Irish history gets the better of Arnold. Little wonder, then, that he ends by appealing to a rather different commonplace: Ireland as the emerald isle of saints and sages, a place of perpetual 'sweetness and light'.

The Irish as Catholic Celts remained for Arnold quite incapable of governing themselves but, as such, still offered an antidote to 'the so-called practical people and men of the world' who have yet to provide a solution to the Irish problem. 'In the present collapse of their wisdom', he argues, 'we ought to find it less hard to rate their stock ideas and stock phrases, their claptrap and their catchwords, at their proper value, and to cast in our lot boldly with the sages and with the saints'.¹¹⁷ As Deane concludes of Arnold's final appeal, 'ideas of continuity and betrayal persist, but they have become associated with the experience of sectarian division in such a way that continuity has become the preserve of the Catholic Celts and betrayal the role of the Protestant garrison'.¹¹⁸ Arnold had not altogether abandoned his belief in a role for Celtic literature in forming a more perfect Anglo-Celtic political union. As he wrote to his brother

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹¹⁸ Deane, p. 27.

Thomas on 26 February 1885, 'I do most strongly think that the Catholics ought to have one of the Dublin cathedrals, and I hope they will some day have it':

It is only sentiment which makes for leaving one to the Anglicans, but perhaps it would be felt that a church which had once had so great a position ought to be treated tenderly. Of course if the Imperial Parliament tried to do a thing of this kind there would be endless opposition and delay.¹¹⁹

But Arnold also understood the role that the fear of betrayal played in Anglo-Irish politics, and thus he felt quite certain that the situation in Ireland would not change until the English themselves did.

He opposed Gladstone's scheme for Home Rule, believing the Irish unfit for the far greater legislative freedoms that it would afford them. Moreover, he believed such a measure would lead to further unrest and agrarian violence. Arnold wrote on this subject in an open letter to the editor of *The Times* on 22 May 1886, just before embarking on a speaking tour of the United States. 'A separate Parliament for Ireland is Mr. Gladstone's irreducible *minimum*', he observes. 'Ireland is a nation, says Mr. Parnell, menacingly, Mr. Stansfeld [Gladstone's president of the Local Government Board] gushingly; a nation should have its national Parliament'. As Arnold continues his attack, he argues that:

Ireland has been a nation, a most unhappy one. Wales too, and Scotland, have been nations. But politically they are now nations no longer, any one of them. This country could not have risen to its present greatness if they had been. Give them separate Parliaments, and you begin, no doubt, to make them again nations politically. But you begin also to undo what has made this country great.

Do not let us be preposterously alarmist. Perhaps, if it suits Mr. Gladstone's purposes, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland may all of them, to Mr. Stansfeld's delight, become politically nations once again, and yet this country, such is its force, may still, by new and untried ways, continue great. But it will be a plunge into the unknown, not a thing to be risked without absolute necessity.

¹¹⁹ Arnold, *Letters*, VI, p. 15.

But Arnold's scathing public indictment of Home Rule did not end with its supporters in parliament, as he focuses in his conclusion on its political advocates amongst the English people with a long view of Ireland's contested history. 'The passionate supporters of Mr. Gladstone in his operations are the political Dissenters and the Radical workmen in the great towns', he rails:

I agree with Mr. Labouchere that aristocracies are not in general the best of guides in politics. But I have too much respect for his undoubted lucidity to believe him capable of really thinking the political Dissenters and the Radical working men to be on a question like that of Ireland any better guides, or even so good. They know little and prize little beyond the one their dissent, the other their union for trade politics. In the past they would have supported Cromwell's dealings with Ireland, or William the Third's, as they applaud Mr. Gladstone's now. It is on the country as as [*sic*] whole, and on the mind of the country, that we must rely.¹²⁰

The people whom Arnold berated for their fickle ways—much as Coriolanus might have done in the same position—did not return the Liberals to power after the defeat of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. Arnold wrote to the Irish Catholic poet and Wordsworth scholar Aubrey Thomas de Vere from the family getaway at Fox How, Ambleside, in the Lake District on 25 September 1886, letting him know that 'I have read the enclosed [article], and agree with a great deal of it. I have less hope for "the educated and independent classes" in Ireland than you have, but I should be glad to see the more solvent half of them retained, as you propose, and another chance given to them. As to "the strong and steady hand" I agree with you entirely; but the real question is, how is society in Ireland to be re-organised; for it has now come to that'.¹²¹

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-2.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

2. EDWARD DOWDEN

MACMORRIS What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal. What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?

—*Henry V*, 3.2.90-1

With Shakespeare's time we may date the true beginning of English greatness; the religious energy of the people, the art and knowledge peculiar to the genius of the nation, and the commencement of the future political and maritime power of England, lie like a bud of rich promise within the period of Elizabeth's reign.

—Georg Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries* (1852)¹

FRIEDA I'm not that kind of Irish.

—Anne Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* (1986)²

MIND AND ART

The Anglo-Irish poet and first chair of English literature at Trinity College, Dublin, Edward Dowden, did not hear the 'Celtic note' in Shakespeare that Arnold had in his lectures on Celtic literature. Instead, Dowden argued after the German literary and political historian Georg Gervinus that Shakespeare came to embody the scientific materialism and spiritual pragmatism taking shape in Elizabethan England by writing plays that pushed his inborn idealism to the periphery. Gervinus had Shakespeare pegged as an early advocate of Anglo-Saxon notions about free trade and family values:

We must read in Richard II. with what earnestness he insists upon the sacredness of property, and in Troilus and Othello with what rigour he maintains the strict observance of family, in order that we may understand how infinite is the gap which separates Shakespeare from the political free-thinkers of the present day. [...] whither the equalisation and prosperity of communism would lead he has made most plain in Cade's revolution.³

¹ Georg Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, trans. by F. E. Bunnètt 5th edn (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1892), p. 8.

² Anne Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 89.

³ Gervinus, pp. 924-5.

Published in an English edition in 1863 and then a revised translation in 1875, Gervinus's *Shakespeare Commentaries* brought his own reading of the contemporary moment to bear on the Shakespearean text in a manner that matched Dowden's own spin on Elizabethan England. 'Shakspeare was for all time by virtue of certain powers and perceptions', Dowden argues in *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875), 'but he also belonged especially to an age, his own age, the age of Spenser, Raleigh, Jonson, Bacon, Burleigh, Hooker,—a Protestant age, a monarchical age, an age eminently positive and practical'.⁴ Despite the conversion to Catholicism of Shakespeare's friend and rival Ben Jonson while imprisoned in 1598 and the execution of courtier and explorer Sir Walter Raleigh after a show trial in 1616, Dowden concluded as an Anglo-Irish complement to Gervinus that, in reading the 'consistent whole' of the Shakespearean text, the Anglo-Saxon commercial and moral sensibilities taking shape in early modern England were represented by Shakespeare's own 'stern fidelity to fact'.⁵

Like Arnold, Dowden delivered his pronouncements on Shakespeare before an audience of both scholars and students. As he points out in the 'Preface' to *Mind and Art*, 'About half of this volume was read in the form of lectures ("Saturday Lectures in connection with Alexandra College, Dublin"), in the Museum Buildings, Trinity College, Dublin, during the spring of the year, 1874'.⁶ Dowden sought in his lectures what he found in *Mind and Art*: evidence to show that Shakespeare overcame the follies of 'love which has known no sorrow, no change, no wrong' to become the 'prudent and sober Shakespeare' of his late plays.⁷ He did not think the task that he had set himself an easy one, however:

It is when we strive to come into contact of the mind of the creator, that the sense of struggle & effort is relieved. We are no longer surrounded by a world of mere thoughts & imaginations which we labour to appropriate & possess in our almost selfish way.

If to lay hold of Michael Angelo, & strive with him to be the most strenuous feat achievable by the critical imagination in the world of

⁴ Edward Dowden, *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Henry S. King, 1875), p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

plastic art, to breath with Shakspere requires yet more endurance & a finer cunning. But Shakspere, if ideal, was also above all a realist in art, & lurks almost impregnably behind his facts. Moreover he possessed that most baffling self-defence, humour. Just when we have laid hold of him he eludes us, & we hear only distant ironical laughter – “Yes, you have caught Hamlet (or you think you have), but here am I away from you, alert & free – you have grappled Falstaff around the waist – did you suppose that tub of flesh was I? You have crossed rapiers with Mercutio, & I, Shakspere, was standing by, jesting at both your houses”.⁸

Despite his joking about the difficulty of pinning Shakespeare down here, Dowden did think he had an angle: he would ‘breath with Shakspere’ by situating his plays within a broad sweep of the age during which he had flourished. This move meant that Dowden could break Shakespeare’s career down into periods of artistic growth and spiritual development, appropriating Shakespeare in this way as a figure representative of an English literary culture rooted in ‘fact’ ever since the Renaissance. His reading of Shakespeare retains this teleological thrust through its many permutations in several critical and introductory works.⁹ But Dowden also sought after what he called ‘the personality of the writer’, and thus he resisted reading Shakespeare’s plays and poetry as merely a means to fix on the historical identity of their author. Rather, ‘Shakespeare’ serves as a signifier in Dowden’s account of the steady stages of artistic and spiritual development in which he sets his own reading of the Shakespearean text over and against an imperialistic reading of early modern English history. ‘Shakespeare’ in this way appears coterminous with the plays themselves, but Shakespeare does not. This Shakespeare had, as Dowden feared, eluded him in the end.

Dowden put his role in this arrangement succinctly with his *Introduction to Shakespeare* (1889):

⁸ TCD MS 3136/3, pp. 3-4

⁹ Dowden’s output of Shakespeare scholarship still seems prodigious, spanning the entirety of his forty-six year career. In addition to *Mind and Art* (1875), Dowden’s iterations of his thesis include his literary primer *Shakspere* (1877), his edition of Shakespeare’s sonnets (1881), *Introduction to Shakespeare* (1889), *New Studies in Literature* (1895), *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (1910) as well as his general introduction to *The Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Henry Irving and Frank A. Marshall in eight volumes (1888-90), and his own editorial work on the first Arden editions of *Hamlet* (1899), *Romeo and Juliet* (1900), and *Cymbeline* (1903).

Various attempts have been made by Shakespeare scholars to distinguish the successive stages in the development of his genius, and to classify his plays in a series of chronological groups. The latest attempt is that of a learned French Orientalist, who is also a well-informed student of English literature, M. James Darmesteter. It is substantially identical with what I had myself proposed, a division of the total twenty or twenty-five years of Shakespeare's authorship into four periods of unequal length, to which I had given names intended to lay hold of the student's memory, names which, without being fanciful, should be striking and easy to bear in mind. The earliest period I called "In the Workshop," meaning by this the term of apprenticeship and tentative effort. The years which immediately followed, during which Shakespeare, though a master of his art, dwelt on the broad surface of human life, years represented by the best English histories and some of the brightest comedies, I named "In the World." To indicate the third period, that of the serious, dark, or bitter comedies, and those great tragedies in which the poet makes his searching inquisition into evil, the title "Out of the Depths" served sufficiently well. Finally, for the closing period, when the romantic comedies, at once grave and glad—*Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*—were written, I chose to name "On the Heights," signifying thereby that in these exquisite plays Shakespeare had attained an altitude from which he saw human life in a clear and solemn vision, looking down through a pellucid atmosphere upon human joys and sorrows with certain aloofness or disengagement, yet at the same time with a tender and pathetic interest. [...] the reader should be on his guard against the notion that at any time either what we now term "pessimism" or what we term "optimism" formed the creed, or any portion of the creed, of Shakespeare.¹⁰

Dowden cared rather little about the precision of his classification of the four periods of Shakespeare's artistic development. *The Tempest* felt thematically like a fitting conclusion to the trajectory of Shakespeare's career, and so it serves as

¹⁰ Dowden, *Introduction to Shakespeare* (New York: Scribner, 1905), pp. 52-3.

such for Dowden. As he observes in his eighth Shakespeare lecture, 'Shakspeare's Latest Period':

The succession of Shakspeare's epochs of spiritual alteration & development. Whether Macbeth preceded Othello, or Othello, Macbeth need not greatly concern us; both plays belong, & they belong in an equal degree to one & the same period in the history of Shakspeare's mind & art., to which period we can unequivocally assign its place.¹¹

Dowden points up his process of appropriating Shakespeare for a steady instead of a heady development here, echoing Carlyle's paean to Shakespeare the 'Stratford Peasant' now worth more to Britain's sense of national identity than its Indian colony.¹² On the one hand, Dowden has to assert that Shakespeare managed a kind of mastery of dialectical progression between his inborn idealism and the materialism of his age to make the case for 'his stern fidelity to fact' stick, playing Shakespeare's practical concerns off against the spiritual ones of his art. On the other hand, it feels false, too pat, and too easy for Dowden. Of course, he could not have organised Shakespeare's career as a triumphant progression from Stratford to London and back as a personal and professional triumph had he lacked the comparative methodology of the English literary scholar F. G. Fleay. As Dowden observes in *Mind and Art*, 'In some instances I have referred to, and quoted from papers by the Rev. F. G. Fleay as read at meetings of "The New Shakspeare Society," but which have not received the final corrections of their author'.¹³ Dowden observes in the first line of *Mind and Art* that, far from an act of reckless scholarship, this imposition of form on Shakespeare's career 'distinguishes the work from the greater number of preceding criticisms of Shakspeare'. He would reaffirm with his collection *Studies in Literature* (1878) that he believed great authors to reflect the highest ideals of the period that produced them. In his essay 'The Scientific Movement and Literature', Dowden delineates his methodology as explicitly Darwinian.¹⁴ And

¹¹ TCD MS 3136/3, p. 2.

¹² See above, pp. 35-7.

¹³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. viii.

¹⁴ Dowden, 'The Scientific Movement and Literature', in *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (London: Kegan Paul, 1878), pp. 85-121.

Dowden did indeed think that Elizabeth's England encouraged, like Victoria's Britain, a productive commercial as well as spiritual relationship with the 'fact', creating a robust species of person suited to the competitive environment of mercantile and, later, industrial forms of capitalism. He left little room for those upstarts who wrote against the grain of history and would even fit Shelley into the prevailing order of the day.

As Franklin Court has argued in his study *Institutionalizing English Literature*, Dowden ranks alongside Arnold amongst 'a corps of professors [...] who established the main theoretical framework that shaped English literary study' and pressed those at home on 'arguments for racial and cultural hierarchy' within the British Empire during the nineteenth century. 'In spite of different academic concentrations', Court concludes, 'all these professors shared one dominant and important characteristic, the belief that racial history, social evolution, and the inherent nobility of the English *spirit* provide the philosophical grounding for the primacy of English literary study'.¹⁵ Furthermore, writing two decades before Hugh Grady's study *The Modernist Shakespeare* situated early twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism as, in part, a product of the late nineteenth-century professionalism in which both Arnold and Dowden played a part in forming, Aron Stavisky placed Dowden at the centre of his study *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, observing that, 'As we might expect, Dowden opts for real and not abstract knowledge. [...] Dowden's critical bent was either influenced by or was itself a part of the attempted late Victorian identification with some great individual of which [the American historian of Victorian literature] Walter Houghton spoke'.¹⁶ But both Court and Stavisky fail to take *where* into their thorough consideration of *when* Dowden lived as an influence on his approach to English literature and appropriation of the Shakespearean text to the end of its propagation in Ireland.

For Arnold in London, literary study meant bringing 'sweetness and light' to the benighted English 'philistines', challenging conventional conceptions of Britain's Anglo-Saxon identity with contemporary Continental thinking and a few

¹⁵ Franklin E. Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study, 1750–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 136–7. My italics.

¹⁶ Aron Y. Stavisky, *Shakespeare and the Victorians: Roots of Modern Criticism* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 69.

uncomfortable observations about Britain's Celtic cultures in the process, and yet fixing Shakespeare to a stronger position atop the hierarchy of 'the best that has been thought and said in the world'. 'Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it', he observes of 'high seriousness' in his essay on 'The Study of Poetry'. 'It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed'.¹⁷ For Dowden in Dublin, though, pushing this project forward also meant lauding English literary culture over an insurgent Irish one and appropriating the Shakespearean text as his chief example of the former's 'high seriousness', its 'stern fidelity to fact'. As he observes of Richard II's desperate claim to 'keep a league till death' with Bolingbroke (*Richard II*, 5.1.22):

Henry does not personify Necessity, and greet it with this romantic display of fraternity; but he admits the inevitable fact, and the fact is something to lay hold of firmly, a support and resting place,— something which reanimates him for exertion.

Are these things then necessities?

Then let us meet them like necessities;

And that same word even now cries out on us:

They say the Bishop and Northumberland

Are fifty thousand strong. [*2 Henry IV*, 3.2.89-93]

His faculties are firm-set and re-organised and go to work once more.¹⁸

But in this context Arnold's own assessment of 'fact' serves as a caveat to *Mind and Art*: 'Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact'.¹⁹ Differences of location

¹⁷ Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry', in *English Literature and Irish Politics, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), XI, pp. 161-88 (p. 177).

¹⁸ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 209.

¹⁹ Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry', p. 161.

prove central to understanding these differences of opinion over the appropriate way to appropriate Shakespeare.

If the Englishman possesses an overabundance of ‘facts’ in Arnold’s accounting, then precisely the Irishman’s apparent lack of them guarantees the importance of ‘fact’ in Dowden’s estimation. As Philip Edwards has remarked of Dowden’s emphatic insistence on Shakespeare’s materialism and pragmatism, ‘It is amazing how the word “fact” dominates Dowden’s book on Shakespeare’.²⁰ Dowden uses ‘the fact’ and ‘facts’ largely to signify that Shakespeare stuck to the evidence provided by lived experiences, insofar as these can authenticate reality against doubts induced by dream, imagination, and hope.²¹ Yet Edwards cautions that ‘Dowden’s insistence on this concerning a man who wrote such works as *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, may strike us as insane. But for Dowden, insanity is defined as the sort of “protest against fact” which you find in Shakespeare’s contemporaries, Marlowe and Greene—and they died young’.²² Moreover, at least since Arnold rearticulated the stereotype in his lectures on Celtic literature, to ‘protest against the despotism fact’ seemed a decidedly Irish activity in aesthetics as well as politics. It comes as little surprise, then, that rising alongside empiricism and Protestantism during Shakespeare’s lifetime, England’s imperial ambitions feature for Dowden as the necessary outcome of the drive to extend ‘the dominion of civilised man, [while] others were no less eagerly engaged in endeavouring to extend, by means of scientific discovery, the dominion of man over all forces and provinces of nature’.²³ In this way, Dowden consolidates the diverse artistic, scientific, religious, and imperial ambitions of the great Elizabethans—with Shakespeare chief amongst them—around an overweening effort to expand the authority of ‘fact’ in literary criticism.

He found confirmed in his reading of the Shakespearean text, then, that Catholicism belonged to a more primitive point along this long march forward. Protestantism, in Dowden’s opinion, provided the confessional model properly

²⁰ Edwards, ‘Shakespeare and the Politics of the Irish Revival’, p. 54.

²¹ Dowden participates in the Victorian discourse on the authority and efficacy of ‘facts’ in poetry, a question that had, since Keats, largely concerned the priority of consciousness over the world.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

²³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 12.

suiting to the 'modern spirit'. But he concedes, 'It has been asked whether Shakespeare was a Protestant or a Catholic, and he has been proved to belong to each communion to the satisfaction of contending theological zealots'.²⁴ The great Anglo-Irish editor of Shakespeare, Edmond Malone, captured this contentious debate and the dubious documents upon which it centred in *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (1796). Along with his 1790 edition of Shakespeare, Malone had published the 'Spiritual Last Will and Testament of John Shakespeare'. It declared, in short, that Shakespeare's father died a Catholic.²⁵ According to the account of Stratford historian John Jordan, the master bricklayer Joseph Moseley found it between the rafters at the western end of the Shakespeares' house in Henley Street when doing some tiling work there in 1757. But the original document, missing the first page, did not reach Malone until 1789. He eventually came to doubt its authenticity, remarking seven years later that 'it could not have been the composition of any one of our poet's family'.²⁶ As Robert Bearman has recently observed, 'Malone's retraction and the earlier pronouncement of forgery by the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and Joseph Greene were enough to discredit the document for over a hundred years'.²⁷ The debate about Shakespeare's faith would instead turn with increased scrutiny to his works and experience a revival of sorts in the middle of the nineteenth century with the translation into English of Hermann Ulrici's study *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art* (1846, third edition 1880), which Dowden cites himself.²⁸ And Bishop Charles Wordsworth's *Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible* (1864), for example, defends material removed by the Bowdlers in *The Family Shakespeare* (1807, fifth edition 1827), particularly the speech of the clown, Lavatch, about 'the broad gate and the great fire' in *All's Well that Ends Well* (4.5.38) and the porter's speech about 'the primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire' in *Macbeth* (2.3.1-15). He then concludes his study with a bit of Victorian fault finding by observing that

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁵ Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 80.

²⁶ Edmond Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (London: Thomas Cadell, 1796), pp. 199.

²⁷ Robert Bearman, 'John Shakespeare's "Spiritual Testament": A Reappraisal', *Shakespeare Survey* 56 (2003), 184-202 (p. 188).

²⁸ See Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 263, p. 381, p. 382.

an excess of passion—whether the jealousy of Othello or the ambition of Macbeth—brings about the fall of great men, appropriating Shakespeare in this way as a playwright surpassing all others for his ability to stick faithfully to this broadly Christian teaching. But J. B. Selkirk's *Bible Truths with Shakespearian Parallels* (1872) does the bishop one better by comparing Shakespeare to the Bible on over one hundred subjects. Bettering both of these studies, Ulrici demonstrates that Shakespeare translates 'the idealistic art' of the Middle Ages into the objective terms of the contemporary moment, and thus Shakespeare had fast become a Victorian moral philosopher at the expense of his Romantic status as a wild and idealistic genius. And yet, such studies of Shakespeare as a broadly Christian poet had a specifically Catholic counterpart in the work of the liberal, English writer Richard Simpson.

Simpson had already published a number of articles on recusant history in *The Rambler*, a monthly magazine for Catholic converts, before he turned to Shakespeare. His work for *The Rambler* helped him put together his most significant study, *Edmund Campion: a Biography* (1867), which served for nearly a century as the standard work on the Jesuit martyr. Simpson's focus on the early modern period in this way acquainted him with Shakespeare scholarship in general. His most original study of Shakespeare, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1868), represents material first written up for *The Chronicle*, another Catholic periodical. In his *Introduction*, Simpson puts forward an analysis of what he calls 'The Shakespearian Love Philosophy' and concludes that Shakespeare was indeed a Catholic.²⁹ Then in 1872, Simpson published the first in a series of Elizabethan dramas in which he believed Shakespeare had a hand. After his death in 1876, the entire series appeared in two volumes as *The School of Shakespeare* (1878) and included the anonymous play *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley*, which resembles George Peele's play *The Battle of Alcazar* in plot as it follows the infamous English courtier and mercenary on his adventures in Ireland and on the Continent until his death in Morocco while serving in the army of King

²⁹ Robert Simpson, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Trübner, 1868). A. C. Bradley, in his study *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1908), commends Simpson's *Introduction* for showing English readers unfamiliar with Plato 'how easy it was in Shakespeare's mind to move in a world of "Platonic" ideas' (p. 264-5).

Sebastian of Portugal in 1578.³⁰ Simpson's scholarship earned him election to the New Shakspeare Society in 1874, its founding year. At the end of the century, Henry S. Bowden took Simpson's ideas even further in his own study *The Religion of Shakespeare* (1899). His zeal for Simpson's liberal Catholic ideals led him to find, for example, sympathy in Shakespeare's portrayal of Cardinal Pandulph in *King John*. Even though Dowden's own reading of Shakespeare's faith in *Mind and Art* appears conversant with the renewed interest in the Catholic question that his fellow member in the New Shakspeare Society had engaged, he responds directly to a turn taken by an amateur Shakespearean away from religion altogether.

In 1848, the English atheist William John Birch published his essay entitled 'An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare'. An editor of the *Oracle of Reason*—an atheistic weekly founded in 1841 by the social missionary Charles Southwell—Birch concluded that Shakespeare was himself an atheist. Dowden bemoans Birch's inductive method of 'bringing together little sentences from the utterances of this one of his *dramatis personae*' to suggest something so radical. 'The faith by which Shakspeare lived', Dowden rejoins, 'is rather to be discovered by noting the total issue and resultant of his art towards the fostering and sustenance of a certain type of human character'.³¹ By this deductive method, Dowden drew his own conclusion about Shakespeare's faith. But he also liked to latch onto catchphrases from Shakespeare's plays just as surely as Birch and did so while reiterating his point about Shakespeare's Protestant credentials in a lecture on religion in *King John* delivered at Trinity a decade after *Mind and Art* first appeared in print.

In celebration of the 'great festival in the Calendar of English Literature, for it was on April 23 that Shakespeare was born', Dowden declares:

A monarchy supported by the nobles, peers & people united, a
National Church free from foreign influence, the loyalty of all

³⁰ Simpson, *The School of Shakspeare: Edited, with Introductions and Notes, and an Account of Robert Greene, his Prose Works, and his Quarrels with Shakspeare by Robert Simpson* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1878). The first volume contains *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley and Nobody and Somebody*. The second volume contains *Histrion-Mastix, The Prodigal Son, Jack Drum's Entertainment, A Warning for Faire Women, and Faire Em, the Miller's Daughter of Manchester*.

³¹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 38.

Englishmen to England – this was the ideal of the old writer [of *The Troublesome Reign of King John*] – And Shakespeare’s was essentially the same:

‘This England never did, & never shall’ [5.7.116]

Philip Faulconbridge at last speaks wholly from the heart, & through him the genius of England utters itself.³²

Here Dowden amps back up the toning down done in Shakespeare’s *King John* of the anti-Catholic rhetoric that features in many speeches of *The Troublesome Reign*. ‘Though Shakespeare generally follows his predecessor’, Richard Helgerson has recently observed of Shakespeare’s relationship with the ‘elect nation’ plays of his contemporaries, ‘scene by scene and often speech by speech, he cuts away almost all the most virulently anti-Catholic rhetoric’.³³ Perhaps more to the point, Dowden puts Shakespeare out in front of St. George by appropriating the Church’s calendar of feast days: the ‘great festival in the Calendar of English Literature, for it was on April 23 that Shakespeare was born’. But in this way Dowden also makes explicit his metaphor of national unity between ‘nobles, peers & people’. After all, national unity had only appeared as an implicit concern of the Shakespeare behind *King John* in *Mind and Art*. ‘Sensible that he is a king with no inward strength of justice or of virtue, John endeavours to buttress up his power with external supports’, Dowden had observed, ‘against the advice of his nobles he [King John] celebrates a second coronation, only forthwith to remove the crown from his head and place it in the hands of an Italian priest’.³⁴ Since publishing *Mind and Art*, though, the political climate had profoundly changed around Dowden. In March 1880, for example, Dowden could still dismissively remark in a letter to the English writer Sir Edmund Gosse that ‘I love that well-thwacked ass, the people, when he [Parnell] doesn’t bray too loud or kick out too savagely’.³⁵ In the 1885 General Election, however, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party had returned enough MPs

³² TCD MS 3136/2, p. 27.

³³ Richard Helgerson, ‘Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists of History’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works: The Histories*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, 4 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 26-47 (p. 30).

³⁴ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 171.

³⁵ *Letters of Edward Dowden and his Correspondents*, ed. by Elizabeth D. and Hilda M. Dowden (London: Dent, 1914), p. 154.

to form a coalition that gave Gladstone's Liberals control of the House of Commons. The following February, Gladstone replaced the Conservative leader Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister and started to draft the Government of Ireland Bill thanks, in no small part, to Parnell himself. With Gladstone pressing the debate over Home Rule closer to its first parliamentary vote, the presence of Pope Innocent III's representative, Cardinal Pandulph, at the English court, typifying the compromised rule of King John, now recommended the Bastard's speech as a rallying cry for a unionist like Dowden.

As Dowden observes in his initial lecture of the original political context for *King John's* London audiences, 'We can imagine the applause of spectators to whom the Spanish armada was a recent memory, at the edge of England, assigned not by an enthusiastic patriot but to an Enemy'.³⁶ Yet Dowden paints a far rosier picture of England's achievement here than contemporary pamphlets indicate. For example, as the English draper and poet Roger Cotton cautioned in 1596 with *An Armor of Prooffe, brought from the Tower of David, to fight against Spannyardes, and all enemies of the trueth*:

His sworde thou knowest, he threatened fore to draw,
 In eightie eight; but he did thee spare:
 yet since that time, in thee great sinnes he saw:
 wherefore for thee great plagues he did prepare.
 The Pestilence through out thy coastes hath bin,
 and now with sworde, to threat he doth begin.³⁷

Not only did England narrowly escape Spanish invasion in 1588, 'the defeat of the Armada did not change the balance of sea power in Europe. Within a decade Philip had rebuilt his fleet and he was able to launch three future armadas against England in 1596, 1597 and 1599, all of which were menacing since Ireland was then in rebellion'.³⁸ For Dowden, pressing Shakespeare's Protestant credentials appealed as much on imperial as theological grounds. It matters rather little to Dowden in his account of *King John's* initial impact on London audiences whether or not England achieved naval prowess over Spain in 1588.

³⁶ TCD MS 3136/2, p. 14.

³⁷ Roger Cotton, *An Armor of Prooffe, Brought from the Tower of David, to Fight against Spannyardes, and all Enemies of the Trueth* (London, 1596), sig. B4^r, S. T. C.: 5865.

³⁸ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 55.

Instead, he emphasises that England secured its right to defend Protestantism with victory against the Armada and, by extension, to protect Protestants elsewhere in its dominion, including those living in Ireland. The Battle of Kinsale, fought in 1601 as part of the Nine Years' War by England with the aid of its Irish allies against the Ulster chiefs with Spain on their side, looms silently in the background of Dowden's discussion. He polices the boundaries of the Shakespearean text in this way, attempting to put the Catholic question in connection with Shakespeare's religion and politics beyond doubt. 'Catholicism had endeavoured to sanctify things secular by virtue proceeding towards them from special ecclesiastical persons, places and acts', he observes in *Mind and Art*. 'The modern spirit, of which Protestantism is a part, revealed in the total life of men a deeper and truer sanctity than can be conferred by the wand of ecclesiastical magic'.³⁹ And yet, Dowden claims that he would not dare read into any of Shakespeare's plays a preference for one faith over another, only that:

Shakspeare abstains from embodying theological dogma in his art, and tolerant as his spirit is, it is certain that the spirit of Protestantism,— of Protestantism considered as portion of a great movement of humanity,—animates and breathes through his writings. Unless he had stood in antagonism to his time, it could not be otherwise. Shakspeare's creed is not a series of abstract statements of truth, but a body of concrete impulses, tendencies, and habits. [...] It may be asserted, without hesitation, that the Protestant type of character, and the Protestant polity in state and nation, is that which has received impulse and vigour from the mind of the greatest of English poets.⁴⁰

Here Dowden oversteps yet another of the politically circumspect conclusions he had drawn about Shakespeare's faith in the lectures that formed the backbone of *Mind and Art*.

'Slightly before Shakspeare's time England has gone thro[ugh] the terrible persecution of Catholics & Protestants, the executions for the sake of faith, the destruction of old opinions, the elevation of new', Dowden had observed before his audience at Alexandra College, 'all round him prevailed the enmity of a

³⁹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

sectarian spirit – & no doubt in Shakspere’s day as in Defoe’s “a thousand stout fellows could be got to risk their lives against the Pope – without knowing whether the Pope was a man or a horse”⁴¹ Dowden understood, then, that Shakespeare’s work as a dramatist legislated against adopting a ‘dogmatic faith & opinions, for in action the religious & the divine in man became identical with the moral’.⁴² For publication, however, Dowden reasoned that the little known about Shakespeare’s biography—his humble birth, marriage to Anne Hathaway, various property acquisitions—testified to his Protestant work ethic, exhibiting those qualities of ‘energy, devotion to the fact, self-government’ that he also considered important.⁴³ The question of how to situate Shakespeare’s struggle with personal challenges had come to shape his lectures into *Mind and Art*.

‘My Shakespeare theory’, Dowden wrote in January 1874:

is not quite what it was in the spring of ’73, when I wrote the lectures you read. *Then* I thought he [Shakespeare] repressed his metaphysical mood and his passionate mood. *Now*, I think he adjusted the two so that neither suffered. He had his outer sphere of metaphysics and self-abandonment and *that was his truest self*; but he had his inner sphere of practicality and self-restraint.⁴⁴

As his biographer Kathryn Ludwigson has pointed out, the essay entitled ‘Shakespeare and Goethe’ (1856) by the Scottish academic and editor David Masson pushed Dowden through this impasse.⁴⁵ After reading Masson’s work, Dowden understood that the Shakespearean text straddled the finite and infinite, the real and the ideal, the material and the spiritual world. Masson saw in Shakespeare the uneasy marriage of what Dowden later called his ‘concreteness as a poet’ to ‘such stuff / As dreams are made on’ (*The Tempest*, 4.1.169-70). Shakespeare’s abundant and faithful attendance to the mundane in exquisite detail ever at the expense of metaphysical speculation in verse had, until reading Masson, left Dowden feeling ‘a sense of repression’ at Shakespeare’s hands

⁴¹ TCD MS 3136/13, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Dowden, *Fragments from Old Letters: E.D. to E.D.W., 1869-1892*, 2 vols (London: Dent, 1914), I, p. 83.

⁴⁵ Kathryn R. Ludwigson, *Edward Dowden* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 112-3.

'which was painful' as a Romantic.⁴⁶ But reading Masson had shown Dowden, then, that Shakespeare could also 'stimulate, urge, or impel, more than he represses'. As Masson wrote of Shakespearean metaphysics:

Because Shakespeare was such a votary of the concrete, because he walked firmly on the green and solid sward of that island of life which he knew to be surrounded by a metaphysical sea, this or that metaphysical proposal with respect to the island itself occupied him but little [...] man must needs know what the island contains, and act as those who have to till and rule it; still, with that expanse of waters all round in view, and that roar of waters ever in the ear, what can men call themselves or pretend their realm to be?⁴⁷

Now Dowden could feel his confidence return, and thus he pronounces of Shakespeare that:

He does not, indeed, come forward with explanations of the mysteries of existence; perhaps because he felt more than other men their mysteriousness. Many of us seem to think it the all-essential thing to be provided with answers to the difficult questions which the world propounds, no matter how little the answers be to these great questions. Shakspeare seems to have considered it more important to put the questions greatly, to feel the supreme problems.

Thus Shakspeare, like nature and like the vision of human life itself, if he does not furnish us with a doctrine, has the power to free, arouse, dilate. Again and again we fall back into our little creed or our little theory. Shakspeare delivers us; under his influence we come anew into the presence of stupendous mysteries, and, instead of our little piece of comfort, and support, and contentment, we receive the gift of solemn awe, and bow the head in reverential silence.⁴⁸

But Ludwigson overstates the change in Dowden's thinking that this observation would appear to represent, as she overlooks the signal importance placed on

⁴⁶ Dowden, *Fragments*, p. 83.

⁴⁷ David Masson, *Essays Biographical and Critical Chiefly on the English Poets* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1856), p. 27.

⁴⁸ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 34.

Shakespeare's objectivity in Victorian criticism generally and from which Dowden's own does not deviate appreciably.

While living in Paris in 1851, the English poet Robert Browning set down an introduction to a collection of Shelley's letters in which he works out a distinction between the 'objective' poetry of Shakespeare and the 'subjective' poetry of Shelley himself.⁴⁹ In what became his famous 'Essay on Shelley', Browning argues that the objective poet is one 'whose endeavour has been to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain) with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow men'.⁵⁰ As Robert Sawyer has recently observed, even though the idea that Hamlet suffers from 'intellectual paralysis' seems abstract to a fault, Browning concludes that audiences understand 'intellectual paralysis' as an explanation for some of Hamlet's inaction because Hamlet *as a character* appears in this way complete unto himself.⁵¹ For Browning, the objective poet offers up an image of 'humanity in action', the subjective poet in and through 'effluence'.⁵² But the biography of an objective poet like Shakespeare does not serve critical inquiry, for Browning finds that the 'man passes, the work remains'.⁵³ A literary biography like Dowden's *Mind and Art* in this way proves of greater value to understanding a subjective poet like Shelley, for 'that effluence cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality,— being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated'.⁵⁴ In his polemic poem 'At the "Mermaid"' (1876), Browning would appear to have set in his sights the futility of Dowden's endeavour—like that of Browning's own critics—to discover the 'personality' behind the poetry:

Which of you did I enable

⁴⁹ As it turns out, the letters were forgeries.

⁵⁰ *Robert Browning*, ed. by Adam Roberts (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 574.

⁵¹ Robert Sawyer, 'The Shakespeareanization of Robert Browning', in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (Routledge: London, 1999), pp.142-59, (p. 143).

⁵² *Browning*, p. 576.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 575.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* In the end, Dowden's biography of Shelley did indeed succeed as authoritative for more than a generation. But a scholar such as A. C. Bradley writing at the beginning of the twentieth century could already refer to Dowden's study of Shakespeare fondly in the past tense as a good place to start on the subject. See below, p. 84.

Once to slip inside my breast,
 There to catalogue and label
 What I like least, what love best,
 Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
 Seek and shun, respect—deride?
 Who has right to make a rout of
 Rarities he found inside?⁵⁵

This apparent sleight did not put Dowden off the project of publishing his own biography of Browning in 1904.⁵⁶ In his defence, Dowden might have cited his earlier attempt to bring what reads objectively in the Shakespearean text nearer to the subjective in the manner that Browning had already defined their mutual distinction.

With the first of his Shakespeare lectures, ‘Shakspeare and the Elizabethan Age’, Dowden moves from what seems ‘positive, practical, & finite in Shakspeare’s art’ to contemplate the paradox that Jonson introduced with his commendatory poem prefacing the First Folio: ‘But if the poet was for his own age – he was also “for all time” – And there is an infinite side to his art’. Shakespeare must indeed have ‘an infinite side to his art’ in order to evidence the timeless quality that Dowden would stress here. ‘Shakspeare, then, it seems, to have lived in two worlds – one limited practical positive. The other a world opening into two infinities – an infinite for thought, & an infinite for passion’.⁵⁷ Dowden concludes his lecture by observing the only option left open to him: ‘Shakspeare’s humanity was large, gracious & tolerant’.⁵⁸ He forecasts in this way the subject of a later lecture on ‘The Humour of Shakspeare in Comedy Tragedy & History’—*Mind and Art*’s chapter simply entitled ‘The Humour of Shakspeare’—a Shakespeare ‘who saw life more widely & wisely than any other of the seers could laugh. [...] “What did he laugh at?”, & “What was the manner of his laughter”’.⁵⁹ Dowden resolved

⁵⁵ Browning, *Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper: With Other Poems* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1876), p. 38. See Schoenbaum, p. 359.

⁵⁶ Dowden, *The Life of Robert Browning* (London: Dent, 1904).

⁵⁷ TCD MS 3136/3, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ TCD MS 3136/9, p. 1.

to 'put some of himself into Shakespeare in self-defense'⁶⁰ against the threat that this quality presented to his project.

'Shakespeare was a discipline in some way alien to my most vital self', he confessed in June 1874. 'But, really, I think there is a deficiency in Shakespeare of recognising the influence for good of large general ideas. Everything in him seems to proceed from individuals'.⁶¹ Dowden's confusion over Shakespeare's apparent obsession with particulars, the simplest of details, persisted. With his springtime lecture series on Shakespeare complete, Dowden then turned his attention—not without sincere reservation—to their revision into *Mind and Art*. After the summer of 1874, though, Dowden started to see Shakespeare as 'an idealist in thought and emotion, who resolves that *his idealism should be real*, and should include, not exclude, all positive fact'.⁶² Dowden reached this realisation in September 1874, and it represents a formative change in his thinking. The process of putting his *Mind and Art* manuscript together meant that he needed to put a coherent account of Shakespeare's 'personality' down on paper, to tidy up the four periods of Shakespeare's artistic growth and spiritual development. Dowden added a paragraph pointing to the deficiency, then, that he saw in the materialism and pragmatism informing the Shakespearean text, its relentless objectivity. In addition, Dowden deleted remarks on Shakespeare's belief in the interpenetration of the ideal and the real. Shakespeare at first plays the sage in his lecture notes, 'a priest to us all | Of all the wonder and bloom of the world' and a 'teacher of the hearts of men and women'. But Dowden would delete for publication his belief that Shakespeare also seems 'one from whom may be learned something of that inner principle that ever modulates with murmurs of the air | And motions of the forests, and the sea, | And voices of living beings, and [...] hymns, | Of night and day, and the deep heart of man'.⁶³ From here, his conception of Shakespeare's last period regally spent 'On the Heights' grew into a conflation of Shakespeare and Prospero: a Shakespeare restored to Stratford, a Prospero restored to Milan. Yet Dowden understood, or at least thought he understood, that Shakespeare suggests the supernatural enveloping of the

⁶⁰ Dowden, *Fragments*, I, p. 99.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶³ Quoted in Ludwigson, p. 115.

natural world by what he calls 'God' in yet another passage deleted from his lectures. This conflation represents the real interpenetration that Dowden effects through the fusion of his perspective with Shakespeare's own, or what little he could gather of it.

Consequently, Dowden adds to his lecture 'Shakspeare and the Elizabethan Age' his conclusion for publication in *Mind and Art* that:

It is impossible however that the sixteenth or the seventeenth century should set a limit to the nineteenth. The voyaging spirit of man cannot remain within the enclosure of any one age or any single mind. We need to supplement the noble positivism of Shakspeare with an element not easy to describe or define, but none the less actual, which the present century has demanded as essential to its spiritual life and well-being, and which its spiritual teachers—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Newman, Maurice, Carlyle, Browning, Whitman (a strange and apparently motley assemblage!) have supplied and are still supplying. The scientific movement of the present century is not more unquestionably a fact, than this is a fact. In the meantime to enter with strong and undisturbed comprehension in Shakspeare, let us endeavour to hold ourselves strenuously at the Shaksperian standpoint, and view the universe from thence. We shall afterwards go our way, as seems best; bearing with us Shakspeare's gift. And Shakspeare has no better gift to bestow than the strength and courage to pursue our own path, through pain or through joy, with vigour and resolution.⁶⁴

Dowden baptises Shakespeare in the 'spilt religion' of Romanticism here in order to make more of his own reading of Shakespeare's materialism.⁶⁵ It would appear, then, that Carlyle, Coleridge, Maurice, and Wordsworth signify prophets of a specifically spiritual sympathy with that conspicuously absent father figure to this 'motley assemblage', Goethe. But a generative relationship with the great German Romantic cannot entirely account for Dowden's inclusion of Browning, Newman, Shelley, and Whitman in such august company.

⁶⁴ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, pp. 40-1.

⁶⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism', in *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme*, ed. by Karen Csengeri (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 59-73 (p. 62).

As Ludwigson observes, a few subsequent comments of Dowden's own on each figure clarifies the confusion over his inclusion criteria.⁶⁶ Dowden read into Browning's dramatic monologues two qualities that recommended him. 'First, he attempts to re-establish a harmony between what is infinite and what is finite in man's nature', he observes in *Studies in Literature*. 'Secondly, what determines Mr. Browning's place in the history of our literature is that he represents militant transcendentalism, the transcendental movement at odds with the scientific'.⁶⁷ The hyperbolic, if not contradictory, phrase 'militant transcendentalism' reads as emblematic of the interpenetration of the ideal and the real that Dowden attempts an analysis of in *Mind and Art*. Likewise, Dowden relates an anecdote about Newman to this effect in his *Transcripts and Studies* (1896):

A young Protestant heretic from America, who prized at their true worth Cardinal Newman's "Verses on Various Occasions," took courage one day and sent a copy of that volume to the Oratory at Birmingham, with a request for the writer's autograph. It was returned with the inscription, *Viriliter age, expectans Dominus*— words containing in little Newman's best contribution to his time; his vivid faith in a spiritual world, and the call to his fellows in an age of much material ease and prosperity to rise and quit them like men.⁶⁸

But Dowden struggled to similarly locate a *via media* through the 'effluence' that Browning saw flowing from Shelley's pen. Remarkably, he would conclude that:

Idealist as he was, Shelley lived in some important respects in closer and more fruitful relation with the real world than did his great contemporary, Scott. Because he lived with ideas he apprehended with something like prophetic insight those great forces which have been altering the face of the world during the nineteenth century, and which we sum up under the names of democracy and science; and he apprehended them not from the merely material point of view, but from that of a spiritual being, uniting his vision with democracy and science a third element not easy to name or to define, an element of spirituality which has been most potent, in the higher thought and

⁶⁶ See Ludwigson, pp. 115-9.

⁶⁷ Dowden, *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (London: Kegan Paul, 1878), p. 81.

⁶⁸ Dowden, *Transcripts and Studies* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1896), p. 171.

feeling of our time. [...] Wordsworth, an incomparably greater thinker than Shelley, expressed a poet's fears—fears by no means wholly unjustified—that the pursuit of analytic investigation in things material might dull the eye for what is vital and spiritual in nature and in man. “Beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.” No, not in the void, but amid the prime forces of the modern world; and this ineffectual angel was one of the heralds of the dawn—dawn portentous, it may be, but assuredly real.⁶⁹

Dowden could not believe as Arnold had, for example, that Shelley brooded over the immaterial ‘in vain’ any more than Shakespeare did. Dowden’s Shelley achieves as productive a relationship with ‘the fact’ in this way as Arnold’s Shakespeare does, despite their caveats written to the contrary. ‘The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley’s poetry is not entirely sane either’, Arnold concludes his review article ‘Shelley’ (1886) in defiance of a Dowden with whom he otherwise agrees on this point. ‘In poetry, no less than in life, he is “a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain”’.⁷⁰ But his paraphrase of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister discoursing on Hamlet—‘A fine, pure, noble, and highly moral person, but devoid of that emotional strength that characterizes a hero, goes to pieces beneath a burden that it can neither support or cast off’—makes an intertextual mess of their argument over Shelley, turning it into one over Shakespeare as well. Dowden would not budge, for Shelley’s ‘spiritual being’ must have harmonised with the more mundane and, nevertheless, ‘prime forces’ of the early nineteenth century: empirical science and representative democracy. As he revealed to the social reformer Henry Stephens Salt on 18 September 1889, ‘I feel with you that Shelley’s life and poetry belong to each other and form a consistent whole, that there are not two Shelleys’.⁷¹ Dowden casts Shelley as himself a materialist and pragmatist heralding a new age of positivism.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁷⁰ Arnold, ‘Shelley’, in *The Last Word, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), XI, p. 327.

⁷¹ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 242.

With this insight onto Dowden's Shelley, perhaps the most incongruous of the group, Walt Whitman, suddenly snaps into place. In 'November Boughs' (1888), Whitman argues that Shakespeare's history plays wallow in their feudalism—'only one of the "wolfish earls" so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant and knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works'—but he also suggests that someday scholars 'diving deeper [...] may discover [...] the inauguration of modern Democracy'.⁷² Dowden doubtless read the latter remark with mixed feelings, his early scholarship on Shakespeare having appeared in print for over a decade. He had even conceded the point to Whitman in *Mind and Art* that Shakespeare 'is not in a modern sense democratic'.⁷³ The 'vigour and resolution', then, that Dowden finishes the Shakespearean text feeling in this way fixes Shakespeare firmly in the nineteenth century looking backwards—and not without nostalgia—to a time of much greater spiritual depth. More importantly for Dowden himself, the feeling of 'vigour and resolution' secures Shakespeare for the conception of Englishness that he had in mind as he turned to confront the Anglo-Irish politics of the contemporary moment.

That Shakespeare needs Dowden's spiritual 'supplement' to cure his 'positivism' obscures the fact that Dowden believed positivism had saved Shakespeare from the idealism that, left unchecked, would have kept him from succeeding so completely as a playwright. Dowden indeed concludes his chapter on 'The English Historical Plays' by observing that 'We can in some measure infer how Shakspeare would endeavour to control, and in what directions he would endeavour to reinforce his own nature while in pursuit of a practical mastery over events and things'.⁷⁴ Positivism serves as the supplement, not the teachings of Dowden's 'motley assemblage' of poets and prophets. Moreover, as Dowden knew from the later work of the French sociologist Auguste Comte, positivism 'finds religious sanctions for its order by deifying Humanity as the Great Being worthy of worship'.⁷⁵ To serve as a signifier for the signified Englishness that

⁷² Walt Whitman, 'November Boughs', in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 1150.

⁷³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 319.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁷⁵ Ludwigson, p. 117.

Dowden defends in *Mind and Art*, Shakespeare needed the sort of positivism that only Dowden could administer. He shows positivism in this way manifested as much in Shakespeare's plays and poetry as the material success that these commercial ventures earned him, suggesting to readers of *Mind and Art* everywhere that the greatest of English poets also amassed a handsome fortune by virtue of his materialism and pragmatism, his positivism, his Englishness. Little wonder, then, that Dowden preferred to corner Shakespeare in periods of steady artistic and spiritual development.

This move allowed Dowden to position the creation of certain plays or poems as the product of Shakespeare the dreamer pulling up hard against the brute facts of life in line with the worldly image of Shakespeare that James Halliwell-Phillips revealed in his influential biography, *Life of Shakespeare* (1848). From Halliwell, Dowden deduced a Shakespeare commercially motivated in mind as well as art. As Samuel Schoenbaum has observed in his encyclopedic study *Shakespeare's Lives*, Halliwell 'is the first biographer of Shakespeare to appreciate fully the significance of the Stratford documents, and to exploit them systematically'.⁷⁶ Halliwell's revision of the Romantic conception of Shakespeare the poet of natural genius according to the documentary evidence at Stratford compelled Dowden to centre the spiritual identity of Shakespeare on his purchase of New Place in 1597, the second largest piece of property in Stratford at the time. For Dowden, Shakespeare 'was himself resolved, as far as in him lay, not to fail in this material life of ours, but rather, if possible, to be for his own needs a master of events. [...] To fail is the supreme sin'.⁷⁷ Yet Synge, reading *Mind and Art* while an undergraduate at Trinity, wondered with due incredulity about his professor's point: 'was he [Shakespeare] not more interest [sic] about the plays than the pound! The infinite of meditation and of passion both lay within range of Sk's experience and of his art. He thought it more important to feel the great problems are not for the intellect but for these emotions and imagination'.⁷⁸ Synge beats Yeats to the punch on this point. Dowden affirmed his own belief in Anglo-Saxon sensibilities by reading a commercially savvy Shakespeare into his most astute and calculating characters. As Synge's

⁷⁶ Schoenbaum, p. 291.

⁷⁷ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ TCD MS 4373

comments suggest, Dowden allowed his emphasis on the importance of commercial success to rob his literary biography of the more sympathetic portrait that he might have otherwise painted of Shakespeare. The volatile interiority of a Hamlet or a Richard II in this way posed serious problems for Dowden's Shakespeare that only a Fortinbras or a Bolingbroke seemed to solve, and so it becomes a conclusion that Shakespeare must have come to himself:

One thing, however, we *do* know—that the man who wrote the play of Hamlet had obtained a thorough comprehension of Hamlet's malady. And assured, as we are by abundant evidence, that Shakspeare transformed with energetic will his knowledge into fact, we may be confident that when Hamlet was written, Shakspeare had gained a further stage in his culture of self-control, and that he had become not only adult as an author, but had entered upon the full maturity of his manhood.⁷⁹

Dowden takes his initial departure from a Romantic reading of *Hamlet* here. As Goethe had observed of the play's plot in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), 'a heavy deed placed on a soul which is not adequate to cope with it. And it is in this sense that I find the whole play constructed. An oak tree is planted in a precious pot which should only have held delicate flowers. The roots spread out, the vessel is shattered'.⁸⁰ Dowden knew well the lines that Goethe took as his starting point on Hamlet. Indeed, he uses them in *Mind and Art* to launch an attack on the German writer's influential interpretation of the Danish prince's dilemma:

The time is out of joint: O, cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right! (1.5.205-6)

But Dowden concludes that, although he otherwise admires Goethe, his reading of Hamlet 'misled criticism in one way by directing attention too exclusively on the inner nature of Hamlet'. He thought that in this way Goethe 'only offered a half interpretation of its difficulties'. But the English Romantics fare little better in Dowden's account by following a different German critic, A. W. von Schlegel. 'The whole', Schlegel had argued, 'is intended to show that a calculating

⁷⁹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 160

⁸⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, in *Goethe's Collected Works*, ed. and trans. by Eric A. Blackall, 9 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), IX, p. 146.

consideration, which exhausts all the relations and possible consequences of a deed, must cripple the power of acting'.⁸¹ Coleridge takes up this line of reasoning in his lectures on Shakespeare to locate Hamlet as 'a man living in meditation, called upon to act by every motive, human and divine, but the great purpose of life [is] defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve'.⁸² For Dowden, the Romantic reading of Hamlet, whether English or German, hits wide of the mark: 'To represent Hamlet as a man of preponderating power of reflection, and to disregard his craving, sensitive heart is to make the whole play incoherent and unintelligible'.⁸³ This objection fits snugly with his early conception of culture as glossed in his Arnoldian reading of Goethe's famous *Bildungsroman*.

'I have finished Mr Meister with great edification. It has saved my idea of "culture" from a taint it was getting', he wrote to his younger brother John—later archbishop of Edinburgh—on the eve of 1866. "'Culture" is not getting or having anything—not knowledge any more—or scarcely more—than money. It is being and becoming the best possible to our nature'.⁸⁴ Margreta de Grazia has recently observed of Dowden's Arnoldian definition of culture in this context that first he and later A. C. Bradley in his study *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) 'extend the time line as far back as his [Hamlet's] childhood in order to extend the developmental trajectory of his biography'. Bradley indeed knew well his debt to Dowden, but he points it out by way of a different play:

I believe the criticism of *King Lear* which has influenced me most is that in Prof. Dowden's *Shakspeare, his Mind and Art* (though, when I wrote my lectures, I had not read that criticism for many years); and I am glad that this acknowledgement gives me the opportunity of repeating in print an opinion which I have often expressed to students, that anyone entering on the study of Shakespeare, and unable or unwilling to read much criticism, would do best to take

⁸¹ August Wilhelm von Schlegel on *Hamlet*, in *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 308. See also Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 131.

⁸² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge on Shakespeare: The Text of the Lectures of 1811-12*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 128.

⁸³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 132.

⁸⁴ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 28.

Prof. Dowden for his guide.⁸⁵

But de Grazia does her best to dismiss Dowden's approach, observing that he 'suggests that Hamlet's life, under the rule of a "strong-willed" father, has been spent in years of study and contemplation, without ever, until the Ghost's injunction, requiring him to execute a deed'.⁸⁶ By wresting this reading of the play away from the Romantics, Dowden increases Shakespeare's 'culture of self-control'. Abandoning the Romantics entirely would in this way pose its own set of problems to Dowden, however. His definition of Englishness becomes narrow and yet overdetermined, if not entirely false, in its application to Shakespeare. His reading of *Hamlet* reduces the play to proof, then, that Shakespeare had at last learned to set his inborn idealism aside and settle comfortably into the Anglo-Saxon set of material and spiritual sensibilities that would make him an even greater success.

SPIRITUAL BROGUE

Of course, Dowden's letters testify to his own prosperity. After moving from his hometown of Cork to Dublin, he secured increasingly better lodgings, settling his family finally in suburban Rathgar. The son of John Wheeler Dowden, a landowning linen merchant in St. Patrick's Street, Cork, Dowden grew up as a child of the Ascendency. The Dowdens had numbered amongst the important Protestant families in Ireland since the close of the seventeenth century, with the first receiving land in south Munster after serving in the New Model Army under Oliver Cromwell's command.⁸⁷ Dowden's mother, Alicia Bennett, belonged to the Presbyterian Church, his father to the Church of Ireland. Ludwigson has observed of Dowden that 'each parent reflects, respectively, his or her Scottish and English heredity and Protestant commitment, and, we might also add, each one's consequent influence in shaping the mature political commitments of their

⁸⁵ Bradley, p. 430.

⁸⁶ Margreta de Grazia, *'Hamlet' without Hamlet* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), p. 83. See Dowden's *Mind and Art* at pp. 132-3.

⁸⁷ Ludwigson, p. 13.

son'.⁸⁸ That Dowden worked ceaselessly on behalf of unionist causes until his death in 1913 comes as little surprise in this context.

As Andrew Gibson has recently observed, Dowden served as president of the Irish Unionist Alliance at a time 'when its publications exhibit an almost hysterical fear of the shift in political and cultural power towards the Catholic majority'.⁸⁹ From the late 1880s, Dowden chaired or lectured at various IUA meetings, participated in unionist demonstrations, served at times as secretary of the Liberal Union, started a Unionist Club, toiled 'for some months on nothing but Unionist work' in its Dublin office, and even asked Algernon Swinburne to pen a unionist song.⁹⁰ It did not take the Irish Unionist MP Sir Edward Carson long to recognise Dowden's efforts after taking over as party leader in 1910 and occasionally reported to him on political developments at Westminster:

There is however a feeling amongst some of our party that the continuance of power in the Irish Nat. Party in the House of Commons forms a great danger to the state that "something" might [need] to be done – Tho' when I ask what the "something" is no one can explain it.

How far this feeling is shared I can't know but I think it will be advisable to point out some of the more serious difficulties [...]

The whole situation is [...] a very bitter struggle.⁹¹

Dowden did not doubt Carson's resolve to defeat the latest draft of the Home Rule Bill.⁹² In September 1912, nearly 250,000 signatures would endorse the Solemn League and Covenant pledge professing Ulster Unionists' resistance to Home Rule and willingness to defend the Union through armed resistance, if necessary. The Home Rule Bill nevertheless cleared its third reading in the Commons by over one hundred votes. The Ulster Volunteer Force formed and started to drill within the month. Carson then announced in Newry that the UVF would defend a provisional Ulster government, if Home Rule ever came into effect.⁹³ He relied on Dowden to continue keeping Dublin Unionists affiliated

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁸⁹ Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 63.

⁹⁰ Ludwigson, p. 45.

⁹¹ TCD MS 3154/1177

⁹² Dowden, *Letters*, p. 375.

⁹³ See Bew, pp. 368-72.

with Trinity on side as the crisis unfolded, a role that seems to have suited Dowden, despite his stated reservations. 'I am not happy about T.C.D. and Home Rule', he admitted at the end of the year. 'We are a pawn in the game and I prefer being a Unionist to being a Home Rule pawn'.⁹⁴ As Carson had confided to 'My dear Dowden' earlier that December:

I read with great pleasure the proceedings at your recent meeting in the Rotunda. I was especially glad to see that you were able to take the chair, and hope you are now in the best of health. Your reference to myself was most kind and I much appreciate it, but I know that you and I have the same feeling as regards the disaster that will occur to Ireland, if this Home Rule Bill should unfortunately become law.⁹⁵

Even though Dowden accepted his role as a unionist 'pawn in the game' of Anglo-Irish politics by backing Carson in 1912, it would appear that he had always struggled to see his work on Shakespeare—indeed, any of his many literary endeavours—as somehow significantly separate from this work.

'Is Shaksper's representation [of the people] so wholly unjust to the seventeenth century, or even the nineteenth?' he wonders of Shakespeare's depiction of the mob throughout *Coriolanus*. 'He had no political doctrinaire philosophy, no humanitarian idealism, to put between himself and the facts concerning the character of the people. His age did not supply him with humanitarian idealism; but man delighted Shakespeare and woman also'.⁹⁶

Dowden's Shakespeare comes out cosmopolitan at first, much as Dowden himself does, demonstrating on occasion an Elizabethan-*cum*-Victorian hostility towards anything that 'cannot be verified or attested by actual experience'.⁹⁷ But Dowden serves here as Shakespeare's apologist just the same, acknowledging on the one hand Shakespeare's unflattering depiction of 'the people' in his plays while on the other asserting that this depiction still applies, if not with greater import, to contemporary Anglo-Irish politics. Dowden's appropriation of *Coriolanus* consists with Arnold's own in this way, as neither thought that Shakespeare indulged in that decidedly Celtic activity of 'rebellion against the despotism of

⁹⁴ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 386.

⁹⁵ TCD MS 3154/1191

⁹⁶ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 325.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

fact'. And yet, Dowden's biographical sketch of Shakespeare as something of a successful entrepreneur as well as an accomplished artist and enemy of the people connected materialism and pragmatism in a manner above all befitting of his own poetic output.

In his sonnet 'Paradise Lost' (1876), Dowden pronounces the power of 'that Hebrew legend' of original sin to hold rather little sway over him. He declares that after the fall of humanity's first parents a new kind of power arose: 'Leave Eden there; we will subdue the earth'.⁹⁸ Likewise with his sonnet 'In the Cathedral', Dowden rejects the promise of special revelation in favour of the certainty offered by the 'sane breath' of spiritual positivism:

The altar-light burns low, the incense-fume
Sickens: O listen, how the priestly prayer
Runs as a fenland stream; a dim despair
Hails through their chaunt of praise, who here inhume
A clay-cold faith within its carven tomb.
But come thou forth into the vital air
Keen, dark, and pure! grave Night is no betrayer,
And if perchance some faint cold star illumine
Her brow of mystery, shall we walk forlorn?
An altar of the natural rock may arise
Somewhere for men who seek; there may be borne
On the night-wind authentic prophecies;
If not, let this—to breathe sane breath—suffice,
Till in yon East, mayhap, the dark be worn.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Dowden, 'Paradise Lost', in *Poems* (London: Henry S. King, 1876), p. 93, p. 94.

⁹⁹ Dowden finished this sonnet, along with the others in his *Poems*, while working on *Mind and Art*. It takes up—albeit in a much subtler manner—a theme similar to that addressed in his poem 'Memorials of Travel: V. On the Sea-Cliff (in Ireland)', which he had finished three years earlier:

Ruins of a church with its miraculous well,
O'er which the Christ, a squat-limbed dwarf of stone,
Great-eyed, and huddled on his cross, has known
The sea-mists and the sunshine, stars that fell
And stars that rose, fierce winter's chronicle
And centuries of dead summers. From his throne
Fronting the dawn the elf has ruled alone,
And saved this region fair from pagan hell.
Turn! June's great joy abroad; each bird, flower, stream
Loves life, loves love; wide ocean amorously

Here Dowden exploits the pathetic fallacy in images that play enlightened reason and benighted faith off against each other as he contemplates the ‘authentic prophecies’ of natural phenomena, inverting Arnold’s conceit in ‘Dover Beach’ (1867) that the material world holds no spiritual truths, leaving humanity to devour itself ‘on a darkling plain’:

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.¹⁰⁰

Dowden did not appreciate being thought an Irish writer of any sort. Indeed, he would declare in his *New Studies in Literature* (1895) that ‘I confess that I am not ambitious of intensifying my intellectual or spiritual brogue’.¹⁰¹ But hiding it in an appropriation of ‘Dover Beach’ would not prevent Arnold from combining his own distaste for both Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill and Dowden’s *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* with caustic irony in 1886, pinning its stylistic shortcomings on Dowden’s identity as an Anglo-Irishman actively involved with unionist politics in Dublin. ‘Is it that the Home Rulers have so loaded the language’, Arnold speculates in his review of Dowden’s biography, ‘that even an Irishman who is not one of them catches something of their full habit of style?’¹⁰²

By the time Dowden betrayed an emergent preoccupation with his own ‘intellectual and spiritual brogue’ in 1895, a new literary movement led by a new generation of writers—some Irish, others Anglo-Irish—had started to take shape in Dublin, giving Dowden good reason to pause over his own identity as an

Spreads to the sun’s embraces; the dulse-weeds sway,
 The glad gulls are afloat. Grey Christ to-day
 Our ban on thee! Rise, let the white breasts gleam,
 Unvanquished Venus of the northern sea!

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, ‘Dover Beach’, in *New Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1867), pp. 113-4.

¹⁰¹ Dowden, *New Studies in Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1895), p. 19.

¹⁰² Arnold, ‘Shelley’, p. 307.

Anglo-Irish poet and professor of English literature at Trinity. Then Yeats's 'List of 30 Best Irish Books' appeared in the letters column of the *Daily Express* on 27 February of that year, flagging up the issue:

During our recent controversy with Professor Dowden certain of my neighbours here in the West of Ireland asked me what Irish books they should read. [...] Here then is my list, and I will promise you that there is no book in it that 'raves of Brian Boru' or displays an 'intellectual brogue' more 'accentuated' than the Scottish characteristics in Scott and Stevenson.¹⁰³

The use of the word 'brogue' within the context of the conflict between Dowden and Yeats over the relationship of Irish to English literary traditions in Ireland embeds their mutually hyphenated identities as Anglo-Irishmen within a complex network of references over which neither could easily exercise control. Dowden had in this way confused much of what he had accomplished in Dublin by toning the Cork accent of his own intellect down.

As observed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an early use in English of the word 'brogue' comes from the 1537 state papers of King Henry VIII, where it invokes the medieval legal definition of an 'escheat' in conjunction with its usage—a novelty during the Tudor period—to denote a simple 'cheat, fraud, [or] trick'. The word certainly sounds like an English conflation of brigand and rogue. But a question of legal legitimacy arises, for an escheat only occurred as an "incident" of feudal law, whereby a fief reverted to the lord when the tenant died without leaving a successor qualified to inherit [the land] under the original grant. Hence, the lapsing of land to the Crown [...], or to the lord of the manor, on the death of the owner intestate without heirs'. Henry VIII declared, then, that 'Ne any brogges or meanes that any of those borderers canne make, shall cause Us to altre that which We have established'.¹⁰⁴ Henry VIII uses 'brogges' here to denounce as counterfeit the claims of 'those borderers' of northern England who had participated in the popular rebellions against the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Moreover, he appears to threaten the confiscation of their lands after the legitimacy of his own claim to head the

¹⁰³ *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), pp. 246-51, (p. 246).

¹⁰⁴ St. Papers Hen. VIII, I. 548.

Church of England came under fire from the northern gentry unwilling to reform. Risings of ‘the borderers’ banded together those with a host of grievances against Henry VIII. Indeed, the 1536 ‘Pilgrimage of Grace’ alone saw nearly 10,000 people occupy York on 16 October.¹⁰⁵ Its leader, the Yorkshire-born lawyer Robert Aske, issued a proclamation declaring that:

For thys pylgrymage we have taken hyt for the presevacyon of Crystes churche, of thys realme of England, the kynge our soverayne lorde, the nobyltye and comyns of the same, and to the entent to macke petycion to the kinges highnes for the reformacyon of that whyche is amyssse within thys hys realme.¹⁰⁶

The economic and political complaints of the northern gentry had combined with the religious apprehension felt by English Catholics nearly everywhere and at nearly every level of English society. Henry VIII’s break with Rome in this way made brogues of all parties involved with the Dissolution as long as the legitimacy of Henry VIII’s claim to head both church and state remained in dispute by Catholics in the north. Consequently, the first parallel with Dowden’s desire to play his own ‘intellectual and spiritual brogue’ down in Dublin raises the spectre of his own legitimacy as long as Revivalists challenged the hegemony of the English language and, of particular political and professional concern to Dowden, the supremacy of the English literary tradition.

But another parallel appears, appropriately enough, with Shakespeare’s own use of the word ‘Brogues’ in *Cymbeline*, splashing some Celtic colour on Dowden’s remark. After Guiderius dispatches with Cloten, his sister Innogen—passing herself off as the page Fidele—lies, apparently dead after swallowing a potion, in the arms of their other brother, King Cymbeline’s other lost son, Arviragus. In the cave of their caretaker, the banished nobleman Belarius, Arviragus remarks to Guiderius that ‘I thought he [Innogen/Fidele] slept, and put | My clouted Brogues from off my feet, whose rudeness | Answered my steps too loud’ (4.2.268-70). Not wishing to wake Innogen/Fidele with the sound of his footfalls echoing off the cave’s walls, Arviragus took from his feet a pair of what

¹⁰⁵ R. W. Hoyle, ‘Aske, Robert (c.1500–1537)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 4th edn (London: Longman, 1997), p. 26.

the *OED* calls a ‘rude kind of shoe, generally made of untanned hide, worn by the inhabitants of the wilder parts of Ireland and the Scotch Highlands’. By considering the setting of this scene from *Cymbeline* in the Welsh mountains, an altogether different and likely dubious use of the word ‘brogue’ appears the more clearly in Dowden’s remark. As observed in the *OED*, a use of the sort that Dowden makes of the word ‘brogue’—dating to the early eighteenth century, a period of harsh Penal Laws limiting the landholding rights of Catholics¹⁰⁷—in order to disparage a ‘strongly-marked dialectal pronunciation or accent; now particularly used of the peculiarities that generally mark the English speech of Ireland’ almost certainly comes ‘from the frequent mention of “Irish brogue”, it has been conjectured that this may be the same word as the prec[eding], as if “the speech of those who wear brogues”, or “who call their shoes brogues”; but of this there is no evidence’. Evidence on offer or not, Dowden reinforces this specious yet popular usage of the word ‘brogue’ to emphasise a distinct hierarchy—indeed, the same hierarchy that obtained in Dublin as elsewhere in Ireland—within his own hyphenated identity, privileging the sensible English half over the rude Irish brogue.

Little wonder, then, that Dowden also took a personal interest in appropriating the Shakespearean text. ‘It was Shakespeare who made me a citizen of the world’, Dowden wrote to the English journalist and magazine magnate Clement Shorter on 3 October 1890.¹⁰⁸ Dowden indeed professed that the ‘direction of such work as I have done in literature has been (to give it a grand name) imperial or cosmopolitan and though I think a literature ought to be rooted in the soil, I don’t think a conscious effort to promote a provincial spirit tends in that direction’.¹⁰⁹ He thought that this ‘provincial spirit’ had come to occupy an all-too-important role in the Revival—just as it had for the Young Irelanders—during his tenure at Trinity, reflecting in his mind the separatist streak in the Irish nationalism of some Revivalists that would culminate at least culturally in the endeavour to ‘De-Anglicize’ Ireland as Douglas Hyde would declare before the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin on 25 November 1892. Within the year, Hyde would also help to found the Gaelic League in order

¹⁰⁷ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 250.

¹⁰⁹ E. A. Boyd, *Appreciations and Depreciations* (Dublin, 1918), p. 157.

to preserve and promote the Irish language. Increasingly, the Revival did indeed challenge the premises of cultural and political assimilation endemic to the liberal theory of nations that Dowden called cosmopolitan and acknowledged as imperial. But from Shakespeare, Dowden thought he understood the fate that awaited such wishful thinking, such pure idealism. It either negotiated a *via media* with 'the fact' or fell by the wayside of history. He now believed idealist accounts of literary history had pushed criticism to a breaking point. Yet he had only just started to scratch the surface himself.

The development of Dowden's belief that history had started to shift against the materialism and pragmatism of the period took hold not long after *Mind and Art* first appeared in print. Dowden added to his discussion of the Roman plays for the third edition of *Mind and Art* in 1877 an aside that points up a distinctly Victorian languor, which contrasts sharply with his conception of Elizabethan vigour:

A time will perhaps come, more favorable to true art than the present, when ideas are less outstanding factors in history than they have been in this century; when thought will be obscurely present in instinctive action and in human emotion, and will vitalize and inspire these joyously rather than tyrannically dominate them. And then men's sympathy with the Elizabethan drama will be more prompt and sure than in our day it can be.¹¹⁰

In Dowden's eyes, the best poetry provided a window that opened onto the soul quite obviously labouring under the pressure to put inspiration down on paper. He had remained something of a shallow idealist in this way. Even though Shakespeare did not appear a poet of this sort to Dowden, he could still 'vitalize and inspire' through onstage action. But Dowden thought the English Romantics better served the scholar as well as the sensitive critic with privileged access to the creative processes at work behind the artifice. Writer and reader could connect as one soul to another. Dramatic texts, even those plays written by Shakespeare almost exclusively in verse, afforded Dowden precious little of this privileged access. He wrote of his frustration at this discovery to Aubrey de Vere

¹¹⁰ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1877), p. 287.

on 22 August 1874, his lectures on Shakespeare just a few months away from publication as *Mind and Art*:

How is the personality of a dramatic poet to be discovered?

You and he [Shakespeare] ought to know how you either concealed yourselves, or in what ways you found yourselves disappearing, in order to give place to your creations, and therefore you ought to be able to say how you might have been arrested, and bid to come forward by a member of the critical constabulary in plain clothes, who was lurking to get hold of you. I want to put my hand on Shakespeare's shoulder for a moment even, and find it difficult. He eludes one at first, and much more afterwards. And yet there ought to be methods by which one could force a dramatic poet to discover himself, and announce his name, and tell you his secret.¹¹¹

Dowden found, then, that his apprehensions about Shakespeare the dramatist lingered after *Mind and Art* appeared in print.

As Nathan Wallace has recently pointed out, however, in his 'appeal to get de Vere, a Catholic poet, to turn Irish informer on Shakespeare for the colonial police, Dowden reaffirms his faith in the disciplinarity of his approach, if not in the results they have given him'.¹¹² Shakespeare did deeply trouble Dowden, but not only because of the morality tale of steady artistic growth and spiritual development with which it appeared impossible to definitively saddle him. Shakespeare defied Dowden's ability to form an intimate connection with him on the page and his plays appeared always already in a form mediated by actors on the stage. 'After all an actor's commentary is his acting', Dowden remarked to his friend and former student Bram Stoker after seeing the Shakespearean actor Sir Henry Irving play *Hamlet* in 1876.¹¹³ Once again Dowden echoes Carlyle, in this instance his lament that, by writing for the theatre, Shakespeare's 'great soul had to crush itself, as it could, into that and no other mould'. Moreover, Carlyle observes in this context that Shakespeare's plays leave just a trace of their author's handiwork, as each appears 'comparatively speaking, cursory,

¹¹¹ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 69.

¹¹² Nathan Wallace, 'Shakespeare Biography and the Theory of Reconciliation in Edward Dowden and James Joyce', *ELH* 72 (2005) 799–822 (p. 816).

¹¹³ Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, 2nd edn (London: Heinemann, 1907), p. 17.

imperfect, written under cramping circumstances'.¹¹⁴ Such complications to a simple fix on Shakespeare's soul never completely squared with Dowden either, making the marriage of Shakespeare's mind to his art a difficult if not altogether unhappy one. As Edwards has argued, 'Dowden's real fear was that when he had managed to put his hand on Shakespeare's shoulder he would discover that the man had no soul'.¹¹⁵ It would appear, then, that Shakespeare had outflanked an undercover assault by this 'member of the critical constabulary in plain clothes'.

Writing to de Vere again just after Christmas in 1874, Dowden confessed that the materialism and positivism of the contemporary moment had indeed clouded the vision of his newly completed study:

This 'Study of Shakespeare' I only partly like myself, and I expect you will only partly like it. One who loves Wordsworth and Browning can never be content to wholly abandon desires and fears and affinities which are extra-mundane, even for the sake of the rich and ample life of mundane passion and action which Shakespeare reveals.¹¹⁶

But in 1899, Dowden tried to redeem his reading of the accomplishment that *Hamlet* represents in Shakespeare's artistic growth and spiritual development with his introduction to the first Arden edition of the play. He admits here that 'I prefer to think of Shakespeare as setting to work with the intention of rehandling the subject of an old play, so as to give it a fresh interest on the stage; as following the subject given him, and as following the instinctive heading of his genius'.¹¹⁷ Dowden concludes, then, that:

Together with such an intellectual and such a moral nature, Hamlet has in him something dangerous—a will capable of being roused to sudden and desperate activity. It is a will which is determined to action by the flash and flame of an excitable temperament, or by those sudden impulses or inspirations, leaping forth from a sub-conscious self, which come almost like the revelation and decree of Providence.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Carlyle, 'The Hero as Poet', p. 94.

¹¹⁵ Edwards, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Dowden, *Letters*, pp. 69-70.

¹¹⁷ *Hamlet*, ed. by Edward Dowden (London: Methuen, 1899), p. xxiv.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

Here Dowden sticks by his conclusion that Catholicism did not consist with Shakespeare's 'stern fidelity to the fact'. Indeed, he appears confident enough in his conclusion to omit from his annotations to the text any speculation over the Catholic conception of purgatory that the presence of the ghost of Hamlet's father suggests. Moreover, at the point when Hamlet invokes St. Patrick (1.5.150), Dowden notes only that:

In connection with "the offence" there is special propriety in the oath. It was given out that a serpent stung Hamlet's father; the serpent now wears his crown. St. Patrick was the proper saint to take cognizance of such an offence, having banished serpents from Ireland. In *Richard II.* II. i. 157, Shakespeare alludes to the freedom of Ireland from venomous creatures. Campion in his *History of Ireland*, written in 1571, mentions the legend. In Shirley's *Saint Patrick for Ireland*, serpents come on the stage, are banned by the saint, and creep away. [Benno] Tschischwitz supposes that the oath alludes to St. Patrick's Purgatory, and I find mention of this place of torment in Dekker's *Olde Fortunatus* (Pearson's *Dekker*, vol. i. p. 155).¹¹⁹

Dowden opts here to persist in his earlier ridicule of Catholicism's 'wand of ecclesiastical magic' by situating St. Patrick as one of its principal wizards, able to banish serpents from Ireland and keep watch over purgatory. His reluctance to mention, moreover, that Catholic tradition locates the entrance to purgatory at Lough Derg, County Donegal, registers Dowden's sustained insistence on Shakespeare's Protestantism within an Irish context. Perhaps more to the point, Dowden downgrades to a simple supposition the conclusion about the reference to purgatory of an early German editor and translator of *Hamlet*, Tschischwitz, which requires a cross-reference to Dekker's comedy. Shakespeare, for Dowden, was with these aspects of *Hamlet* just keeping up with the competition by sticking to convention, whatever speculation about Shirley's own conversion might suggest of Catholicism's position in early modern Ireland.¹²⁰ But Dowden does not separate the 'sulphurous and tormenting flames' of hell (1.5.5), to which Hamlet's father believes he must go, from purgatory as a similar 'place of

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹²⁰ See Arthur H. Nason, *James Shirley, Dramatist* (Manchester, NH: Ayer, 1972).

torment in Dekker'. Dowden forwards in this way, much as he does in *Mind and Art*, his religious sensibilities as Shakespeare's own after bristling in response to the Revival. No surprise, then, that he took on a more entrenched tone during the 1890s.

IMPERIAL IMPRESARIO

Dowden reported on the Trinity tercentenary celebrations for *The Illustrated London News* in July 1892, fondly recalling a performance of *Hamlet* given by Irving and his company some sixteen years earlier. With this memory in mind, Dowden detailed the ceremony conferring the honorary Doctor of Literature degree on Irving:

Dramatic art will be honoured as it deserves in the person of Dr. Henry Irving. Nor is this the first time that Mr. Irving has received the plaudits of Trinity College. I well remember the College night at the old Theatre Royal, Dublin, the dimensions of which were far larger than those of our existing theatres: I remember the brilliant gathering in the stalls, and the sea of young life—all students of Trinity College—which filled the body of the house, and swayed and surged under the influence of the great actor while he played *Hamlet*, with his powers put forth at their highest.¹²¹

Dowden recalls the events of 11 December 1876 here. Irving finished his tour of *Hamlet* with his company that year in Dublin, and Stoker put the plan to award Irving informal honours from Trinity in motion the morning after the opening night at the Theatre Royal.¹²² But Stoker's own address points up Irving's impact on a much wider audience in Dublin during this stint than just 'the sea of young life' from Trinity that Dowden fondly recalls. 'Throughout your too brief engagement our stage has been a school of true art, a purifier of the passions, and a nurse of heroic sentiments', Stoker had declared, 'you have succeeded in commending it to the favour of a portion of society, large and justly influential,

¹²¹ Edward Dowden, 'Tercentenary of Trinity College, Dublin', *Illustrated London News*, 9 July 1892, p. 45.

¹²² Stoker, *Reminiscences*, p. 22.

who usually hold aloof from the theatre'.¹²³ Stoker understood the democratic potential of the theatre in this way. He would indeed fill his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* with anecdotes about accompanying his father to Dublin's theatres as a boy, then on his own while one of Dowden's students at Trinity, and finally as a Castle functionary like his father until moving to London in 1878 to work as Irving's business manager at the Lyceum Theatre. Stoker's memoir consists in this way with what fast became conventional reverence for Irving following his death on 13 October 1905 and public funeral at Westminster Abbey a week later.

Stoker places Irving ahead of Charles Kean, G. V. Brook, T. C. King, and Charles Dillon in the category of 'old school', attributing their barnstorming style of overwrought stage gestures, movements, phrasings, readings, and timings to their desire for accordance with precedents established by the great performers of previous generations: acting by imitation. For representing a character according to intuition rather than rule, Irving stands out in Stoker's account as the vanguard of the 'new school' of stagecraft that, according to *The Times*, 'more than doubled the number of theatre-goers in London and in the provincial towns', including Dublin, because his approach 'revealed **SHAKESPEARE** to them, and a score of other playwrights and poets, in a new and unforgettable way'.¹²⁴ Irving paid Stoker many humble thanks in return. More importantly, his rather lengthy reply on the occasion affirmed his motivation to continue democratising the theatre as an institution in the manner that Stoker had specified. 'I trust with all my soul that the reform which you suggest may ere long be carried out', Irving observes, 'and that the body to whom is justly entrusted our higher moral education may recognise in the Stage a medium for the accomplishment of such ends'.¹²⁵ In due course, Irving received official recognition for his contribution to this cause in the form of a knighthood in 1895—the first ever conferred on an actor—in addition to countless honorary degrees, the first his doctorate from Trinity in 1892:

For once let Tragedy desert the Stage,

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 21 October 1905, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Stoker, *Reminiscences*, p. 23.

Yes, for a little while let the London Lyceum miss its chief of actors, while worthy as he is of our wreath of bay, he crowns his head withal. You all know by what unique talent, by what new art, and with what unblemished repute Henry Irving rose to the eminence which he has attained. Yet it is a pleasure to remind you that this College was the first, or one of the first, to recognise his supremacy amongst Tragedians. Never, as far as I can remember, was the Theatre Royal more carried away by enthusiasm than when he, by his pourtrayal [*sic*] of Hamlet, enraptured all eyes and minds. Now then once more with equal joy in salutation of our Roscius—

*Let palm meet palm in resonant applause.*¹²⁶

With his informal honours from Trinity in hand, Irving and his company had performed *Hamlet* at the Theatre Royal for ‘University Night’ in 1876, ‘which filled the body of the house, and swayed and surged under the influence of the great actor while he played Hamlet, with his powers put forth at their highest’, according to Dowden’s write-up in 1892.

Stoker provided his own lengthy report of the event for the *Evening Mail* in 1876 that highlights no less impressed an audience, but one altogether more engaged and perhaps more diverse than Dowden’s remarks admit. Stoker observes of Irving’s performance that in ‘the philosophic passage “To be or not to be”, and the advice to the players, there was a quiet, self-possessed dignity of thought which no man could maintain if he did not know that he had an appreciative audience, and that he was not talking over their heads’. He reports that the audience crowded into the theatre, that ‘the box lobbies were filled with those who were content to get an occasional glimpse of the stage through the door’.¹²⁷ After the green curtain closed and Irving thanked the audience for their ‘brilliant attendance on this, my parting performance’, Stoker recalls that a crowd of over a thousand waited for the actor to exit the theatre after the performance so that they might escort him back to his hotel on St. Stephen’s Green. In the meantime, some of the students assembled outside replaced the

¹²⁶ *Programme of Trinity College, Dublin, Honorary Degree Conferral, 6 July 1892*, Shakespeare Centre Library, Bram Stoker Collection, MS 30/5/30, p. 13.

¹²⁷ Stoker, p. 24.

horses harnessed to Irving's carriage with a rope that they then used to pull him the distance across Dublin.

Trinity officially recognised the orderliness of their students later in the week: 'At Roll-call to-night the Junior Dean will express his grateful sense of the admirable conduct of the Students on Saturday last, at Mr. Irving's Reception in Trinity College and subsequently at the performance in the Theatre Royal'.¹²⁸ Such recognition appears particularly significant in Stoker's account, as he indicates that 'in those days town and gown fights were pretty common'.¹²⁹ The affection given Irving went without the usual opposition between 'town and gown', however, for many more in Dublin than the usual mix of Castle functionaries and Trinity students appreciated the actor for whom they all had gathered. Stoker's address had indeed indicated as much earlier that day. Irving inspired a sort of unity around an appreciation of Shakespeare on the Dublin stage, then, that Dowden's own report omits.

In 1892, the honours that Trinity awarded Irving appeared as part of the greater grandeur of an imperial gesture rather than the affectionate, informal outpouring of the enthusiastic students rallied together by Stoker, a point not lost on Dowden:

From Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, from Canada and India, from the United States, from every country and nation in Europe (with the exception of Spain, Portugal, and the unspeakable Turk), as well as from ancient and modern Universities of Great Britain, come delegates to convey sympathy and encouragement to the College of Queen Elizabeth.¹³⁰

Moreover, Dowden observes that for 'the occasion political differences between town and gown have been set aside; our Parnellite Lord Mayor has been the recipient of an honorary degree from the Unionist University, and he in turn has shown his good feeling by hospitably opening the Mansion House to the University and its guests'.¹³¹ Dowden reports, finally, on the imperial founding of the university through a subscription for books placed by the English army after

¹²⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 26.

¹³⁰ Dowden, 'Tercentenary of Trinity College, Dublin', p. 45.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 45.

its victory over Irish and Spanish forces at the Battle of Kinsale, commemorated by a painting of the battle plan hanging in the library at that time. As he observes in the opening of the article:

Our history does not lose itself, like that of Salerno or Bologna, in the dimness of the Middle Ages; it lies in the space from the reign of one great queen to that of another; and just now the ladies of Ireland who desire admission to our lecture-rooms and our degrees are pleased to remind us of the fact that Elizabeth presided over the birth of our College, and Victoria, if she turns her eyes westward, regards with friendly gaze its attainment of the majority. The purpose of the foundation was to promote knowledge, civility, and religion in this Island of the West. The University of Ussher and Burke, of Southerne and Congreve and Farquhar, of Grattan and Flood, of Moore and Lever, of Rowan Hamilton and MacCullagh, of Lecky and Salmon and Archbishop Magee, has fulfilled its function—at least, in part; and knowledge, civility, and religion have each—we dare to think—gained something through its foundation.¹³²

A farce written for the occasion featured along with the Dublin-born playwright R. B. Sheridan's *The Rivals* at the Gaiety Theatre to round out the tercentenary celebrations that day. Irving did not perform in either production, but he and Stoker, along with Dowden, numbered amongst the audience. Had Irving performed and perhaps his *Hamlet* would have again held the stage, despite his advanced age. But Dowden reports that it 'is truly more Attic that Irish students should give an Irish play than a play in any learned tongue deceased'.¹³³

Tempering the exclusivity that Dowden appears at pains to highlight, Stoker points out in his *Reminiscences* that the 'Irish generally were very pleased that he [Irving] was to receive the honour'.¹³⁴ He even recalls that the Irish steward on the mail boat over to Dublin congratulated the actor upon boarding. Yet the differences of opinion between Dowden and prominent Revivalists like Yeats that help to position his report on Trinity's tercentenary did not surface before

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 45-6.

¹³⁴ Stoker, p. 393.

the wider public until January 1895, when a lecture on Sir Samuel Ferguson prompted some incendiary remarks from Dowden.

At a meeting of the Irish Literary Society in London early in 1894, the Anglo-Irish poet Roden Noel had declared Ferguson ‘the authentic precursor of the Revival’. Noel’s position consisted with Yeats’s own in which Ferguson figures as ‘the greatest poet Ireland has produced, being the most central and most *Celtic*’.¹³⁵ But Noel’s speech ruffled Dowden’s feathers when read in Dublin again later that year. The *Daily Express* put Dowden down as remarking that he ‘did not believe in an Irish literary renaissance’. ‘Of course he does not’, the article concludes:

how could anyone do so who thinks that an Irish poet is born out of due time because he is not acceptable to contemporary English taste, or to that small Irish circle of polite and cultivated people who know more and think more of every third, fourth, fifth, and sixth rate poet than they would of Homer himself if he lived on the Hill of Howth and wrote the epics of the Gael?¹³⁶

Surprisingly, given its otherwise conservative credentials, the *Daily Express* objected to the fact that while Dowden was busy building his reputation as a professional critic, he was also hard at work supporting Anglo-Irish unionism and separating himself from explicitly Irish literary endeavours.

At a meeting of the Fortnightly Club in 1874, for example, Dowden had indeed stood to toast Ireland upon the return of the Tories to power and James Hamilton, first duke of Abercorn, as Lord Lieutenant. ‘I did my best’, he later recalled, ‘and tried to make a little joke about the Liffey which had taken me some days to invent, and on the subject of Ireland I asked some unpractical questions such as “Had a census been taken of the wise men in Ireland?” “How much thought was annually spun?” “Which passions were imported from the Continent?” and “What were the exports of sweetness and light?”’¹³⁷

Significantly, Dowden plays with Arnoldian cheek here on the tensions that

¹³⁵ Yeats, ‘The Poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson—II’, in *Early Articles and Reviews* (2004), ed. by John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by George Mills Harper and George Bornstein, 14 vols (New York: Scribner, 1990-2008), IX, pp. 10-27 (p. 26). My italics.

¹³⁶ *Daily Express*, 21 January 1895.

¹³⁷ Dowden, *Fragments*, p. 103.

would simmer beneath the surface in Irish literary circles during the coming decade. He reads the inchoate Revival in Arnoldian terms, finding it reluctant to respond to the literary resources of England and the Continent. Dowden thought this isolationist approach also privileged emotional material over intellectual content in the process of rejecting the Anglo-Saxon sensibilities of commercial gain, the 'culture of self-control' and the 'stern fidelity to fact' that he saw in Shakespeare.

In 1889, Dowden nevertheless praised the talented son of his friend J. B. Yeats on the publication of his first collection of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín*. But the Yeatses knew that he hardly sympathised with the cultural nationalism that the Revival represented and a rift slowly opened up between them. In an article on 'The poetry of Samuel Ferguson', published in the November 1886 number of the *Dublin University Review*, Yeats had already observed of Dowden's stance that:

It is a question whether the most distinguished of our critics, Professor Dowden, would not only have more consulted the interests of his country, but more also, in the long run, his own dignity and reputation which are dear to all Irishmen, if he had devoted some of those elaborate pages which he has spent on the much bewritten George Eliot, to a man like the subject of this article.¹³⁸

Ferguson had died just a few months earlier, and Yeats thought his achievements as an archivist, poet, and amateur translator of Irish verse an indication of how other Protestants and unionists might participate in a broadly Irish cultural and literary movement. Yet Yeats failed to notice Dowden's conservative influence on Ferguson in this context, as Ferguson had also brought his editorial and lyrical skills to bear on Shakespeare.

In 1882, Ferguson had published *Shakespearian Breviates*. Its subtitle boasts 'an adjustment of twenty-four of the longer plays of Shakespeare to convenient reading limits', and thus Ferguson sets out to show how best to abridge the Shakespearean text by eliminating the number of characters and eliding any passages considered too vulgar for the Victorian drawing room. To convey a sense of continuity between these bowdlerised versions of

¹³⁸ Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, ed. by J. P. Frayne, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1970-5), I, p. 89.

Shakespeare's plays, Ferguson penned verses to bridge the gaps that his cuts had created. Motivation for his appropriation came, in part, from evenings spent talking about Shakespeare with friends, including his neighbour Dowden.¹³⁹ Dowden encouraged Ferguson to emphasise a resilient Anglo-Saxon manhood similar to the prevalent theme of *Mind and Art*, to sanitise Shakespeare much as he had done himself.

Dowden had indeed concluded that Shakespeare gave pride of place to the usurping King Henry IV's eldest son, Henry V, above all other characters in the histories. 'The unmistakable enthusiasm of the poet about his Henry V. has induced critics to believe that in him we find Shakspeare's ideal of manhood', Dowden observes. 'He must certainly be regarded as Shakspeare's ideal of manhood in the sphere of practical achievement,—the hero, and central figure therefore of the historical plays'.¹⁴⁰ This point even persuaded de Vere to consider Henry V 'one of the most religious of Shakespeare's characters, which followed from his being one of the most chivalrous'.¹⁴¹ Dowden also maintains throughout *Mind and Art* that creating characters in the tragedies such as Timon and Hamlet allowed Shakespeare to exorcise the twin demons of his nature: emotional and intellectual immoderation, idealism run amuck. For Dowden, doing so allowed Shakespeare to achieve a balance between art and life. 'An Alcibiades or a Fortinbras represents that side of his character into which he threw himself for protection against the weakness of excess of passion, or excess of thought', Dowden concludes in the chapter that closes *Mind and Art*, 'Shakspeare's Last Plays'. 'It was the portion of his being which was more elaborated than the rest, and less spontaneous; and therefore he highly esteemed it, and loved it little'.¹⁴² Once again, Dowden appeals to Anglo-Saxon sensibilities in his reading of Shakespeare's mind through his art. The serenity that Dowden thought Shakespeare later achieved also required confronting 'a darker side to the world and to the soul of man' as Hamlet, Lear, and Timon do. As Edwards has observed, 'The theory underlying Dowden's Shakespeare is that the self creates

¹³⁹ Peter Denman, 'Ferguson, Sir Samuel (1810–1886)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹⁴⁰ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 210.

¹⁴¹ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 74.

¹⁴² Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 393.

an anti-self as a prophylactic against the weakness of the self'.¹⁴³ Dowden indeed argues that 'The Shakspeare invariably bright, gentle, and genial is the Shakspeare of myth. The man actually discoverable behind the plays was a man tempted to passionate extremes, but of strenuous will, and whose highest self pronounced in favour of sanity'.¹⁴⁴ An excess of passion, a rebellion against fact in this way, distinguished the Revival to its discredit—not least, its excess of cultural nationalism—and Revivalists would themselves do well for Dowden to tread in the careful footsteps of his Shakespeare. Dowden's Revivalists appear far too resilient in their idealism, maintaining in stiff measures both a provincial sense of literary self-sufficiency and a budding cultural nationalism at odds with his preference for an Irish identity derived from English literary culture and Britain's history of imperial enterprise. But leaders across Europe heard similar cries for national sovereignty based on cultural differences during the 1890s.

For many nationalists throughout in the late nineteenth century, politically independent states should exist wherever distinct cultural groups do as well. 'Indeed, the success of a cultural and philological interest in mobilizing a national movement seems crucially to depend on its power to fire a public sphere', Leerssen has observed in his recent study of nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, 'and in a country like Ireland, that public sphere was only just beginning to emerge from an older downtrodden peasantry'.¹⁴⁵ Pointing up the Continental parallels of the Irish case, one of the most vocal Irishmen on this point, Arthur Griffith, published a collection of articles culled from *United Irishman*—wherein he also called Shakespeare a 'Celt born in England'¹⁴⁶—entitled *The Resurrection of Hungary* (1904), in which he discusses the similarities of the two countries as culturally unique, and so deserving of their independence from the larger empires that governed them. Griffith's essentially secular case had its decidedly clerical complement in Moran's *Philosophy of Irish Ireland* (1905), most of the material for which initially appeared on the pages of the *New Ireland Review* between 1898 and 1900. Moran cited the 'characteristic

¹⁴³ Edwards, p. 57.

¹⁴⁴ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 384.

¹⁴⁵ Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 162.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 260.

way of expressing thought, a distinct language' as 'usually the most prominent mark of a nation'. But Moran acknowledged that in Ireland 'our activities spring from a foreign inspiration, and that we only preserve a national colour about the manner in which we don't do things'.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, a persistent problem for cultural nationalists such as Griffith and Moran persisted in the difficulty of integrating the country's powerful Anglo-Irish minority, which included Dowden as well as members of the Revival like Yeats himself, into any coherent definition of national identity. It looked as if the only solution lay—to paraphrase Moran—in figuring out how both the Anglo-Irish and the Gaelic Irish 'don't do things' like the English. The point would prove one that separatist Irish nationalism never resolved to the satisfaction of every party.

Dowden had denounced the Revival from its early days forward, however, arguing against so many more Celtic Calibans peopling his island through the shift in literary allegiances that cultural nationalism encouraged. He even moved to keep Yeats from setting up as chair of English literature after he retired from Trinity.¹⁴⁸ Ezra Pound perhaps put it best when joking in 1913 that Dowden 'rose from the grave' to keep Yeats out.¹⁴⁹ 'I can't [...] believe that Ireland will produce such a thing [as a Shakespeare] or anything but long-eared asses (or at most a Duns Scotus or two)', Dowden had written to his brother back in 1865, 'the idiotic noises the true Irishman makes from generation to generation are certainly not human, but are part of the irony on humanity of the Aristophanic Spirit who presides over the World-Drama—a chorus of asses'.¹⁵⁰ He echoed this opinion in a letter to his friend and former student William McNeile Dixon on 18 December 1902, lamenting that he taught 'lasses as well as asses in my classes'.¹⁵¹ He had indeed stuck close by his opinion of Irish literary culture and—despite Trinity admitting and Dowden teaching so many braying barnyard animals—he would produce some thirty students who later became chairs of

¹⁴⁷ Moran, *Irish Ireland*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ See Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life. Volume I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 429-31.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 430.

¹⁵⁰ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 24.

¹⁵¹ TCD MS 2259, McNeile Dixon Collection, no. 18.

English literature worldwide,¹⁵² including McNeile Dixon at the University of Glasgow. Dowden had effectively married Arnold's ideas about the role of culture in society to Anglo-Irish unionism in an effort to help his students achieve the better facilitation of 'being and becoming the best possible to our nature'.¹⁵³ As Arnold argues in *Culture and Anarchy*, for example, 'by our best self we are united, impersonal, at harmony. We are in no peril from giving authority to this, because it is the truest friend we all of us can have; and when anarchy is a danger to us, to this authority we may turn with sure trust'.¹⁵⁴ If under fire from a Fenian mob, a radical unionism looked to Dowden from the late 1860s forward like the only answer to Irish demands for independence.

Then in 1893 the opportunity to take this position a step further presented itself. Dowden praised the masses gathered for an Ulster Unionist demonstration in an article written for *The Fortnightly Review*:

The men of Ulster did not assemble to enter on a debate and a discussion. They had come to their conclusions; they gathered together to declare their convictions and to formulate their determination as to a line of action. They constituted in their own persons a formidable basis of reasoning against any Separatist scheme. Each of the twelve thousand delegates was a living argument, the logic of which must in the end prove irresistible.¹⁵⁵

The positive spin given the Ulster Unionists by Dowden here contrasts in a curious way with the negative spin that he gives separatist Irish nationalism in his sonnet 'King Mob'. Addressing a 'King Caliban', he presses his readers to resist the threat now facing them:

I love you too, big Anarch, lately born,
Half beast, yet with a stupid heart of man,
And since I love, would God that I could warn
Work out the beast as shortly as you can,
Till which time oath of mine shall ne'er be sworn,

¹⁵² Ludwigson, p. 22. See also Terence Brown, 'Edward Dowden: Irish Victorian', in *Ireland's Literature* (Mullingar: Lilliput, 1988).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁴ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, p. 52.

¹⁵⁵ Dowden, 'Irish Opinion on the Home Rule Bill', *The Fortnightly Review* (1893), p. 593.

Nor knee be bent to you, King Caliban.¹⁵⁶

Dowden betrays in this poem the unionism lurking behind his reading of *The Tempest* in *Mind and Art*, exploiting Caliban as a truly diabolical threat despite numbering as an army of one until meeting Stephano and Trinculo. Even more curious, though, Dowden does not follow Arnold's use of *Coriolanus* to strike fear of the mob into the hearts of his unionist audience here, even though he thought Shakespeare's portrayal of 'the people' to consist in this way with the role of demonstrations in contemporary Anglo-Irish politics. But a remark about Dowden made by the essayist John Eglinton—later head librarian at the National Library in Dublin—hints at a reason.

Eglinton once called his former English literature professor 'a saint of culture', who has made 'a gradual passage from religious orthodoxy, or belief in special revelation, to that standpoint which the modern mind has won for itself, and from which it regards all human utterance, in art, literature, and science, as a progressive revelation of the divine-human'.¹⁵⁷ Dowden took up a cosmopolitan stance, Eglinton suggests, in a bid to transcend all political exigencies. In this vein, Dowden would himself return to a favourite reading of religion's role in Romantic poetry when admitting to his brother John on 13 August 1883 that:

All nineteenth century poetry—Wordsworth, Goethe, Shelley—seems to me to become theistic in its higher moods of nature-worship; but the God is not the Jahveh of Mount Sinai, nor the amiable white-bearded old gentleman of Catholic pictorial art, nor the constitutional ruler governing by general laws of Protestantism, but the true God (of which these are figures), the God of the Ethics of Spinoza; in whom, as one of your own poets says, we live and move and have our being.¹⁵⁸

Dowden asserts his belief in a god above and beyond the God of traditional Judeo-Christian theology here, a belief in the sort of naturalistic pantheism that he read into the Romantics, both English and German. 'The only type of Christianity to which Dowden was finally attracted, therefore was the liberal Protestant Christianity such as Frederick Denison Maurice set forth', Ludwigson observes. 'A transcendental type of Christianity, it was heavily indebted to the

¹⁵⁶ Dowden, 'King Mob' in *Poems*, p. 154.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Dowden, *Letters*, p. xiv.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge'.¹⁵⁹ This spirituality seems to have infused his lectures with the gravity of his own stern yet gentle bearing. 'I can still recall the distinguished presence, the noble brow, and the mellow, golden voice', fawned H. O. White, Dowden's chosen successor to his chair at Trinity. 'Coming to that classroom as a callow Freshman [*sic*], it seemed as though a new heaven and a new earth were unfolded before me. The history of human culture was presented as a vast landscape, shimmering with the divine colours of a Turner, and lit by a light that never was on sea or land'.¹⁶⁰ It would appear, then, that in his polemical poems Dowden appeals with his 'mellow, golden voice' as an Anglo-Irish Prospero to point up the cultural debt that he believed Ireland owed to England and which each and every Celtic Caliban fails to pay by backing any measure of cultural or political autonomy for their island. Dowden does indeed praise in 'Prospero, the grave harmony of his character, his self-mastery, his calm validity of will, his sensitiveness to wrong, his unfaltering justice, and with these, a certain abandonment, a remoteness from the common joys and sorrows of the world are characteristic of Shakspeare as discovered to us in his latest plays'.¹⁶¹ As Wallace has correctly pointed out, then, 'These qualities make Shakespeare a parental deity'.¹⁶² Dowden certainly finds Prospero the very model of tough paternal love with which to conclude *Mind and Art*:

Prospero's forgiveness is solemn, judicial, and has in it something abstract and impersonal. He cannot wrong his own higher nature, he cannot wrong the nobler reason, by cherishing so unworthy a passion as the desire of vengeance. Sebastian and Antonio, from whose conscience no remorse has been elicited, are met by no comfortable pardon. They have received their lesson of failure and of pain, and may possibly be convinced of the good sense and prudence of honourable dealing, even if they cannot perceive its moral obligation. Alonzo, who is repentant, is solemnly pardoned. The forgiveness of Prospero is an embodiment of impartial wisdom and loving justice.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Ludwigson, pp. 70-1.

¹⁶⁰ H. O. White, *Edward Dowden, 1843-1913* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1943), p. 19.

¹⁶¹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 417.

¹⁶² Wallace, p. 806.

¹⁶³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 413.

Of course, Prospero deals sternly with Caliban after he rebels, and thus Dowden identifies in this treatment the upshot of a 'thought which seems to run through the whole of *The Tempest*, appearing here and there like a coloured thread in some web, is the thought that the true freedom of man consists in service'.

As he observes in his lecture on 'Shakspeare's Latest Period', audiences do not identify Shakespeare with Prospero simply because of his book and staff, release of Ariel, and restoration of Caliban. Rather:

It is the temper of Prospero, the grave harmony of his character, his self-mastery, his calm validity of write [*sic*], his sensitiveness to wrong, his unfaltering justice, & with all these, a certain renouncement or abandonment, a remoteness from [*sic*] the common joys & sorrows of the world, & tender bending over them, are characteristic of Shakspeare as discovered to us in all these his latest plays of him.¹⁶⁴

Differences between how Ariel and Caliban respond to their bonds of service to the state of Prospero suggested to Dowden, echoing Hartley Coleridge, that 'Shakspeare [...] had within him some of the elements of English conservatism'.¹⁶⁵ Contending with Hartley's father, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt defended Caliban in 1818 as the rightful heir to the island and his rebellion as 'far from being the prototype of modern Jacobinism'.¹⁶⁶ As Jonathan Bate has observed, Hazlitt offers here the first attempt at a reading of *The Tempest* 'in terms of colonialism'. Hazlitt in this way hits upon what Paul Brown, amongst others, have recently argued, situating Caliban as part of the colonial discourse around expanding 'the Pale', which 'produced a lively literature about civility and incivility, master and masterlessness, order and disorder'.¹⁶⁷ With his dramatic monologue 'Caliban upon Setebos' (1864), Browning had himself added to this colonial discourse. As Alden and Virginia Mason Vaughan have observed of Browning's appropriation, 'Caliban is an amphibian – half man, half fish – who

¹⁶⁴ TCD MS 3136/3, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 419, p. 421.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 179.

¹⁶⁷ See Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 140-3, (p. 142), and David J. Baker, 'Where is Ireland in *The Tempest*?', in *Shakespeare in Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. by Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 68-88.

lives on the margins of humanity but reveals essential human traits such as selfishness and self-deception'. Throughout the poem, Browning interrogates the theological upshot of evolutionary theory. 'Caliban judges his god Setebos by himself', the Vaughans point out, 'if he is capricious with crabs on the beach – sometimes ignoring them, sometimes cruelly toying with them – so must Setebos be cruel and capricious, favoring Prospero for no reason'.¹⁶⁸ Although theologically naïve, Browning's Caliban thinks he can intercede on his own behalf through ritual song just the same:

*What I hate, be consecrate
To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate,
For thee, what see for envy in poor me?*¹⁶⁹

'But if Browning will implicitly have none of the argument from design from the monstrous and self-satirizing speaker of "Caliban upon Setebos," of which the subtitle is "Natural Theology in the Island," he will explicitly have none of it from Newman', whose theology Dowden himself admired and, as Stuart Peterfreund argues, Browning thought achieved a 'mathematical exactness' of identity by delimiting God in terms of humanity.¹⁷⁰ As Peterfreund points out, Browning revealed to Julia Wedgwood in June 1864 that:

Last night I was talking with a friend who read aloud a passage from Dr. Newman's *Apology* in which he says that "he is as convinced of the existence of God"—an individual, not an external force merely—"as of his own existence:" I believe he deceives himself and that no sane man has ever had, with mathematical exactness, equal conviction on those two points—though the approximation to equality may be in any degree short of that: and looking at the practical effects of belief, I should expect that it would be so: I can see nothing that comes from absolute *contact*, so to speak, between man and God, but everything in all variety from the greater or less distance between the two. When anyone tells me that he *has* such a conviction, I look at a beggar who holds the philosopher's stone according to his profession. Do you see

¹⁶⁸ Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan, p. 109.

¹⁶⁹ Browning, 'Caliban upon Setebos', in *Browning*, pp. 328-35 (p. 335).

¹⁷⁰ Stuart Peterfreund, 'Robert Browning's Decoding of Natural Theology in "Caliban upon Setebos"', *Victorian Poetry* 43.3 (Fall 2005), 317-31 (p. 318).

the bearing of all this as I seem to see it? How, remaining beggars—or poor, at least—we may at once look for the love of those to whom we give our mite, though we throw it into the darkness where they only *may* be: fortunately the experiment on our faith is never a very long one.¹⁷¹

Browning identifies in the ontological ambiguity of Newman's *Apology* the decentring 'Natural Theology' of 'Caliban upon Setebos' here.¹⁷² What Bate points out about Coleridge would in this way appear to hold true of both Browning and Dowden: 'A partisan critic will always take care not to ask certain questions which might upset his appropriation of a Shakespearean text for his own cause'.¹⁷³ Problematically, however, Dowden asserts at the outset of *Mind and Art* the very possibility of personal disinterest that Bate's observation presupposes. Dowden does claim, after all, that he just hopes to find 'the personality of the writer' Shakespeare by reading his plays.¹⁷⁴ It would seem, then, that Dowden does both Browning and Coleridge one better by omitting in the name of nonpartisan objectivity the first half of Caliban's final lines in the play when quoting his apologetic speech in *Mind and Art*, letting Caliban call himself a 'a thrice-double ass' without vowing to change, depriving him of the empathy that the Vaughans identify in Browning's appropriation: 'Ay, that I will: and I'll be the wiser hereafter, | And seek for grace' (5.1.328-9). By gagging Caliban before he can promise to reform, Dowden effectively locks his appropriation of this Shakespearean text up in the decorated cell that Caliban prepares to earn Prospero's pardon.

Likewise, Dowden does not discuss Caliban's accusation of Miranda: 'You taught me language, and my profit on't | Is I know how to curse' (1.2.423-4). Silence on these lines nearing the end of a century that saw English replace Irish as the language spoken in most of Ireland sounds out as patently political censorship of Shakespeare. 'Strike a blow for Irish by speaking it', Eoin Mac Néill urged early recruits to the Gaelic League, 'if we cannot learn Irish we can at least

¹⁷¹ Browning, p. 698.

¹⁷² Peterfreund, p. 317.

¹⁷³ Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*, p. 179.

¹⁷⁴ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. v.

stand up for it'.¹⁷⁵ As Kiberd has argued, 'The history of Ireland in the decades after the foundation of the League in 1893 was to prove how much easier Mac Néill's second option was than his first'.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, Kiberd observes in *Inventing Ireland* that the English spoken in Ireland up to this point:

retained many of the linguistic features of Shakespearian England, words and phrases which had long fallen into disuse in the parent country. This hints at a broader truth: everything in a colony petrifies, laws, fashions, customs too, so that a point is reached at which the planter may come to resent the parent country's failure to remain the model it once was.

But Dowden did not recognise this 'broader truth' about his own hybrid identity. Further bowdlerising *The Tempest* in *Mind and Art*, Dowden omits Prospero's apparent acceptance of Caliban: 'this thing of darkness I | Acknowledge mine' (5.1.309-10). Although Dowden reads *The Tempest* in colonial terms, he takes a line in sharp opposition to Hazlitt by putting Anglo-Irish cultural politics first. As Stephen Greenblatt has observed in *Learning to Curse*, omission of these crucial lines from *Mind and Art* reflects a reluctance to acknowledge the awkward position that Dowden also occupied as a colonial intellectual.¹⁷⁷ 'I come to Irish subjects neither as an Englishman nor as an Irishman, but as a half-breed', Dowden once remarked to de Vere of reading Irish folklore.¹⁷⁸ In this context, his own sense that 'Prospero's forgiveness is grave, judicial & has something in it abstract & impersonal', conflates Prospero's pardon of Antonio with Prospero's move to make amends with Caliban, introducing ambiguity to his reading of the play's ending: 'He cannot wrong the weaker reason, he cannot wrong his own higher nature by deriding so unworthy a passion as the desire for vengeance'.¹⁷⁹ But the Anglo-Saxon absolutism and Anglo-Irish unionism that Dowden upheld also prevented him from similarly seeking forgiveness from separatist Irish nationalists, making unity across communities effectively impossible from his

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Kiberd, 'George Moore's Gaelic lawn party' (1979) in *The Irish Writer and the World* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 91-104 (p. 91).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 26.

¹⁷⁸ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 183.

¹⁷⁹ TCD MS 3136/3, p. 18.

perspective. He could not play the part of Prospero any further until he could himself forgive an Anglo-Irish Antonio for his betrayal and return Ireland to Caliban, his Irish countryman.

After attempting at almost every opportunity in *Mind and Art* to situate Shakespeare in sharp relief against his characters, then, that Dowden concludes by likening Shakespeare to Prospero comes as something of a surprise.¹⁸⁰ With this reading of Shakespeare as Prospero, Dowden nevertheless hit upon what proved a more persuasive point during much of the last century because routinely emptied of its political import. Anthony Nuttall does well to take issue with Dowden in a recent rereading of *The Tempest*:

Ever since Edward Dowden wrote that Shakespeare's final period was a time of 'large, serene wisdom' in which the poet 'had attained some high and luminous table-land of joy', it has been common practise to assume that *The Tempest* is like the other romances, a radiantly happy work, *deep* comedy. [...] But where the endings of *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale* are simultaneously this-worldly and Paradisal, the ending of *The Tempest* seems somehow infected. The source of the contagion may be uncertainty.¹⁸¹

Finishing the epilogue, Prospero indeed asks for forgiveness himself, begging of the audience: 'As you from crimes would pardoned be, | Let your indulgence set me free' (5.1.374-5). Nuttall has identified here a 'sin that is never explained to us, the audience'.¹⁸² Dowden embraces this ambiguity, however, that he might gloss over it to make his own meaning by Shakespeare. 'Shakspeare does not supply us with a doctrine, with an interpretation, with a revelation', he remarks in the last lines of *Mind and Art*. 'What he brings us, is this—to each one, courage, and energy, and strength, to dedicate himself and his work to that,—whatever it be,—which life has revealed to him as best, and highest, and most real'.¹⁸³

Dowden had concluded in his lectures that when Shakespeare thought on his own obligations as a playwright in this way, 'he was passing from his service as artist, to his service as an English gentleman. Had his mind been dwelling on the

¹⁸⁰ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 414.

¹⁸¹ A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 369-70.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹⁸³ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 430

though question of how he should use his new freedom, & had he been enforcing upon himself the truth that the highest freedom lies in service the bonds, of duty?’¹⁸⁴ The Shakespeare of *Mind and Art* signals the freedom of unionism—the submission of Irish literary culture to the ‘bonds’ of a ‘stern fidelity to fact’ represented by Dowden’s Shakespeare—even though he had concluded his last lecture by observing after Ralph Waldo Emerson that ‘We are still out of doors’ with Shakespeare.¹⁸⁵ Amongst Dowden’s own faults, number the false notes that ring throughout his attempt to sing Shakespeare’s praises as a playwright defined by his materialism and pragmatism, his Anglo-Saxon sensibilities.

Indeed, the inauthenticity of Dowden’s study disappointed Yeats before it set off his political side. Edwards has observed of the part Dowden played in their spat over Shakespeare that:

Dowden finds himself landed with a worldly Shakespeare whose pragmatism he found distasteful. Yet the book [...] is noisy in its acclamation of the virtue of pragmatism, or devotion to fact. But this acclamation *is* noise, political noise. Besides trying, rather unsuccessfully, to show that this worldly pragmatism was not the be-all and the end-all of Shakespeare, Dowden has a political duty to put the practical, bourgeois, Anglo-Saxon worship of success in the best light possible – even if later it must be seen to be overthrown. Insofar as pragmatism adheres to Shakespeare (and Dowden fears it may be ineradicable), it must be praised. For the sake of Great Britain, Shakespeare must be praised. The cause of unionism demands that even Shakespeare’s visionary inadequacies should be shown in a good light. In any case, what are recognized as and accepted by Dowden as Anglo-Saxon characteristics have to be hailed as virtues.¹⁸⁶

But after demonstrating that Dowden’s casting of Irish identity as feminine fits with Arnold’s reading of the Celt, Edwards rather problematically concludes that could Dowden and Yeats have put politics aside, the pair would have found that

¹⁸⁴ TCD MS 3136/3, p. 23.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁶ Edwards, p. 59.

their readings of Shakespeare shared much in common.¹⁸⁷ Yet Dowden's appropriation of Shakespeare depends on a favourable reading of instrumental reason—the materialism and pragmatism that he read in both Shakespeare and his age, 'a Protestant age, a monarchical age, an age eminently positive and practical'—which Yeats would never get behind.

It does not come as a surprise, then, that Wallace has identified Revivalists like Eglinton as quite comfortable with Dowden and his reading of Shakespeare because they 'were responding to his *Shakspeare* primer'.¹⁸⁸ To conserve space and make a primer of *Mind and Art*, Dowden removed much of the political baggage that bears on, amongst other things, his inflammatory reading of *The Tempest*. In the three pages that he devotes to his discussion of the play in his primer, only in the last paragraph does he gesture towards his original reading:

Shakspeare seems in this play, among other things, to consider the question: What is true freedom? Ariel, incapable of human bonds, pants for liberty; Caliban sings his drunken song of freedom, and conspires to throw off the yoke of Prospero's rule; but Ferdinand, the lover, finds true freedom in service to her he loves; and Prospero, resigning his magic powers, finds it in the law of human duty.¹⁸⁹

But in its combined emphasis on Elizabethan materialism and pragmatism and Victorian imperialism and positivism, his primer loses out in nothing to *Mind and Art* and matches the consolidation of Shakespeare's artistic growth and spiritual development around the four periods that he first devised in his lectures. 'In the closing years of the sixteenth century the life of England ran high' on a diet of practical men—sailors, scientists, and soldiers—Dowden reiterates at the opening of his primer.¹⁹⁰ Of course, in *Mind and Art* he had similarly observed that 'A vigorous, mundane vitality—this constitutes the basis of the Elizabethan drama', and thus it serves as an answer to cynicism by being 'thoroughly free from lassitude, and from that lethargy of heart, which most of us have felt at one

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁸⁸ Wallace, p. 812.

¹⁸⁹ Edward Dowden, 'The Tempest' in *Shakspeare*, ed. by John Richard Green (London: Macmillan, 1877), pp. 148-51 (p. 151).

¹⁹⁰ Dowden, *Shakspeare*, (London: Macmillan, 1877), p. 5.

time or another'.¹⁹¹ Dowden had just entered his second decade as chair of English literature at Trinity when he made this contribution to Macmillan's series of 'History and Literature Primers' edited by the English clergyman turned historian J. R. Green, author of *Short History of the English People* (1874). But Dowden's primer certainly remains remarkable as a representation of *Mind and Art* to his younger readers.

He accessibly summarises here contemporary scholarship on both Shakespeare and Elizabethan London, establishes a coherent chronology for the composition of Shakespeare's plays and poetry, and discusses the famous performances of Shakespearean actors down the ages. Those students whom Dowden had in this way weaned could move onto *Mind and Art*, and indeed generations of editors brought up by both studies have influenced the structure of Shakespeare anthologies ever since.¹⁹² Little wonder, then, that Dowden introduced several terms that have simply stuck such as 'Romances' for the late plays, which stands out as only the most widely known for grouping *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale* together since these mark the transition from 'the plays concerned with the violent breaking of human bonds, to a group of plays which all are concerned with the knitting together of human bonds'.¹⁹³ His primer also fits the four periods of Shakespeare's spiritual and artistic development from *Mind and Art* into the easily recalled categories of 'In the Workshop', 'In the World', 'In the Depths', and 'On the Heights'. Addressing younger students also forced Dowden to clean up the already highly glossed material from *Mind and Art* that touches on the controversial aspects of Shakespeare's biography.

Dowden scrupulously handles, for example, contemporary doubts over authorship and rumours of Shakespeare's backhanded business dealings captured famously in the bitter remark:

Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of

¹⁹¹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 25, p. 29.

¹⁹² Schoenbaum, p. 359.

¹⁹³ Dowden, *Shakspere*, p. 55.

you; and, being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.¹⁹⁴

But because Shakespeare represents English literary culture as well as English commercial sensibilities, Dowden discusses this early reference to Shakespeare, found in the 1592 pamphlet *Greenes Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, largely to place Shakespeare in London as an aspiring actor in the early 1590s. Although Dowden also mentions the popular assumption that as a budding playwright Shakespeare may have ‘stolen’ lines from Robert Greene, amongst other playwrights, he foregoes an analysis of any wrongdoing on Shakespeare’s part and rejects as standing on ‘peculiar ground’ the claim that Greene or Marlowe or both had a hand in writing substantial parts of *3 Henry VI*.¹⁹⁵ Rather, Dowden forgoes repeating his gesture towards an expansion of the canon from *Mind and Art* where he had indeed argued that Shakespeare ‘co-operated in the writing of historical plays, “The First Part of the Contention,” and “The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke”’. Yet to reinforce the immense metaphysical restraint that he saw in Shakespeare, Dowden had also concluded of further early collaboration that ‘add[ing] to the pieces of the school of Marlowe a rhapsody of blood commingled with *nonsense* was impossible for Shakspeare, who was never altogether wanting in a sane judgment, and a lively sense of the absurd’.¹⁹⁶ More to the larger point of preserving Shakespeare as a moral authority for his younger readers, therefore, Dowden looks but briefly in his primer at Shakespeare’s Sonnets for biographical material that points up the process of Shakespeare’s sexual maturity.

‘The young friend whom Shakspeare loved with a fond idolatry, was beautiful, clever, rich in gifts of fortune, of high rank’, he observes. ‘The woman was of stained character, false to her husband, the reverse of beautiful, dark-eyed, pale-faced, a musician, possessed of a strange power of attraction. To her fascination Shakspeare yielded himself, and in his absence she laid her snares for Shakspeare’s friend and won him’. Dowden concludes, then, that the falling out

¹⁹⁴ *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592). As Bate has recently pointed out, the diatribe is ‘written in the voice of Robert Greene but now usually attributed to another playwright, Henry Chettle’, who also put the publication to press. See Bate, *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind, and World of William Shakespeare* (London: Viking, 2008), pp. 39-45, p. 453.

¹⁹⁵ Dowden, *Shakspeare*, pp. 20-2.

¹⁹⁶ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 97, p. 98. My italics.

between Shakespeare and his 'young friend' over the 'dark-eyed' mistress ended in 'a complete reconciliation' between them, despite her 'snares'. After his own edition entitled *Shakspeare's Sonnets* appeared in 1881, Dowden would direct readers of his primer with a footnote to his discussion of how Shakespeare's verses 'make upon Time, and confer immortality upon his friend's loveliness'.¹⁹⁷ Even though he appears at pains to keep his discussion of love outside the bonds of marriage as heterosexual, homoracial, and platonic as possible here, Dowden does attempt to tread lightly around the idea that Shakespeare's Sonnets evidence reconciliation between their author and his wife after a falling out over his 'dark-eyed' mistress.¹⁹⁸ But by pointing up the debt owed to Dowden by many Revivalists for their Shakespeare, Wallace has diminished the source of at least Yeats's disappointment with the Anglo-Saxon sensibilities that Dowden stresses before his readers, both young and old.

Dowden had pinned on Shakespeare from his lecture on 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Age' forward a level of devotion to 'the fact' sympathetic to middleclass moralities consistent with a robust sense of commercial sensibilities. Yeats indeed remarked in May 1901 that 'Professor Dowden, whose book I once read carefully, first made these emotions eloquent and plausible. He lived in Ireland, where everything has failed, and he meditated frequently upon the perfection of character which had, he thought, made England successful, for, as we say, "cows beyond the water have long horns"'.¹⁹⁹ For Dowden, a defender of both the Union and the Empire facing down separatist Irish nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, violent conflict in Ireland felt imminent once again. 'The flutter of flags in Dublin flout the sky and fan our people cold', Dowden reported to Gosse in April 1900:

The queen's visit is right and wise, but will not effect any miracles. A more important fact is that under the auspices of the United Irish League local tyranny thro' the country has revived, and boycotting of shopkeepers in small towns who do not display the League ticket has

¹⁹⁷ Dowden, *Shakspeare*, note, p. 113.

¹⁹⁸ See also 'Shakspeare's Marriage', in *Shakspeare*, pp. 17-9. My Italics.

¹⁹⁹ Yeats, 'At Stratford-on-Avon', in *Early Essays* (2007), ed. by George Bornstein and Richard J. Finneran, *The Collected Works*, IV, pp. 73-83 (p. 78).

more than begun, while our no doubt well-meaning Executive act as if things were going smoothly.²⁰⁰

England represented in Dowden's own mind and art not only the model of economic stability that Ireland should imitate, but more importantly the system of political and social control that both ensured its steady operation and informed the disciplinarity of English literary studies. 'Let us get hold of the realities of human nature and human life, Shakspeare would say', Dowden argues in *Mind and Art*, 'and let us found upon these realities, and not upon the mist or the air, our schemes of individual and social advancement'.²⁰¹ Little wonder, then, that as English culture had inherited these 'schemes' from an era which Dowden thought the Shakespearean text utterly embodied, 'the struggle of "blood" and "judgment" was a great affair of Shakspeare's own life'.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Dowden, *Letters*, pp. 295-6.

²⁰¹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 65

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. v-vi.

3. W. B. YEATS

ROSENCRANTZ Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tar them to controversy. There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

—*Hamlet*, 2.2.317-9

In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet, not that cheap wisdom of Jack the Dreamer who reflects too much and, as it were, from an excess of possibilities does not get around to action. Not reflection, no—true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in Hamlet and in the Dionysian man.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)¹

FILE In this your theatre you will make our dead rise, William. You will raise our Irish dead, Englishman.

—Frank McGuinness, *Mutabilitie* (1997)²

VICTORIAN IDEALS

In 1901, Dowden saw his *Introduction to Shakespeare* as well as the twelfth edition of *Mind and Art* into print. Yeats wrote to Lady Augusta Gregory from the Shakespeare Hotel in Stratford on 25 April of that year:

This is a beautiful place. I am working very hard, reading all the chief criticisms of the plays and I think my essay will be one of the best things I have done. The more I read the worse does the Shakespeare criticism become and Dowden is about the climax of it. I[t] came out [of] the middle class movement and I feel it my legitimate enemy.³

The first half of his essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon' would feature in *The Speaker* on 11 May. Yeats wrote to Gregory again just after the second half appeared a week

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 2000), § 7 (p. 60).

² Frank McGuinness, *Mutabilitie* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 61.

³ Yeats, *Letters*, p. 349.

later, remarking that ‘I think I really tell for the first time the truth about the school of Shakespeare critics of whom Dowden is much the best’.⁴ Despite this qualified praise, Dowden represented a ‘legitimate enemy’ to Yeats much as he had to his father.

If not ‘one of the best things’ he ever did, ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ has remained one of Yeats’s more revealing critical interventions. Significantly, he wrote to Gregory within the week to mention that:

My father is delighted with my second article on Shakespeare [the latter half of ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’, published in *The Speaker* on 18 May 1901]. He has just written to say that it is “the best article he ever read”. He has sent off four copies. The truth is that Dowden has always been one of his “intimate enemies” and chiefly because of Dowden’s Shakespeare opinions.⁵

Yeats would once again point up his father’s opinions of Dowden’s Shakespeare as his own with the inscription to the copy of *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903) given to the Irish-American lawyer and art collector John Quinn in 1908. ‘I think the best of these Essays is that on Shakespeare’, he contends. ‘It is a family exasperation with the Dowden point of view, which rather filled Dublin in my youth. There is a good deal of my father in it, though nothing is just as he would have put it’.⁶ Yeats acknowledges here as he does elsewhere that his argument against Dowden and his Shakespeare continued a bit of ongoing family business over the question of artistic integrity as read against the middleclass sensibilities of ‘provincial’ Dublin.⁷ Shakespeare serves Yeats in this way as a pawn in the more elaborate game of Anglo-Irish cultural politics already underway. When the time came to make his own move on Dowden’s position, though, Yeats found that his father had done much of the reconnaissance work for him.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 350

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁶ *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade, 3rd edn, rev. and ed. by Russell K. Alspach (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 90.

⁷ See Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 85-90. For a full discussion of J. B. Yeats’s Shakespeare, see William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats, 1839-1922* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

J. B. Yeats once confessed to his son that ‘I study [Shakespeare] and all other poets exclusively that I may find myself’.⁸ As he stresses elsewhere in his letters to his son, Shakespeare forgives ‘other people’ since he has much in himself to forgive as well. But the significant dissent from Dowden’s position does not appear here, of course. For one, the parallels with Dowden’s influential conflation of an imperial Prospero with a magnanimous Shakespeare ‘On the Heights’ in *Mind and Art* appear too obvious. In addition, J. B. Yeats thought Shakespeare a much less self-assertive man than Dowden ever did. He reacted harshly when he learned, for example, that his son had to write an essay on a topic—lifted from the first canto of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (1849)—considering just such an issue: ‘Men may rise on the stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things’. He thought the question, ‘in eloquent indignation’, smacked of smug Victorian pragmatism. As Yeats later reported of his father’s response to the assignment, “‘That is the way’, he said, ‘boys are made insincere and false to themselves. Ideals make the blood thin, and take the human nature out of people’”. Yeats fondly recalls that his father advised him to avoid ‘such a subject’ and write instead ‘upon Shakespeare’s lines, “To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man” [*Hamlet*, 1.3.81-3]’.⁹ By repeating the fatherly advice of Polonius to his own son, J. B. Yeats breaks with Dowden over the assiduous cultivation of character—and the practice of character criticism—to find Shakespeare both understanding and unassuming in personality from the start, a reading that situates Shakespeare as residing always already ‘On the Heights’ but never presiding from them. J. B. Yeats’s Shakespeare never becomes the haughty Stratford burgher that Dowden had lionised. His Shakespeare does not have in him that Elizabethan ‘vigour’ lauded by Victorian apologists like Dowden or his other favourite targets, Browning and Wordsworth, who ‘go over to the side of the authorities’. He thought Shakespeare ‘benign’ like his own son, to whom he later wrote: ‘This benign quality you get from me; I say this remembering my father’s family’. Shakespeare ‘was at his best when most benign’, but ‘Wordsworth was malign, so was Byron and so is Swinburne. These people could not get away from their

⁸ J. B. Yeats, *Letters of J. B. Yeats: Letters to his son W. B. Yeats and Others, 1869-1922*, ed. by Joseph Hone (London: Faber and Faber, 1944), p. 199.

⁹ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 58.

self-importance. They must denounce and scold'.¹⁰ J. B. Yeats had warned his son, then, that much of contemporary literature and most of its criticism had 'gone over to the side of the schoolmaster'.¹¹ But differences between Dowden and J. B. Yeats did not diminish the respect that the pair held for each other.

After enjoying a close friendship as undergraduates together at Trinity, they suffered a brief falling out over the question of emotion's role in education. This came not long after Dowden became chair of English literature at Trinity. 'With you intellect is the first thing and last in education', J. B. Yeats wrote to Dowden on the eve of 1870. 'With us [the Brotherhood], with me at any rate, and with everybody who understands the doctrine, emotion is the first thing and last'.¹² The difference of opinion that J. B. Yeats flags up here, like that over Shakespeare in later years, would appear an entirely literary one. The Yeatses and the Dowdens lived as neighbours in Rathgar during the 1880s, Yeats himself frequently visited Dowden to talk about and borrow books from Dowden's extensive library, and J. B. Yeats painted Dowden's portrait in 1904. But such complications to a reading of their friendship as largely antagonistic did not stop Yeats from characterising it as just that in 1916 with the publication of his *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*.

'Only the other day, when I got a volume of Dowden's letters, did I discover that the friendship between Dowden and my father had long been an antagonism', he observes. 'Living in a free world accustomed to the gay exaggeration of the talk of equals, of men who talk and write to discover truth and not for popular instruction, he had already, when both men were in their twenties, decided, it is plain, that Dowden was a provincial'.¹³ J. B. Yeats had, however, advised his son to tread lightly on the memory of his 'very old friend' in *Reveries*. 'I would ask you, indeed beg of you, to remember that he not only was a very old friend, but the best of friends', J. B. Yeats wrote. 'He took a keen interest

¹⁰ J. B. Yeats, *Letters*, p. 117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

¹² Dowden, *Letters*, p. 48. See pp. 43-51 for their entire exchange. 'The Brotherhood', a name used as much in jest here as homage to the Pre-Raphaelites, consisted of the artists J. B. Yeats, Edwin Ellis, J. T. Nettleship, and George Wilson. Their 'doctrine' of emotional education fell heavily under the Pre-Raphaelites' influence.

¹³ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 88, pp. 88-9.

in your success [...] it is better to be illogical than INHUMAN'.¹⁴ Yeats feared what his father might think of the rough treatment that he did give Dowden in the end:

I could not leave Dowden out, for, in a subconscious way, the book is a history of the revolt, which perhaps unconsciously you taught me, against certain Victorian ideals. Dowden is the image of those ideals and has to stand for the whole structure in Dublin, Lord Chancellors and all the rest. They were ungracious realities and he was a gracious one and I do not think I have robbed him of the saving adjective. The chapter, I should tell you, gives particular satisfaction to Gregory[,] who felt in Dowden a certain consciousness of success which makes it amusing to her that I have quoted from you a very kind analysis of the reasons of his failure.¹⁵

But Dowden could not serve for Yeats as the 'intimate enemy' that he had for his father, and here he tries to point this fact out to his father gently. This break indeed allowed Yeats to see in Dowden his own 'legitimate enemy'. Only then could he 'quite brutally attack'¹⁶ Dowden in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. By working with his father's own insights on Shakespeare and yet abandoning his father's loyalty to Dowden, Yeats achieves a balance between critical tact and emotional distance in order to make Dowden not only 'the image of those [Victorian] ideals', but also force him 'to stand for the whole structure in Dublin, Lord Chancellors and all the rest'.

Yeats accomplishes with his appropriation of the Shakespearean text in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' what Kiberd has recently argued Yeats's 'gifted father failed to do', like many other artists: 'write themselves into existence as models, before going on to read and decode that new self'. As Kiberd observes of Yeats's ability to bring off this self-reflexive scrutiny in his literary criticism, 'Such a critique is the highest compliment, for all truly great moments in culture are achieved by an act of analytic opposition'.¹⁷ Yeats argues against Dowden in 'At Stratford-on-

¹⁴ J. B. Yeats Letters, p. 168.

¹⁵ Yeats, *Letters*, pp. 602-3.

¹⁶ Peter Ure, 'W. B. Yeats and the Shakespearean Moment: On W. B. Yeats's Attitude Towards Shakespeare as Revealed in his Criticism and in his Work for the Theatre' (Belfast: Mayne, Boyd and Son, 1969), p. 6.

¹⁷ Declan Kiberd, 'Yeats and Criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 115-28 (p. 119).

Avon' by focusing his attack on precisely those 'Victorian ideals' of materialism and pragmatism, positivism and utilitarianism that underwrite the reification of an Anglo-Saxon Shakespeare in *Mind and Art*. 'To suppose that Shakespeare preferred the men who deposed his king is to suppose that Shakespeare judged men with the eyes of a Municipal Councillor weighing the merits of a Town Clerk', Yeats rails against Dowden, 'and that had he been by when Verlaine cried out from his bed, "Sir, you have been made by the stroke of a pen, but I have been made by the breath of God," he would have thought the Hospital Superintendent the better man'.¹⁸ The quote cited as that of the French Symbolist poet Paul Verlaine perhaps erroneously here gets Yeats's point across precisely all the same: life's purely practical exigencies troubled Shakespeare rather little. Yeats cuts his Shakespeare from finer cloth and yet his Shakespeare also represents a celebration of 'the folk' amidst the flowering of the English Renaissance.

What is more, Yeats argues that Shakespeare 'meditated as Solomon, not as Bentham meditated, upon blind ambitions, untoward accidents, and capricious passions, and the world was almost as empty in his eyes as it must be in the eyes of God'.¹⁹ Yeats's Shakespeare—aristocrat, mystic, and peasant—spent little time worrying after the utility of an action whether taken himself or by one of his characters. For Yeats, the heroic elements of the Shakespearean text express 'personality' rather than the imperial ambitions of England under Elizabeth. As Kiberd has observed of Yeats's sympathetic reading of *Richard II* in 'At Stratford-on-Avon', in this way 'he reinterpreted it in Arnoldian terms as a version of what England had done in Ireland. This he went onto re-imagine in the contrast between King Conchubar and the hero Cuchulain in plays like *On Baile's Strand* (1904), the former being astute, cunning, and worldly, the latter impulsive, poetic, and reckless of his own interest'. Kiberd concludes what has proven a productive line of reasoning in recent criticism by pointing out that 'by creating a cycle of Cuchulain plays, Yeats was merely making available to Irish audiences a myth of national self-explanation to set alongside Shakespeare's Henriad cycle'.²⁰

¹⁸ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 79.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁰ Kiberd, 'Yeats and Criticism', p. 124. This idea has its own history in Yeats criticism. Reg Skene in *The Cuchulain Plays of W. B. Yeats: A Study* (London: Macmillan, 1974) and Philip Edwards in *Threshold of a Nation: A Study in English and Irish Drama* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979) have each given it a systematic

The principal critical text in this project, 'At Stratford-on-Avon', leverages the dichotomy between 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' as poetical, political, and above all Shakespearean, a dichotomy that Yeats would take to its logical conclusion in *A Vision* (1925, 1937).

The first book of *A Vision* schematises 'history' according to the 28 phases of the moon under the title 'The Great Wheel'. The phases rotate from the complete objectivity of the first to the total subjectivity of the fifteenth, neither of which Yeats peoples because he did not believe anyone could actually sustain the absolutes of either a 'primary' or 'antithetical' personality. Rather, Yeats argues here as he does elsewhere that the best art synthesises.²¹ The 28 phases of the moon wax heroic with intuition and impulse coming to the fore early. The moon then passes through several sensual phases before reaching an aesthetic dispensation. It finally wanes with the religious and philosophical mind bringing things full circle to start the cycle ticking over again. Significantly, each phase of the moon represents various aspects of creativity and power through a cast of characters that Yeats culls largely from Western literary history. For example, he places Walt Whitman at phase six, John Keats at fourteen, Dante—nearest for Yeats to the perfect fusion of mind and body here—at seventeen, Newman and Luther at 25, and Socrates and Pascal at 27. Yeats places Shakespeare at phase twenty alongside Napoleon and Balzac, arguing that:

Shakespeare, the other supreme figure of the phase, was—if we may judge by the few biographical facts, and by such adjectives as 'sweet' and 'gentle' applied to him by his contemporaries—a man whose actual personality seemed faint and passionless. Unlike Ben Jonson he fought no duels; he kept out of quarrels in a quarrelsome age; not even complaining when somebody pirated his sonnets; he dominated no Mermaid Tavern, but through *Mask* and *Image*, reflected in a multiplying mirror—he created the most passionate art that exists.

treatment. Edwards reiterates his position in 'Shakespeare and the Politics of the Irish Revival'. Ruth Nevo has adopted a similar position to both Edwards's and Skene's in 'Yeats, Shakespeare and Nationalism', in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. by Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), pp. 182-97.

²¹ See Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), in *Mythologies* (London: Macmillan, 1959). He observes of the imagination in relation to the object therein 'that sudden luminous definition of form which makes one understand almost in spite of oneself that one is not merely imagining' (pp. 344-5). In the phases near fifteen, this balance appears the most productive.

He was the greatest of modern poets, partly because entirely true to phase, creating always from *Mask* and *Creative Mind*, never from situation alone, never from *Body of Fate* alone; and if we knew all we would find that success came to him, as to others of this phase, as something hostile and unforeseen; something that sought to impose an intuition of *Fate* (the condition of Phase 6) as from without and therefore as a form of superstition.²²

The important part for Yeats here concerns Shakespeare's relationship as a 'concrete man' to the '*Body of Fate*', which he construes as the internal representation of external facts. That Shakespeare creates 'never from *Body of Fate* alone' consists with Yeats's rejection of Dowden's position on Shakespeare's 'fidelity to fact'. Yeats also rejects in this way the Shakespeare popularly thought to merely 'hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature' (*Hamlet*, 3.2.15-6). But Yeats had first firmed up this reading of Shakespeare by drafting it as a piece of literary criticism. It should come as no surprise, then, that he focuses on the 'poetic reverie' of Richard II in 'At Stratford-on-Avon', a reading that his trip to see Sir Frank Benson play this part during the 'Week of Kings' at the Memorial Theatre in 1901 only encouraged.

'AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON'

That April, Yeats added his name to a long list of literary visitors to Stratford, one that includes many other famous authors such as Dickens, Scott, Tennyson, Thackeray, and Wilde. Devotees had steadily trickled into Stratford ever since David Garrick celebrated his famous Jubilee there in September 1769, albeit over five years after the bicentenary of Shakespeare's birth passed without much fanfare anywhere. But 'Shakespeareanity' eventually proved catching, and thus the tercentenary celebration of 1864 at the Birthplace sealed for Stratford its reputation as a sort of Anglo-Saxon Holy Land.²³ Yeats welcomed this relocation of England's cultural capital to the Warwickshire countryside. 'In London the first man you meet puts any high dream out of your head, for he will talk of

²² See Yeats, *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 151-4, for phase twenty.

²³ See Poole, pp. 214-20.

something at once vapid and exciting', he wryly observes. 'But here [in Stratford] he gives back one's dream like a mirror'.²⁴ Likewise, the town itself enchanted Yeats. He writes fondly of his walk to the theatre with a view to the town's antiquated qualities: 'One passes through quiet streets, where gabled and red-tiled houses remember the Middle Ages'.²⁵ But by appealing to the period-splendour of Stratford's streets—and later in the essay to the River Avon's own charms—Yeats also gestures at the gulf between his impression of a culturally unified past and the fractured present of those pilgrims who had flocked from London along with him for the week.

Yeats signals this sentiment from the opening sentence of his essay by referring to the English socialist and designer William Morris's utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1891). Like Morris's traveler, Yeats finds himself 'a being from another planet'²⁶ in a strange and romantic place: 'I feel that I am getting deeper into Shakespeare[']s mystery than ever before and shall be perfectly happy until I have to begin to write and that will be, as always, misery'.²⁷ To convey this 'mystery', Yeats must endure the 'misery' of breaking its spell down in an essay and thereby risk undoing its effect on him. But Yeats cleaves close to Morris, from whom he had learned that, before the rise of the middleclass, 'the aristocracy and the people shared in a common, unified culture, and art was truly "organic" and popular'.²⁸ He sympathises with Morris's anti-materialist, anti-utilitarian ethos and applies it in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' to appropriate the Shakespearean text for his Celtic revivalist rereading of the English Renaissance. Although he avoids undoing the effect of Shakespeare's mystery in this way, his move comes with its own consequences for how he shapes his essay. As Tom McAlindon has noted, 'It is built on a series of intimately related antitheses: Stratford and London, "a green garden by a river side" and "ringing pavements", the Middle Ages and "our noisy time", self-expression and efficiency, Anglo-

²⁴ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 74. Hatred for London forms the theme of his novella *John Sherman* and, to a lesser extent, *Dhoya*. He confessed to John O'Leary on 19 November 1888, for example, that 'my story—the *motif* of which is hatred of London' (*Letters*, pp. 94-5).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁶ William Morris, *News from Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest, Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), p. 60.

²⁷ Yeats, *Letters*, p. 349.

²⁸ Tom McAlindon, 'Yeats and the English Renaissance', *PMLA*, 82.2 (May 1967), 157-69 (p. 158).

French and Anglo-Saxon'.²⁹ Yeats displays the primary lesson, then, that Morris taught: 'Unity of Being' requires 'Unity of Culture'. Even though he thought that the contemporary moment largely precluded either sort of unity, Yeats's gesture towards a 'Merry England [that] was fading' suggests Shakespeare knew both sorts.³⁰ As Yeats later wrote of the modern aesthetic experience in *A Vision*, only in the eighteenth century did 'a breaking of the soul and world into fragments' finally take place.³¹ To start putting these pieces of consciousness back together and unify being once more, Yeats thought 'Unity of Culture' a necessity. As Jefferson Holdridge has recently observed in his study of Yeats's poetry, *Those Mingled Seas*, Yeats identified 'Unity of Being' as a passing thing, just 'momentarily possible', and 'Unity of Culture' an altogether rare achievement.³² But the English Renaissance serves Yeats in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' as one of the few historical instances of a culture with unity enough to sustain a Shakespeare, the fracturing of this shared sensibility—the source of its unity as such—an event, in his mind, that Shakespeare also foresaw himself.³³

Perhaps more to the point, Yeats works out a conflated sense of religious and secular pilgrimage across space and time in his essay that highlights the journey from London to Stratford—metropolis to province—as an effort to land somewhere which still 'remember[s]' this time, this past, in and for the present. Benedict Anderson's comparison in *Imagined Communities* of the journeys that the pilgrim can make serves to stress in this context the latent personal interest prompting Yeats's trip to Stratford. 'In the modal feudal journey, the heir of Noble A, on his father's death, moves up one step to take that father's place', Anderson observes. 'This ascension requires a round-trip, to the centre for investiture, and then back home to the ancestral demesne'.³⁴ That Yeats saw himself as similarly situated at the end of one era and the start of another in

²⁹ Ibid., p. 159.

³⁰ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 80.

³¹ Yeats, *A Vision*, p. 296.

³² Jefferson Holdridge, *Those Mingled Seas: The Poetry of W. B. Yeats, the Beautiful and the Sublime* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000), p. 3.

³³ See Wayne K. Chapman, *Yeats and English Renaissance Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 10-15, for the impact of this reading of the English Renaissance on the shaping of Yeats's own personality and his early poetry.

³⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 55.

history qualified him as Shakespeare's heir, a poet well placed for putting the pieces of fractured subjectivity back together.³⁵ 'I see, indeed', Yeats argues in his essay 'The Autumn of the Body' (1898), 'in the arts of every country those faint lights and faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies which many call "the decadence," and which I, because I believe that the arts lie dreaming of things to come, prefer to call the autumn of the body'.³⁶ As Peter Ure has observed, 'Yeats said that he both adored and detested the Renaissance. His attitude to Shakespeare is ambiguous, too. [...] But the Renaissance explosion was in itself a disaster; the egg, as Yeats put it, which had been ripening since the time of Chaucer, instead of hatching, burst'.³⁷ The spiritual essence of the changes that he anticipated for Ireland in the twentieth century—the move from a 'primary' or 'objective' dispensation to an 'antithetical' or 'subjective' one—found an analogue in what took shape during the Renaissance and came to define for Yeats the early modern period, 'a time when solitary great men were gathering to themselves the fire that had once flowed hither and thither among all men, when individualism was breaking up the old rhythms of life'.³⁸ This identification of Renaissance England with Revival Ireland focuses his reading on the themes that he finds first taking flight in *Richard II*: 'Shakespeare's myth, it may be, describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness'.³⁹ He situates Shakespeare in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' as a visionary mystic meditating with tremendous sympathy and regret upon the fortunes of usurped figures that Yeats variously represents in his criticism on Shakespeare with the examples of Richard II and Hamlet, Lear and Timon, Antony and Coriolanus. But Yeats owed much to the English aesthete Walter Pater for his appropriation of

³⁵ Yeats hardly stood alone in his hopes for Ireland in the new century. For example, a small pamphlet by the Irish writer T. J. Clancy entitled *Ireland and the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 1892) also captured the spirit of stubborn optimism that followed the fall of Parnell in some circles. Clancy argued that in the twentieth century—the 'heir of all ages'—Ireland would take its rightful place amongst the nations of the world. His concerns were decidedly economic compared to Yeats's own, however, as he situated Ireland as a natural bridge between the ascendant industrial power of the United States and the established capital markets of Europe (p. 8 ff.). Clancy ranks in this way as an early advocate for a centrally managed economy to guide Ireland from poverty to prosperity.

³⁶ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 140.

³⁷ Ure, p. 10.

³⁸ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

the Shakespearean text—particularly, *Richard II's* ‘tragic irony’—in this way and his reading of the Renaissance as a period of cultural unity not only in England, but across Europe as well.

Moreover, Yeats drew from Pater a heavy dose of incredulity towards the materialism and pragmatism behind much contemporary criticism, including Dowden’s own. As Pater observes, for example, in an essay on Coleridge first written in 1865, revised in 1880, and later published in *Appreciations* (1889):

The student of empirical science asks, Are absolute principles attainable? What are the limits of knowledge? The answer he receives from science itself is not ambiguous. What the moralist asks is, Shall we gain or lose by surrendering human life to the relative spirit? Experience answers that the dominant tendency of life is to turn ascertained truth into a dead letter, to make us all the phlegmatic servants of routine. The relative spirit, by its constant dwelling on the more fugitive conditions or circumstances of things, breaking through a thousand rough and brutal classifications, and giving elasticity to inflexible principles, begets an intellectual *finesse* of which the ethical result is a delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life.⁴⁰

A definition of art that privileges ‘intellectual *finesse*’ looked to Pater like a decidedly better course to follow than rules of either creation or mimesis, the aesthetic dogmatisms that he saw represented by the competing Romantic camps of the early nineteenth century.

The roots of his radical aestheticism appear here as not merely *l’art pour l’art*, but also and more importantly as an assertion of life in the face of death. As Pater observes in *The Renaissance* (1877):

Well! We are all *condamnés* [...] we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve [...] we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among ‘the children of this world’, in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and

⁴⁰ Walter Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on ‘Style’* (London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 103.

sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise [...] Only be sure it is passion – that it does not yield you this fruit of quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.⁴¹

With normative statements such these at its heart, it comes as little surprise that T. S. Eliot regarded Pater's aestheticism as an ethical theory.⁴² But Eliot also hits, perhaps by chance, upon what became for Yeats the root of his own political aesthetic, one that informs his appropriation of the Shakespearean text in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'.

As Pater later observes in *The Renaissance*, 'To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits':

Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch.⁴³

Nowhere in Shakespeare's plays did Pater find this dynamic at work quite like in *Richard II*. In his essay entitled 'Shakespeare's English Kings', he points out that in the histories Shakespeare portrayed the problematic nature of royal power 'completer still in the person and story of Richard the Second, a figure—"that sweet lovely rose" [*1 Henry IV*, 1.3.177]—which haunts Shakespeare's mind, as it seems long to have haunted the minds of the English people, as the most touching of all examples of the irony of kingship'.⁴⁴ Rather than rally against the usurper Bolingbroke, Shakespeare has it that Richard II pauses to imagine his

⁴¹ Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 238-9.

⁴² T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 442.

⁴³ Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 236-7.

⁴⁴ Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 189.

own demise as the latest in a long funeral procession which includes the fallen kings who came before him:

Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs,
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.

Let's choose executors and talk of wills. (3.3.140-4)

His lament, started here as elegy, surpasses the particular for Yeats to touch upon the universal 'sorrow' of this world. For Yeats, Shakespeare's Richard II speaks in this way 'for all men's fate'. For Pater, Richard II would 'talk of graves' to indulge in poetry 'simply for those moments' sake', adding an aesthetic edge to his experience of the very real forces of destruction that he and his remaining compatriots now face. Pater's Richard II is neither a hero nor a poet, but a man of 'average human nature' regardless of his knack for poetry.

It appears for Yeats, then, that the 'irony of kingship' amounts to the irony of an ordinary life lived under extraordinary circumstances. Pater's commentary on Shakespeare would nevertheless serve Yeats well in his own fight against 'the fact', as Pater himself observes:

True, on the whole, to fact, it is another side of kingship which he [Shakespeare] has made prominent in his English histories. The irony of kingship—average human nature, flung with a wonderfully pathetic effect into the vortex of great events; tragedy of everyday quality heightened in degree only by the conspicuous scene which does but make those who play their parts there conspicuously unfortunate; the utterance of common humanity straight from the heart, but refined like other common things for kingly uses by Shakespeare's unfailing eloquence: such, unconsciously for the most part, though palpably enough to the careful reader, is the conception under which Shakespeare has arranged the lights and shadows of the story of the English kings, emphasising merely the light and shadow inherent in it, and keeping very close to the original authorities, not

simply in the general outline of these dramatic histories but sometimes in their very expression.⁴⁵

That Shakespeare does not deviate from ‘the facts’ found in his sources—‘sometimes in their very expression’—points up for Pater the way in which lyric poetry provides for dramatic unity amongst the diversity of materials deployed in the histories. Pater’s Shakespeare becomes a composer, his ‘lights and shadows’ themes orchestrated by his vision of English history.

As Pater observes at the other end of his essay, ‘unity of impression’ recommends the lyric, which ‘preserves the unity of a single passionate ejaculation’. What is more, he defines the dramatic unity unique to Shakespeare as itself lyrical:

It follows that a play attains artistic perfection just in proportion as it approaches that unity of lyrical effect, as if a song or ballad were still lying at the root of it, all the various expression of the conflict of character and circumstance falling at last into the compass of a single melody, or musical theme. [...] Just there, in that vivid single impression left on the mind when all is over, not in any mechanical limitation of time and place, is the secret of the “unities”—the true imaginative unity—of the drama.⁴⁶

Likewise, *Richard II* points up for Yeats in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ that death has the power to bring even the mightiest of historical moments to an end. He has it that Shakespeare showed his contemporaries through the histories that a new dispensation now obtained. Yeats adds to this idea a long view of English history: ‘Merry England was fading, and yet it was not so faded that the poets could not watch the procession of the world with that untroubled sympathy for men as they are, as apart from all they do and seem, which is the substance of tragic irony’.⁴⁷ That Richard II responds with a ‘sit upon the ground’ and the ‘sad stories of the death of kings’ (3.2.150-1) to the news that Bolingbroke has executed his courtiers only underscores his tragic irony for Yeats. Ure does well to conclude, then, that his ‘speech, and others in the play, including John of Gaunt’s, communicate primarily as artefacts, only secondarily, if at all as

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 185-6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 203, p. 204.

⁴⁷ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 80.

expressions of character'.⁴⁸ For Yeats, Shakespeare establishes Richard II and Henry V as examples of archetypal personalities competing for a voice in the historical upheaval and mark in this way the beginning of the end for the 'Unity of Culture' represented by the English Renaissance. Yeats had found in Pater's reading of *Richard II* a means for making his case for Shakespeare as a poet of the eternal and impersonal, the abstract and ideal. But Yeats does not propose a naïve conception of the Renaissance in his effort to appropriate the Shakespearean text for the Revival.

Consequently, Yeats turns away from the histories to close the fourth section of 'At Stratford-on-Avon' with Shakespeare's Sonnet 66:

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
 As to behold desert a beggar born,
 And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
 And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
 And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
 And strength by limping sway disabled,
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,
 And folly doctor-like controlling skill,
 And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
 And captive good attending captain ill.

Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
 Save that to die I leave my love alone.

Yeats's Shakespeare anticipates in Sonnet 66 the fracture and eventual breakdown of the Renaissance's 'Unity of Culture'. McAlindon has found in the 'unusual rhetorical structure, based on the figures of merismus and simple anaphora, and enforcing a tone of slow and bitter indictment' of the world apparently crumbling around Shakespeare in this sonnet the source of Yeats's own poem of disillusion, 'The Fisherman' (1914):

All day I'd looked in the face
 What I had hoped 'twould be

⁴⁸ Ure, p. 14-5.

To write for my own race
 And the reality;
 The living men that I hate,
 The dead men that I loved,
 The craven man in his seat,
 The insolent unreprieved,
 And no knave brought to book
 Who has won a drunken cheer,
 The witty man and his joke,
 Aimed at the commonest ear,
 The clever man who cries
 The catch-cries of the clown,
 The beating down of the wise
 And great Art beaten down.⁴⁹

Yeats does not adopt a polemical tone in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' in order to defy Dowden alone. Rather, he accuses Dowden of flinging Shakespeare to a mob of the sort chronicled here, one uniting Irishman and Englishman alike in their philistinism. In this way, Yeats turns the old Arnoldian rhetoric on its ear.

Moreover, Kiberd detects in 'The Fisherman' what appears yet another significant aspect of Yeats's appropriation of Shakespeare in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. 'When Yeats set about founding a national literature', Kiberd observes, 'he made it very clear that the gathering of an interpretative community was an intrinsic part of the process'.⁵⁰ In Stratford, Yeats indeed found an interpretive community hard at work on the Shakespearean text and ready for more. 'One man tells how the theatre and the library were at their foundation but part of a scheme the future is to fulfil', he points out. 'To them will be added a school where speech, and gesture, and fencing, and all else that an actor needs will be taught'.⁵¹ But Yeats had to wonder of audiences back in Ireland, 'Does not the greatest poetry always require a people to listen to it?'⁵² He understood that

⁴⁹ Yeats, *Selected Poems and Four Plays*, ed. by M. L. Rosenthal, 4th edn (New York: Scribner, 1996), pp. 61-2.

⁵⁰ Kiberd, 'Yeats and Criticism', p. 118.

⁵¹ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 74.

⁵² Yeats, 'The Galway Plains', in *Early Essays*, pp. 156-8 (p. 158).

founding a new national theatre in and for Ireland would require a 'Unity of Culture' perhaps out of reach without a revolution in literary criticism to spur its inception. 'The implication is clear: the Irish, so long "read" by others, must now learn how to read themselves', Kiberd argues of Yeats's Arnoldian inflection to this point. 'The mob would only be bonded into a people when their lyric effusions were accompanied by acts of self-explanation and self-analysis'.⁵³ Yet a professional critic in Ireland like Dowden, Yeats knows, 'will not trust his nature'. For Yeats, Dowden had become beholden to the tastes of others, the 'chief temptation of the artist, creation without toil'.⁵⁴ This 'temptation' held its own implications for Yeats's reading of Dowden's appropriation of the Shakespearean text in support of the empty ambitions found in Bolingbroke and the martial virtues of his famous son, Henry V, rather than the 'capricious fancy' of 'blind' Richard II.⁵⁵ It struck Yeats as a disappointment owing to nothing less than the subordination of Irish literary culture under the Union, then, that Shakespeare becomes in *Mind and Art* 'a vulgar worshipper of success' along with his maker, Dowden.

For this reason, Yeats gives Dowden a dressing down in the most explicitly cultural-political terms of 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. 'I know that Professor Dowden, whose book I once read carefully, first made these emotions eloquent and plausible', Yeats observes:

He lived in Ireland, where everything has failed, and he meditated frequently upon the perfection of character which had, he thought made England successful, for, as we say, "cows beyond the water have long horns." He forgot that England, as [General Charles] Gordon has said, was made by her adventurers, by her people of wildness and imagination and eccentricity; and thought that Henry V., who only seemed to be these things because he had some commonplace vices, was not only the typical Anglo-Saxon, but the model Shakespeare held up before England; and he even thought it worth while pointing out that Shakespeare himself was making a large fortune while he was writing about Henry's victories. In Professor Dowden's successors

⁵³ Kiberd, 'Yeats and Criticism', p. 118.

⁵⁴ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 171.

⁵⁵ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 79.

this apotheosis went further; and it reached its height at a moment of imperialistic enthusiasm, of ever-deepening conviction that the commonplace shall inherit the earth, when somebody of reputation, whose name I cannot remember, wrote that Shakespeare admired this one character alone out of all his characters.⁵⁶

Yeats plays a polemicist of Arnoldian proportions here as he privileges 'wildness and imagination and eccentricity' to place at Dowden's feet nothing less than a turn towards the philistine in contemporary Shakespeare criticism. Although he puts Dowden down as a false prophet to a generation of Victorian character critics whipped up 'at a moment of imperialistic enthusiasm', Yeats also sets the work of Anglo-Jewish literary scholar Sidney Lee—Solomon Lazarus Lee—in his sights, bringing the Anglo-Boer War into focus.

Yeats pushes back against the 'imperialistic enthusiasm' ushered in by the guerilla warfare that the Boers waged from 1899. When he set to work on 'At Stratford-on-Avon' in April 1901, British forces had yet to secure their bloody, costly victory in the Transvaal. Yet the protracted fighting against the Boers would allow 'advanced' Irish nationalists to consolidate anti-imperial sentiment amongst more moderate factions, including Yeats's own circle of political acquaintances in Dublin.⁵⁷ The tireless Irish cultural and political activist Maud Gonne formed the 'Boer Franco-Irish Committee' in November 1899 and pressed Yeats to contribute a poem for the cause. The Committee met in the rooms of the Celtic Literary Society in Dublin. Irish nationalists from across the political spectrum attended, including socialist James Connolly, separatist Arthur Griffith, the Fenians John O'Leary and William Rooney, and constitutionalists Michael Davitt and William Redmond. By December, Gonne had secured a public letter of support from Yeats. Even the Gaelic League saw its membership boom as pro-Boer sentiment took hold after 1899, leaping from 107 to 400 branches by 1902. 'The radicalization of Irish politics' was in this way secured by 1900, Foster has observed, as the Anglo-Boer War had 'focused the energies of the political combination that would become known as Sinn Féin'.⁵⁸ Yeats introduced his Shakespeare to this potent combination of cultural nationalism and separatist

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 78-9.

⁵⁷ Foster, *Yeats*, I, pp. 222-3.

⁵⁸ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 456.

politics even as Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* (1898) put a very different spin on its subject, one much more conducive to the 'ever-deepening conviction that the commonplace shall inherit the earth'.

Lee's *Life* represents an expansion of his 1897 contribution to the fifty-first volume of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. By this time, he had taken over from Leslie Stephen as the *DNB*'s general editor. Lee, like Dowden, praises a 'sober' Shakespeare:

With his literary power and sociability there clearly went the shrewd capacity of a man of business. His literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his children. His highest ambition was to restore among his fellow-townsmen the family repute which his father's misfortunes had imperiled [*sic*]. Ideals so homely are reckoned rare among poets, but Chaucer and Sir Walter Scott, among writers of exalted genius, vie with Shakespeare in the sobriety of their personal aims and the sanity of their mental attitude towards life's ordinary incidents.⁵⁹

With his *Life*, Lee would expand this thesis into a chapter entitled 'The Practical Affair of Life'. He speculated that Shakespeare earned £600 a year, a figure that he only revised up in subsequent editions based on new estimates for ticket sales at the Globe and payments for particular plays.⁶⁰ But Yeats knew that Lee had also generously praised the ambitious Henry V, that he did not correct Dowden's own view, despite working almost exclusively with the documentary evidence on Shakespeare and his next of kin to write an 'authoritative' biography.

⁵⁹ Sidney Lee, 'Shakespeare, William', in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 63 vols (London: George Smith, 1885-1900), LI, p. 384. This passage appears almost unchanged in each of the fourteen editions of Lee's *A Life of Shakespeare*, surviving the significant revisions made nearly twenty years after first appearing in print.

⁶⁰ Lee made the final revision of his *Life* one year before his own death in 1926. He had come to estimate that the Globe took in some £3,000 annually during its early years of operation, about half of which he thought went to cover expenses. Shakespeare banked no more than £150 a year in this arrangement. But Lee guessed that he took another £180 on salary as an actor in the King's Men, with a further £40 earned annually for his plays. Lee added £20 for "'benefits" and other supplementary dues of authorship', about £15 for his cut in performances at Court, and £2 to £3 for service as a groom of the chamber, making for a staggering grand total of over £700 in annual income for Shakespeare at the height of his career. Not only does Lee leave much to the imagination in his arithmetic, he also leaves out what Shakespeare might have earned back at home in Stratford. See Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, 4th rev. edn (London: Murray, 1925), pp. 307-15.

Yeats redresses this imbalance with a turn towards Shakespeare's own cultivation of style, upsetting commonplaces and overturning conventions. Plays in general and Shakespeare's in particular exist, for Yeats, to defamiliarise. 'Time after time', he observes, '[Shakespeare's] people use at some moment of deep emotion an elaborate or deliberate metaphor, or do some improbable thing which breaks an emotion of reality we have imposed upon him by an art that is not his, nor in the spirit of his'.⁶¹ Yeats privileges style as both noble and, significantly, of the nobility in Shakespeare's England here. As he had already made clear in a letter written to the *Daily Express* on 27 February 1895 in which he recommends Irish reading material for the general public, 'The creations of a great writer are little more than the moods and passions of his own heart, given surnames and Christian names and sent to walk the earth'.⁶² Yeats binds his politics to his poetics and in this way makes style the special province neither of one period nor of one place but of cultivated elites instead. He saw not action on but reaction to the contemporary moment in the Shakespeares of critics like Dowden and Lee, a view of life that showed it conditioned by material interests alone. For McAlindon, 'Shakespeare's specific contribution to [Yeats's] aristocratic myth was that he created many "great men" whose powers of eloquent and vigorous self-expression were incomparable. [...] Shakespeare's heroes and heroines were nearly always succeeded by sensible, commonplace, "modern" men' for Yeats.⁶³ He feared, like Arnold, the leveling of classes that modernity ushered in and read his dread into the Shakespeare of 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. Yeats also feared a slow movement towards the middle, where the distinctions of taste that he thought made for art could no longer exist. As he would lament near the end of his own life in the poem 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited' (1937):

And I am in despair that time may bring
Approved patterns of women or of men
But not that selfsame excellence again.⁶⁴

It comes as no surprise for the Yeats behind 'At Stratford-on-Avon', then, that

⁶¹ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 76.

⁶² Yeats, *Letters*, p. 249.

⁶³ McAlindon, p. 169.

⁶⁴ Yeats, *Selected Poems*, p. 194.

Richard II buckles under the pressure to perform the tasks of an effective ruler. He appears wise to Yeats because too full of 'dreamy dignity' to deal with the petty externalities and bureaucratic duties of his position as king. 'Approved patterns'—particularly those of a petit bourgeois sort—seemed to Yeats implied by John of Gaunt's fervent chastising of Richard II, as Edwards amongst others has observed, which casts the king as little more than a foolish spendthrift:

This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
 Dear for her reputation through the world,
 Is now leased out—I die pronouncing it—
 Like to a tenement or pelting farm (2.1.57-60)

The national debt matters rather little to Yeats's Richard II, a figure for whom material circumstance holds little importance. But the game of cultural politics afoot in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' blinds Yeats to the more mundane aspects of the Richard II that Shakespeare explores, including his campaign in Ireland.

Although he fails to serve as an effective ruler, Richard II does indeed try to lead after his own manner and sees his forces lose. Richard II returns home defeated only to find upon landing that his Welsh troops have abandoned him, that the nobles allied to Bolingbroke have stirred up the people in rebellion against the crown, and that Bolingbroke has set his terms: repeal of banishment and restoration of title. Richard II agrees to his demands and would appear to do so because he sees only too well that his situation stands upon the edge of a knife: 'Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all' (3.3.199). But this 'all' comes to consume all. Bolingbroke takes back his own and the crown, that pregnant signifier of Richard II's regal identity. Yeats observes, then, that Shakespeare compresses questions of identity into Richard II's riddles on the relationship of physical substance and metaphysical essence to fill the deposition scene with philosophical nuance. But he also observes that this scene confounded Dowden, who had only heard Shakespeare admit to the 'boyishness' and vanity of Richard II:

Not alone his intellect, but his feelings, live in the world of
 phenomena, and altogether fail to lay hold of things as they are; they
 have no consistency and no continuity. His will is entirely unformed;
 it possesses no authority and no executive power; he is at the mercy

of every chance impulse and transitory mood. He has a kind of artistic relation to life, without being an artist.⁶⁵

Dowden quickly marshals the criticism of several contemporaries to his side, wondering of the violence done to the mirror:

Does Richard, as Professor Flathe (contemptuously dismissing the criticisms of Gervinus and of Kreyssig) maintains, rise morally from his humiliation as a king? Is he heartily sorry for his misdoings? While drinking the wine and eating the bread of sorrow, does he truly and earnestly repent, and intend to lead a new life? The habit of his nature is not so quickly unlearned.⁶⁶

Yet Yeats will not speak on this level, as criticism informed by 'Victorian ideals' put things the wrong way round by applying middleclass moral sensibilities about character—a quality standing in this context for complete respectability—to a fundamentally aristocratic literature for which such questions of conduct simply did not apply in these terms. He appropriates Richard II because he represents everything, then, that Dowden's Shakespeare apparently loathed.

Yeats observes instead that Shakespeare dramatises with *Richard II* the condition of the king as both thing and nothing, as man and office, a duality represented by the crown itself and one able to be deconstructed, just as it was constructed, by taking an oath. The crown can pass peacefully from one king to another or along with the other spoils of war as a signifier of these temporal and atemporal identities.⁶⁷ Moreover, Shakespeare shows us that Richard II knows the score on the crown's circulation as a symbol of consolidated power in this way better than anyone else when he declares:

For within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court and there the antic sits (3.2.155-7)

Until:

humoured thus,
Comes at the last and with a little pin

⁶⁵ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, p. 194.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶⁷ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediæval Political Theology*, 7th edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!' (3.2.163-5)

But not, of course, farewell crown, which will pass to the usurper Bolingbroke and then to his son Henry V. Romantic subjectivity effectively delimits the rich poetic displays of Richard II, such as this one, a position that Yeats seems to support in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. Unfortunately for Richard II, these flourishes would also appear to invite Bolingbroke to take the crown as his own. After all, the laurel better suits 'Richard, that sweet lovely rose' (*1 Henry IV*, 1.3.175). And yet, Yeats does not so easily oppose poetry to politics on this point.

When he finally arrived at the theatre in Stratford, Yeats found himself an unexpected guest. Consequently, the librarian of the Shakespeare Institute gave up his own private room to Yeats for him to work in. Likewise, Yeats found the auditorium so full in the theatre that 'they had to get me a kitchen chair to sit on the night I came'.⁶⁸ During Benson's famous 'Week of Kings', he would see *King John*, *Richard II*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *2 Henry VI*, and *Richard III* played in 'their right order'. He would, in other words, watch late medieval English history unfold according to the chronological order of the events that Shakespeare dramatises. Yeats responds—perhaps to no great surprise—in terms of having witnessed the revelation of a truth more ideal than the reality of a modern nation-state's birth: 'The six plays, that are but one play, have, when played one after another, something extravagant and superhuman, something almost mythological'. As Margaret Shewring has recently pointed out, Benson 'made no significant changes in the scope or structure of individual plays in order to shape them into one large narrative of epic proportions'. Instead, he drew on the strength of his company to bring off a set of established plays from its own repertoire.⁶⁹ Yeats observes, then, that '*the theatre* has moved me as it has never done before':

That strange procession of kings and queens, of warring nobles, of insurgent crowds, of courtiers, and of people of the gutter, has been to me almost too visible, too audible, too full of an *unearthly* energy. I have felt as I have sometimes felt on grey days on the Galway shore, when a faint mist has hung over the grey seas and the grey stones, as

⁶⁸ Yeats, *Letters*, p. 349.

⁶⁹ Margaret Shewring, 'In the Context of English History', in *Shakespeare's Histories*, ed. by Emma Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 254.

if the world might suddenly vanish and leave nothing behind, not even a little dust under one's feet. The people my mind's eye has seen have too much of the extravagance of dreams, like all the inventions of art before our crowded life had brought moderation and compromise, to seem more than a dream, and yet all else has grown dim.⁷⁰

Richard II dominates the stage in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' in large part because Yeats saw in the point-counterpoint contest between being and becoming king Shakespeare's own metaphor of cultural politics succinctly stated. As Ure argues, this dialectic between the 'vessels of porcelain and of clay' defines for Yeats the 'Shakespearian moment'.⁷¹ Yeats had indeed found affirmed on his pilgrimage that the theatre itself helped Shakespeare to imagine a national identity over and against the governmental apparatus of the budding nation-state under Elizabeth. Yeats firmly expresses this insight by observing that:

Shakespeare cared little for the State, the source of all our judgments, apart from its shows and splendours, its turmoils and battles, its flamings-out of the uncivilized heart. He did indeed think it wrong to overturn a king, and thereby to swamp peace in civil war, and the historical plays from *Henry IV* to *Richard III*, that monstrous birth and last sign of the wrath of Heaven, are a fulfillment of the prophecy of the Bishop of Carlisle, who was 'raised up by God' to make it; but he had no nice sense of utilities, no ready balance to measure deeds, like that fine instrument, with all the latest improvements, Gervinus and Professor Dowden handle so skillfully.⁷²

Yeats dissociates the Shakespearean text from the Anglo-Saxon inflection of contemporary criticism and the reverence for utilitarian calculation here to defend Shakespeare in the name of his imagined Ireland against the 'Accusation of Sin', which had to his mind 'produced its necessary fruit, hatred of all that was abundant, extravagant, exuberant, of all that sets a sail for shipwreck, and flattery of the commonplace emotions and conventional ideals of the mob, the chief Paymaster of accusation'. In short, hatred of much that Arnold had in his

⁷⁰ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 82, pp. 73-4. My italics.

⁷¹ Ure, p. 7.

⁷² Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 80.

lectures called Celtic.

Significantly, Yeats also denounces the English novelist George Eliot alongside Dowden and Gervinus for her own use of this 'fine instrument' of suspicion to similar ends in her fiction. He argues that:

They and she grew up in a century of utilitarianism, when nothing about a man seemed important except his utility to the State, and nothing so useful to the State as the actions whose effect can be weighed by reason. The deeds of Coriolanus, Hamlet, Timon, Richard II. had no obvious use, were, indeed, no more than the expression of their personalities, and so it was thought Shakespeare was accusing them, and telling us to be careful lest we deserve like accusations. It did not occur to the critics that you cannot know a man from his actions because you cannot watch him in every kind of circumstance, and that men are made useless to the State as often by abundance as by emptiness, and that a man's business may at times be revelation, and not reformation.⁷³

Yet Yeats displays here the problematic ease with which he can gloss a play without paying much attention to detail. For example, Coriolanus confirms his utility as one of the 'Masters of the people' (2.2.69) into the third act of the play by impressing the idea of service to Rome as a soldier into the official line on citizenship while he speaks down to the mob assembled in the marketplace alongside certain other grandees:

They know the corn
Was not our recompense, resting well assured
That ne'er did service for't: being pressed to th'war,
Even when the navel of the state was touched,
They would not thread the gates: this kind of service
Did not deserve corn gratis. (3.1.144-9)

Yeats papers over the utility of Coriolanus to Rome both in his capacity as a statesman and earlier as a soldier in the war with the Volscians. Of course, Coriolanus defects not long after making this speech. But Yeats must, therefore, limit his reading of *Coriolanus* to certain parts of the play largely located in its

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.

latter half—much as he does *Richard II*—to see it as purely an expression of ‘personality’. He has it, then, that Eliot would doubtless have thrown her weight behind Bolingbroke and his crew to unseat the decadent Richard II for his cost to the State. She might have even thrown Shakespeare himself out of her Warwickshire, if given the chance. For Yeats, Eliot subscribes in this way to the ‘Puritanism that drove the theatres into Surrey’.⁷⁴ Nothing in the utilitarian toolkit can situate the role of a theatre and its excesses in his estimation.

‘A nation should be like an audience in some great theatre watching the sacred drama of its own history’, Yeats later wrote of the role that he thought the Abbey Theatre should have in Dublin, ‘every spectator finding self and neighbour there, finding all the world there, as we find the sun in the bright spot under the burning glass’.⁷⁵ And indeed in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’, he hears Shakespeare bring the competing voices of *Richard II*—Richard II’s poetry and Bolingbroke’s rhetoric—to bear on the ‘sacred drama’ of English history. In this way, Yeats is able to identify what Arnold’s political gambit in his lectures on Celtic literature could not let him see: Shakespeare’s ‘rebellion against the despotism of fact’. As Yeats concludes:

[Shakespeare] saw indeed the defeat that awaits all, whether they be Artist or Saint, who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue, whether lyrical phantasy, or sweetness of temper, or dreamy dignity, or love of God, or love of His creatures. He saw that such a man through sheer bewilderment and impatience can become as unjust or as violent as any common man, any Bolingbroke or Prince John, and yet remain ‘that sweet lovely rose’.⁷⁶

A Richard II can achieve in verse a spiritual coup that outstrips anything a Bolingbroke can accomplish by utilitarian calculation alone, and thus Richard II plays the part of Yeats’s coconspirator in a rebellion against the despotic fact of British imperialism by refuting the materialism and pragmatism that underpinned its Anglo-Saxon cultural politics.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁵ See Yeats’s commentary on ‘Three Songs to the Same Tune’, in *King of the Great Clock Tower: Commentaries and Poems* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970), pp. 36-8.

⁷⁶ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 79.

Remarkably, Yeats would make a similar move with 'Easter 1916'. The famous ambivalence⁷⁷ of Yeats's attitude towards the Rising made manifest in the poem at first appears more clear as he brings the 'bewilderment' of Shakespeare's 'Artist or Saint' to bear on the martyred signatories themselves, marking the point when his own bewildered attempt to sort out the causes or reach conclusions about the utility of their actions finally fails him. He can now only name the dead 'in verse':

We know their dream; enough
 To know they dreamed and are dead;
 And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
 I write it out in verse—
 MacDonagh and MacBride
 And Connolly and Pearse
 Now and in time to be,
 Wherever green is worn,
 Are changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born.⁷⁸

But the unmaking of one identity—whether that of schoolmaster, socialist, or 'drunken, vainglorious lout'—results invariably in the making of another, altogether 'terrible beauty' that signifies a level of relativity to identity in and through the poem, which both fascinates and frightens Yeats. Did the martyred signatories become 'as violent as any common man, any Bolingbroke or Prince John, and yet remain "that sweet lovely rose"', he wonders at the poem's close much as Shakespeare does of his own Richard II at the play's end while gesturing at the prospect of civil war.

With the long poem 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' (1921), Yeats would make this connection 'almost Shakespearean in tone', as Louis MacNeice observes of several lines from this 'soliloquy' written in time of civil war:

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
 Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery

⁷⁷ See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, pp. 213-7.

⁷⁸ Yeats, *Selected Poems*, p. 85.

Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free⁷⁹

And yet, Shakespeare does not offer Yeats—nor does he claim to find in the Shakespearean text—any easy answers to the problems of political turmoil in Ireland, despite the many dramatic and poetic forms that Shakespeare otherwise provides. As Richard II observes of his new, protean self from within his cell at Pomfret Castle:

Thus play I in one prison many people,
And none contented. Sometimes am I king;
Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am. And then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king.
Then I am kinged again, and by and by
Think that I am unkinged by Bullingbroke
And straight am nothing. But whate'er I am,
Nor I not any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing. (5.5.31-41)

Likewise, Yeats restores the quicksilver quality of the signatories from that of mere rebels in 'Easter 1916'. That they have 'changed utterly' simply by his saying so hides the persona of the poet in plain sight. The role that Yeats undertakes as a commemorative poet—similar to Shakespeare's own as a playwright author(is)ing the potential personae of Richard II—gifts each a new identity, much 'As a mother names her child', pinning the paternity of the new nation down as a conceit, a poet's privilege. He nevertheless questions the apparent ease and simplicity of making such an evidently fundamental change.

'All had seemed to him ordinary people', Richard Ellmann observes in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, 'but they had suddenly found their heroic opposites, not like Yeats by effort and discipline, but by the sudden violence of a

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 115-9 (p. 116). See Louis MacNeice, *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 136. For Yeats's references to some of his own poems as soliloquies, see *Autobiographies*, p. 359, p. 532, and 'A General Introduction for my Work', in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 509-26 (p. 521).

great action'.⁸⁰ As Yeats had made clear with 'Adam's Curse' back in 1902, change must only appear facile and meet 'the fact' somewhere in the middle:

I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
 Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
 Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
 Better go down upon your marrow-bones
 And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
 Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
 For to articulate sweet sounds together
 Is to work harder than all these, and yet
 Be thought an idler by the noisy set
 Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
 The martyrs call the world'.⁸¹

Yeats observes here that the labour behind a line of verse must not show, that artifice must seem easy precisely when and where most difficult. Fighting a 'rebellion against the despotism of fact' in this way requires that strict drilling and precise coordination be conducted offstage.

Yeats had indeed done well to give Arnold a gentle dressing down in his essay 'The Celtic Element in Literature' (1897). He appreciated the project of repatriating the 'Celtic note' of English literature, but by his estimation Arnold had understated the case for Shakespeare's Anglo-Celtic poetic while overstating the Celt's 'easy emotion'. 'If men had never dreamed that fair women could be made out of flowers, or rise up out of meadow fountains and paved fountains, neither passage could have been written', Yeats argues of Arnold's examples from the *Mabinogion* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Mab and Puck of which—in addition to 'one knows not how much else of his faery kingdom'—he felt sure Shakespeare had appropriated from 'Celtic legend'.⁸² Unfortunately, while attempting to wrest Shakespeare criticism from the firm Anglo-Saxon grip of 'the fact', Yeats also felt sure Arnold had mistaken melancholy for mere sentimentality in his characterisation of Celtic literature. He objects to this aspect

⁸⁰ Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 220-1.

⁸¹ Yeats, *Selected Poems*, pp. 28-9.

⁸² Yeats, 'The Celtic Element in Literature', in *Early Essays*, pp. 128-38 (p. 130-1, p. 137). See also Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 375, p. 379.

of Arnold's argument by observing that:

From this 'mistaking dreams,' which are perhaps essences, for 'realities', which are perhaps accidents, from this 'passionate, turbulent reaction against the despotism of fact,' comes, it may be, that melancholy which made all ancient peoples delight in tales that end in death and parting, as modern peoples delight in tales that end in marriage bells; and made all ancient peoples, who, like the old Irish, had a nature more lyrical than dramatic, delight in wild and beautiful lamentations.⁸³

It should surprise—though, clearly it did not catch Yeats off guard—that Shakespeare's 'Celtic note' ever struck a chord with Arnold, who also argued that a poem must in principle serve as a 'criticism of life'.⁸⁴ Yeats points out at the outset of his essay that 'I do not think any of us who write about Ireland have built any argument upon [Arnold's ideas]'.⁸⁵ As he would repeat in 1900—perhaps just as disingenuously—in Moran's *The Leader*, Arnold had not properly understood his own argument. According to Yeats, 'Celtic' in Arnold's mouth meant little more 'the qualities of the early races of the world'.⁸⁶ The Arnoldian racial distinction nevertheless serves Yeats as an axis orientating the turbulent history of the present. Arnold helps Yeats to move in this way from history, however recent, to the present just the same. Yeats would indeed wield this distinction for *United Ireland* in a damning identification of Irish philistinism with Trinity itself during its tercentenary celebrations of July 1892:

Nobody in this great library is doing any *disinterested* reading, nobody is poring over any book for the sake of the beauty of its words, for the glory of its thought, but all are reading that they may pass an examination [...] [Trinity] has gone over body and soul to scholasticism, and scholasticism is but an aspect of the great god, Dagon of the Philistines. 'She has given herself to many causes that have not been my causes, but never to the Philistines', Matthew Arnold wrote of Oxford. Alas, that we can but invert the sentences

⁸³ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 134.

⁸⁴ Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry', in *Complete Prose Works*, IX, p. 45.

⁸⁵ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 129.

⁸⁶ Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, II, p. 241.

when we speak of our own University—‘Never to any cause, but always to the Philistines’.⁸⁷

Yeats had found the sort of hatred for philistinism that he had inherited from his father confirmed by Arnold. The Anglo-Saxon materialism and pragmatism of contemporary Anglo-Irish cultural politics that had informed Dowden’s own Shakespeare criticism found an opponent in Yeats and the passionate idealism of the Celt. So effectively did Arnold and Yeats help to switch the terms of debate that the English playwright Reginald Ramsden Buckley could pay tribute in 1911 to Shakespeare as an ‘Anglo-Celt’ in his aptly titled *The Shakespeare Revival and the Stratford-upon-Avon Movement*.⁸⁸ Service as a venue for staging ‘Modern dramas of the kind suggested by the names of Yeats, Shaw, Galsworthy, and other distinctive creators’ indeed ranks second in his list of functions for the Memorial Theatre in Stratford behind staging Shakespeare’s own plays.

The ostensibly Celtic gift for blending folklore and history into the plots of plays that pivot on moments of lyric intensity fuelled Buckley’s argument that the ‘modernity’ of what he calls Shakespeare’s ‘Choral Song’—the highest national art by his estimation—had met its contemporary match in Yeats. Buckley attempts ‘to show how the art of Shakespeare was’ like Yeats’s own and in this way ‘veritably the voice of a people, and how through rekindling the fires of true tribal or folk-art, and rallying round the self-conscious plays of Shakespeare, we have the drama once again in direct touch with the hearty and joyous impulses of life, and need no more be thralls to the superficial and stupid manifestations of a denationalised spirit’.⁸⁹ With *The Shakespeare Revival* resting squarely on this claim, Buckley sounds a clarion call for a national, noncommercial theatre dedicated to keeping Shakespeare’s plays in repertory, a position popular amongst London’s literati at the time, including Shaw, that

⁸⁷ *Uncollected Prose*, I, pp. 232-3. My italics.

⁸⁸ In 1907, Buckley completed *Arthur of Britain*, a cycle of five verse dramas. He then partnered up later that year with the English composer Rutland Boughton, a friend of Shaw, to set the cycle to music. By 1908, Buckley and Boughton had nearly finished *Uther and Igraine*, the first part of the cycle. Recognising that no commercial theatre would take on the cycle, the pair proposed founding a communal theatre supported by a small farm to be worked by the company itself. But personal scandal in Boughton’s life put the project on hold indefinitely.

⁸⁹ Reginald R. Buckley, *The Shakespeare Revival and the Stratford-upon-Avon Movement* (London: George Allen and Sons, 1911), pp. 45-6.

infamous advocate of bardicide.⁹⁰

Buckley makes it all seem innocent if not boring stuff, which his book would be, should he not also sound ‘an alarmingly lyrical epitome of turn-of-the-century racial fantasies’.⁹¹ As he concludes in his final chapter, ‘England is the heart of the Anglo-Celtic people, and Stratford England’s heart, beating with all the loyal love which is ours to give and to gain’. From the ‘Foreword’ by Benson unto this last statement of his thesis, *The Shakespeare Revival* celebrates the cause of an Anglo-Celtic coalition that must join hands with ‘the subtle strength of India’ in a blending of black and white, east and west to ensure ‘the triumph of the Aryan Empire’. Benson also declares that this new world order embraces ‘the fervour of the Romance nations, the discipline of the Teuton, the primitive vigour of the Slav, the enterprise of the Scandinavian, the mystic reverence of the Oriental’.⁹² But by celebrating the universality of Shakespeare as the poet of an Anglo-Celtic dispensation just puts new wine in old bottles, as Benson and Buckley both appropriate the older rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon ‘racial’ supremacy and its concomitant celebration of Shakespeare as a confident if not commercially savvy image of Britain’s cultural-*cum*-imperial supremacy.

Consequently, the inclusion of whole pages from ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ represents a fundamental misappropriation, even though simply inserted to illustrate Buckley’s banal observation that ‘there is still no escaping from the charm of the conditions of playgoing amid the green meadows and old-world buildings associated with the life of Stratford’s dramatist’.⁹³ The play was the thing that caught Yeats’s conscience in 1901 and in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ that play is *Richard II*. As he observes in a section of the essay omitted from publication in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, Benson impressed upon Yeats as ‘dramatic in the highest sense’ its deposition scene.⁹⁴ And yet, remarkably, Buckley does not feature Yeats’s identification of ‘Shakespeare’s myth’, which serves him as a codex for reading all the plays just as surely as it appropriates *Richard II* as ‘that

⁹⁰ See John Elsom and Nicholas Tomalin, *The History of the National Theatre* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978).

⁹¹ Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Thomson, 2004), p. 219.

⁹² Buckley, p. 188.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹⁴ Yeats, George Moore, and Gregory had all considered contracting the Benson Company to the Irish Literary Theatre and its successor, the Irish National Theatre Society. See Foster, *Yeats*, I, pp. 236-7.

unripened Hamlet', a rebel 'against the despotism of fact'.⁹⁵ But Buckley only saw fit to lift Yeats's own charming descriptions of Stratford itself, including his equally banal but, in this context, compelling observation that 'none of us that are not *captive* would ever leave the thrushes'⁹⁶ for the dark streets of London just to see a play.

Justifiably, postcolonial criticism on Irish appropriations of the Shakespearean text, such as Kiberd's own, has principally focused on the ways in which Shakespeare's words and works have served as 'captured weapons' or 'unexploded bombs' in a more or less coherent anti-imperial campaign waged against the cultural and political establishment in Ireland under the Union as represented by Dowden and his Shakespeare.⁹⁷ That many separatist Irish nationalists 'opted for a rejectionist approach' to Britain in their definition of Irish culture, Kiberd has observed, 'was both belied and explained by their enthusiastic immersion in key aspects of British culture'. Kiberd understands this 'immersion' to have schooled nationalists in how to use Shakespeare against Britain in the fight for independence, redeploing rather than rejecting the Shakespearean text out of hand to subvert cultural and political forms of British authority in Ireland.⁹⁸ Robin Bates has recently echoed Kiberd's compelling thesis in her own study of the subversive appropriations of Shakespeare by Irish writers, *Shakespeare and the Cultural Colonization of Ireland*, calling Shakespeare 'their cage and yet their key'.⁹⁹ But Yeats does not turn that key in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. Rather, he reduces the infinite variety of Shakespearean drama to the grave singularity of 'Shakespeare's myth', thereby making room in that cage for himself by achieving a measure of independence from the critical hegemony represented by that shrill songbird, Dowden. His 'rebellion against the despotism of fact' in contemporary Shakespeare criticism becomes in this way problematic from a strictly postcolonial perspective, not least because

⁹⁵ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 81.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75. See Buckley, pp. 25-8. My italics.

⁹⁷ See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, pp. 267-85.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁹⁹ Robin Bates, *Shakespeare and the Cultural Colonization of Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 33. See also Rebecca Steinberger, *Shakespeare and Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Conceptualizing Identity and Staging Boundaries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Benson's other role as an imperial impresario fails to put Yeats from his mark.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the Irish wars that feature offstage and, in no small measure, hasten Richard II's own fall do not feature at all in 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. It would appear, then, that Yeats felt content to have found in the history chronicled on stage during the 'Week of Kings' a play on the hyphen uniting Anglo and Irish in his own identity.

AT SWIM-TWO-SWANS

Yeats considered himself a late Romantic and remained reluctant to convert throughout his career. As he laments in 'September 1913', 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, | It's with O'Leary in the grave'.¹⁰¹ But Yeats would persist in his provocative stance on Shakespeare to point up his own Romantic literary inheritance. Through passing references to the plays in his prose and poetry, Yeats highlights what he read as Shakespeare's idealism. Significantly, he would extend his reading of *Richard II* from 'At Stratford-on-Avon' to situate Shakespeare in a tradition of 'romantic nationalism' that includes 'the old Fenian' John O'Leary. As he observes in 'Poetry and Tradition' (1907), 'New from the influence, mainly the personal influence, of William Morris, I dreamed of enlarging Irish hate, till we had come to hate with a passion of patriotism what Morris and Ruskin hated'.¹⁰² But exactly what Morris and Ruskin hated and precisely how it helped to enlarge 'Irish hate' Yeats never states in plain terms.

It only becomes clear as he proceeds, then, that 'Irish hate' takes aim at 'sullen anger, solemn virtue, calculating anxiety, gloomy suspicion, prevaricating hope'.¹⁰³ Yeats pushes these equivocating terms towards a deceptive clarity with an appeal to Shakespeare, whose 'persons, when the last darkness has gathered about them, speak out of an ecstasy that is one-half the self-surrender of sorrow, and one-half the last playing and mockery of the victorious sword before the

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of Benson's work in this capacity, see Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

¹⁰¹ Yeats, *Selected Poems*, p. 39.

¹⁰² Yeats, 'Poetry and Tradition', in *Early Essays*, pp. 180-90 (p. 181-2).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

defeated world'.¹⁰⁴ Here he promotes Shakespeare to the position of general in his 'rebellion against the despotism of fact' in recognition of his distinguished service record as an enduring example of 'style', 'which is set there after the desire of logic has been satisfied and all that is merely necessary established, and that leaves one, not in the circling necessity, but caught up into the freedom of self-delight'. To expand his point, Yeats observes that 'Timon of Athens contemplates his own end, and orders his tomb by the beached verge of the salt flood, and Cleopatra sets the asp to her bosom, and their words move us because their sorrow is not their own at tomb or asp, but for all men's fate'.¹⁰⁵ For Yeats, this timeless, tragic personality—in his extended use of the term—shares with the creative artist the tragic joy of becoming as well as the 'pure' sorrow, a sorrow free from self-pity, of being. As Ure argues, 'Each one masters his sufferings and is born anew into the state of a permanent image, as though he were the golden bird of Byzantium itself'.¹⁰⁶ The cultural and political considerations that had clouded Dowden's vision of the Shakespearean text in *Mind and Art* gather in this way as an antithesis to Yeats's own approach to the plays. And yet, Yeats's Shakespeare in 'Poetry and Tradition' comes with his own thorny qualifications.

'Officially, the argument might have been more aptly titled "Poetry or Patriotism" but unofficially Yeats is unwilling to relinquish all right to the impurities of politics', W. J. McCormack has observed of Yeats's point about the political aesthetic of 'Irish hate'.¹⁰⁷ Yeats finished the essay in August 1907 and initially published it under the title 'Poetry and Patriotism' as a tribute to O'Leary, whose funeral he did not attend earlier that year since he 'shrank from seeing about his grave so many whose Nationalism was different from anything he had taught or that I could share'.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Yeats considers poetry alongside tradition in this essay with the riots of 1907 over Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* fresh in his mind. For Yeats, only 'the wreckage of Young

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰⁶ Ure, p. 14. See Yeats, *Selected Poems*, pp. 138-40.

¹⁰⁷ W. J. McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p. 342.

¹⁰⁸ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 180.

Ireland' had rejected Synge.¹⁰⁹ He decries an emergent Irish Catholic middleclass with tastes reminiscent of the English philistines loathed by Arnold: 'We had opposing us from the first, though not strongly from the first, a type of mind which had been without influence in the generation of Grattan, and almost without it in that of Davis, and which has made a new nation out of Ireland, that was once old and full of memories'.¹¹⁰ The new political dispensation appeared an historical accident to Yeats. His low opinion of Dublin's middleclass—satirised as 'Paudeen' adding 'the halfpence to the pence' in 'September 1913'—would feature in a vociferous manner up and down his career. But his theory of cultural unity appears nevertheless in the aristocrats, peasants, and artists of 'Poetry and Tradition' who share the Renaissance ability to appreciate the same 'beautiful things'.¹¹¹ As he returns to 'O'Leary and his times' to conclude his tribute, the question of legitimacy—cultural as well as political—turns into a question of fidelity not to 'the fact' but to tradition, a tradition that Yeats yokes to O'Leary as 'romantic nationalism' and defines as the 'spiritism' of the rural Irish in order to point up the sense of style vitiated by philistine nationalists now worshipping—like their reviled English counterparts—at the altar of utility.¹¹² Yeats's 'Irish hate' depends in this way on a line of reasoning full of spite for materialism that he identifies vaguely with rural Ireland and specifically with the writings of not only Morris and Ruskin here but, as ever, with Arnold and Pater.¹¹³ Yeats swims in a gathering crosscurrent of contemporary Shakespeare criticism, then, that defended the idealism of the Romantics against even their

¹⁰⁹ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 472.

¹¹⁰ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 182.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹¹³ A similar debate had also worked itself out in England. As Grady has observed, a deep divide had taken shape by the late nineteenth century between lay readers of Shakespeare siding with either Arnoldian 'men of letters' or the 'specialist' founder of the New Shakespeare Society, F. J. Furnivall, a friend and frequent correspondent of Dowden. Grady cites Swinburne's attack on Furnivall and the minutiae of the NSS's metrical texts as an example of this sort of scholarship run amuck. Swinburne resented scientific testing in humanist criticism, resenting even more the 'disintegration' of the 'organic whole' of the Shakespearean text observed, in his mind, unchallenged since at least Coleridge's time (*The Modernist Shakespeare: Critical Texts in a Material World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 53-6). It would appear, then, that Yeats's work fits directly within this debate, as leverages his own Romantic literary inheritance to argue against the reification of a 'racy Saxon' (Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 16) in the work of calculating character critics like Dowden just as surely as he shows himself in 'Poetry and Tradition' to stand increasingly apart from nationalists seeking 'immediate victory, immediate utility'.

professed proponents such as Dowden.

Having waded into these turbulent waters with Arnold and Pater, however, Yeats could rely on Ruskin's lecture 'The Mystery of Life and its Arts' delivered in Dublin on 13 May 1868 to keep him afloat. The occasion marked one of the last in the successful run of 'Afternoon Lectures on Literature and the Arts'. Past speakers had acquainted the 'gentlewomen and male civil servants'¹¹⁴ of the city with the latest in intellectual fashion, including Arnold's cultural criticism as well as recent scholarship on Shakespeare, Scott, and others each spring since 1863.¹¹⁵ Ruskin's lecture proved particularly popular. The *Daily Express* reported on the day after his appearance that 'so great was the demand for tickets, that the place had to be changed to the Concert Hall of the Exhibition Palace. Long before the hour appointed for the lecture the hall was crowded, about 2000 persons being present'.¹¹⁶ Ruskin certainly had lofty expectations to meet and did, in part, by introducing a reading of Shakespeare that situated him alongside Homer as a cultural fountainhead:

Men, therefore, like Homer and Shakespeare, of so unrecognized personality, that it disappears in future ages, and becomes ghostly, like the tradition of a lost heathen god. Men, therefore, to those whose unoffended, uncondemning sight, the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness, with which they will not strive; or in a mournful and transitory strength, which they dare not praise. And all Pagan and Christian Civilization thus becomes subject to them. It does not matter how little, or how much, any of us have read, either of Homer or Shakespeare; everything round us, in substance, or in thought, has been moulded by them. [...] Of the scope of Shakespeare I will say only, that the intellectual measure of every man since born, in

¹¹⁴ Christina Hunt Mahony, 'Women's Education, Edward Dowden and the University Curriculum in English Literature: An Unlikely Progression', in *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres*, ed. by Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), pp. 195-202 (p. 195).

¹¹⁵ Lectures of the last series included in addition to Ruskin's own, Dowden's contribution on 'Mr Tennyson and Mr Browning', 'Specimen of a Translation of Virgil', 'The Poetry of Sir Walter Scott', an untitled lecture that touched on Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', and, ironically, 'The Peculiarities of Popular Oratory'.

¹¹⁶ *Daily Express*, 14 May 1868.

the domains of creative thought, may be assigned to him, according to the degree in which he has been taught by Shakespeare.¹¹⁷

Ruskin erases the centuries of material and spiritual change in Europe that separate Homer and Shakespeare, Ancient Greece and Renaissance England, by insisting on the similarity of their ‘unoffended, uncondemning’ visionary powers and impersonality here, observing that neither the passage of time nor the development of Christianity can avail any critical project that figures the cultural authority of Shakespeare on his redemptive narratives and representative Englishness.¹¹⁸ Any such endeavour looked to Ruskin foolish at best, morally bankrupt at worst, giving the lie to Dowden’s *Mind and Art* before it had even appeared in print. But Dowden was numbered amongst the audience on the afternoon that Ruskin delivered his lecture, and it would appear that his argument about Shakespeare left a strong impression on Trinity’s newly minted chair of English literature.

Dowden does indeed observe after Ruskin in *Mind and Art* that the ‘greatest poetic seers are not angry, or eager, or hortatory, or objurgatory, or shrill’, and then repeats Ruskin’s comments on the ‘unrecognized personality’ of Homer and Shakespeare to set up his own discussion of Shakespeare’s four nonetheless recognisable periods of steady artistic growth and spiritual development. But Dowden also draws his brief discussion of Ruskin’s Shakespeare—with its parenthetical dismissal of ‘an eager and intense Shelley’—to a close by concluding that ‘while this view of things from an extra-mundane point of vision is to be taken account of in any study of Shakspeare’s mind and art, it must be insisted upon that the facts are at the same time thoroughly apprehended, studied, and felt from the various points which are strictly finite and mundane’.¹¹⁹ By insisting on a faithful accounting of ‘the facts’ to the last, Dowden misses Ruskin’s contentious point about the problem that Shakespeare’s cultural authority and impersonality represented for contemporary criticism. But Yeats would not.

¹¹⁷ *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), XVIII, p. 161.

¹¹⁸ See Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, pp. 193-8, pp. 225-8.

¹¹⁹ Dowden, *Mind and Art*, pp. 356-7.

Rather, he privileges just such an ‘extra-mundane point of vision’ in Shakespeare by squaring with the pessimism of Ruskin’s reading in ‘Poetry and Tradition’ much as he does elsewhere. That Ruskin fails to find in Shakespeare’s characters ‘with deepest spirit’—the Hamlets and Lears, the Ophelias and Cordelias—an answer to the mysteries of life, much less the models of morally upright behaviour that contemporary critics had sought, would prove of signal importance for Yeats. The reverence for ‘the Hand that can save alike by many or by few’ that Ruskin lifts in this lecture from the Book of Samuel and identifies as invoked by the victorious Henry V after Agincourt, no less, meets its spiritual match in Shakespeare’s tragedies.¹²⁰ A *coup de grâce* falls hard from Hamlet’s lips, then, that puts an end to simple piety:

Rashly—
 And praise be rashness for it—let us know
 Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
 When our dear plots do pall, and that should teach us
 There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
 Rough-hew them how we will— (5.2.6-11)

Of course divinity does not, Ruskin suggests, however Horatio might reply on the matter. Shakespeare had ceased to provide the peace of mind that he had once upon a time, and thus Ruskin looks onto and through history in ‘The Mystery of Life and its Arts’ to find Homer and Shakespeare kindred spirits of the abyss. And yet, these cultural fountainheads differ in one unexpected way for Ruskin: Homer’s gods give his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* a sense of justice through cosmic order, albeit cruel at times, which Ruskin shows Shakespeare’s tragedies to simply lack. Daunted by his own discovery, Ruskin abandons the nihilism of Shakespeare’s ubiquitous genius to venerate the discrete virtues of charity and hope.

Ruskin published ‘The Mystery of Life and its Arts’ in a reissue of *Sesame and Lilies* in 1871. He confessed in the volume’s new preface that the lecture contains ‘the best expression I have yet been able to put in words of what, so far as is within my power, I mean henceforward to both do myself, and to plead with all over whom I have any influence to do according to their means’.¹²¹ Ruskin

¹²⁰ Ruskin, XVIII, p. 162.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

indeed rounds out his lecture by invoking hope and above all charity, regardless of their conspicuous absence in his reading of Shakespeare. He later expressed his reservations about the pessimism located in this way at the heart of his lecture. Ruskin feared that he had dwelt despairingly on the matter, distracting from his larger point, a sentiment that stemmed from ‘the feeling that I had not with enough care examined the spirit of faith in God, and hope in Futurity, which, though unexpressed, were meant by the master of tragedy [Shakespeare] to be felt by the spectator, what they were to himself, the solution to and consolation of all the wonderfulness of sorrow’.¹²² Despite giving Shakespeare the benefit of the doubt in hindsight here, Ruskin left ‘The Mystery of Life and its Arts’ out of some subsequent editions of *Sesame and Lilies*, making his Shakespeare tough to pin down. He had effectively emptied Shakespeare of the very same virtues that he also ended up praising unconditionally himself, leaving readers with a Shakespeare in whom ‘the strongest and most righteous are brought to their ruin, and perish without word of hope’.¹²³ At his most hopeless, then, that Shakespeare appears truly terrifying to Ruskin should not surprise. His Shakespeare does not abide by the Victorian need to esteem vigorous, life-affirming fact. But faith in Shakespeare had once flowered in Ruskin as well.

In December 1864, he had boldly declared before an audience at Greater Manchester’s Rusholme Town Hall that ‘Shakespeare has no heroes;—he has only heroines’. Ruskin lists as examples of Shakespeare’s women both ‘steadfast in grave hope, and errorless in purpose: Cordelia, Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, Imogen, Queen Catherine, Perdita, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind, Helena, and last, and perhaps loveliest, Virgilia, are all faultless’. For Ruskin, Shakespeare ‘conceived [of them] in the highest heroic type of humanity’.¹²⁴ Yet he struggles even here to saddle Shakespeare with a message of charity and hope while trying at the same time to make his own move away from contemporary reifications of an Anglo-Saxon Shakespeare read through his heroic and holy kings. Like Arnold, Ruskin sought to assert the authority of Shakespeare within a framework of Victorian virtues without relying on the worldly values of Carlyle’s Shakespeare.

¹²² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. lix. See also Ruskin, ‘Letter 91’, *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*, ed. by Dinah Birch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

¹²³ Ruskin, XVIII, p. 161.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Where Carlyle saw saintly soldiers and plucky peasants, Ruskin saw ‘the folly or fault of a man’.¹²⁵ Almost invariably, he finds in Shakespeare’s women ‘infallibly faithful and wise counsellors,—incorruptibly just and pure examples—strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save’.¹²⁶ Feeling a bit desperate, Ruskin tries to appeal in terms of an almost homespun evangelism in his reading of Shakespeare’s heroines only to make a slight exception of Ophelia for ‘failing Hamlet at the critical moment’ and the ‘wicked women’ Lady Macbeth, Goneril, and Regan.

Remarkably, Ruskin would beg before his Dublin audience in 1868 a question that broke with conventional reverence for Shakespeare altogether: ‘what, then, is the message to us of our own poet, and searcher of hearts, after fifteen hundred years of Christian faith have been numbered over the graves of men? Are his words more cheerful than the Heathen’s—is his hope more near—his trust more sure—his reading of fate more happy?’¹²⁷ His answer of ‘Ah, no!’ voices the futility that he had since found in attempting to make a reading of Shakespeare spiritually suffused by Christian revelation stick. He makes room in this way for Yeats’s *Timon* and *Cleopatra* in ‘Poetry and Tradition’. And fortunately for Yeats, Ruskin would by no means conclude with a Shakespeare situated on the path to fact either. Turning to the ‘practical man’ in the section subsequent to his discussion of Homer and Shakespeare, Ruskin sends up the spiritual biography of the consummate Christian pragmatist instead. He teases his audience by offering just enough of a justification for this abrupt change in focus, proceeding as he does in light of the apparent failure of art alone to solve the mystery of life. Rather than turn immediately to charity and hope, however, Ruskin points to practical men, men of instrumental reason, men of action, ‘These kings—these councillors—these statesmen and builders of kingdoms—these capitalists and men of business, who weigh the earth, and the dust of it, in a balance’. But such men, wielding what Yeats would in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ recognise as that ‘fine instrument’ of utilitarian calculation, ‘know the world,

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113. See Francis O’Gorman, “‘The Clue of Shakespearian Power Over Me’”: Ruskin, Shakespeare, and Influence’, in *The Victorian Shakespeare*, ed. by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole, 2 vols (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), II, pp. 203-18, for a much more complete treatment of this theme in Ruskin’s lifelong engagement with Shakespeare.

¹²⁶ Ruskin, XVIII, p. 114.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

surely; and what is the mystery of life to us, is none to them. They can surely show us how to live, while we live, and to gather out of the present world what is best'.¹²⁸ Just such a man was Shakespeare, Dowden would assert in *Mind and Art* with the force of contemporary criticism largely backing him, even though Ruskin only puffs up the practical man to blow him down here as well.

Ruskin's own frustration with Shakespeare in this way would only get worse with time. 'In returning to my Shakespeare', Ruskin wrote in 1888, 'after such final reading of the realities of life as may have been permitted me [...] it grieves me to find, in him, no laborious nor lowly ideal; but that his perfect shepherdess is a disguised princess; his Miracle of the White Island exultingly quits her spirit-guarded sands to be Queen of Naples; and his cottager Rosalind is extremely glad to get her face unbrowned again'.¹²⁹ As Francis O'Gorman has recently observed of Ruskin's socialist reading of Shakespeare, 'In keeping with his shift of interest in the 1870s and 1880s, as political thinker, historian and biographer towards the lives of the ordinary and unregarded, Ruskin was disappointed to realize that the class representations of the plays did not support any conception of the heroism of quotidian life, male or female'.¹³⁰ Shakespeare could not redeem the world that Ruskin saw falling down around him, the working world of the 'practical man' that Yeats would sooner see abandoned entirely. But Ruskin laments that:

I cannot feel that it has been anywise wholesome for me to have the world represented as a place where, for that best sort of people, everything always goes wrong; or to have my conceptions of that best sort of people so much confused by images of the worst. To have kinghood represented, in the Shakespearian cycle, by Richards II. and III. instead of I., by Henrys IV. and VIII. instead of II.; by King John, finished into all truths of baseness and grief, while Henry V. is only a king of fairy tale; or in the realm of imagination, by the folly of Lear, the cruelty of Leontes, the furious and foul guilt of Macbeth and the Dane.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹²⁹ Ruskin, XXXII, p. 492.

¹³⁰ O'Gorman, pp. 208-9.

¹³¹ Ruskin, XXXV, p. 369.

That Shakespeare failed to provide a heroic model of masculinity proved to Ruskin a sin he could not forgive in a figure of such cultural preeminence, however well he might have handled his heroines. Ruskin's thoughts had once again started to dwell on the unapologetic tragedy that Shakespeare stubbornly kept showing those critics looking to his plays for infallible moral authority. The image of Shakespeare as consolidated Anglo-Saxon authority had started to crack, revealing a gap that had widened between the competing Romantic conceptions of art into which Shakespeare had fallen for Ruskin. From this fissure, Pater would pull his radical rereading of *Richard II*. Likewise, Ruskin and the Romantics he grappled with prove in this way vital to understanding Yeats's appropriation, despite the more prominent part that Pater would play alongside Arnold in shaping the Shakespeare of 'At Stratford-on-Avon'.

Ruskin had faithfully followed Wordsworth in his understanding of nature to serve as a normative model for the artist at work in any medium. This relationship rigorously structures Ruskin's aesthetics as well as his reading of Shakespeare by placing nature at the theoretical centre and situating the integrity of a given work in proximity to it. For example, Wordsworth observes of himself as a boy in the famous Fenwick note to the poem 'Ode: On Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1807) that 'I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality'.¹³² Wordsworth insists here that nature exists outside the mind, that it has a reality and, moreover, an integrity all its own. He does not follow his friend Coleridge to find nature an aspect of the intellect. Wordsworth remarks that as a boy he sought the affirmation of external reality vouchsafed by physical sensation alone, the feeling of 'a wall or tree' in his juvenile grasp. But he takes this insight a step further as an adult. Nature appears not only independent of the mind, but also exemplary to Wordsworth as a poet: the thing itself and the thing to imitate. Nature had become normative in his adult hands. In turn, Wordsworth observes

¹³² Quoted in William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940-9), IV, p. 463.

that the poet's perspective must become intersubjective. Significantly, Ruskin adds a Christian qualification to the pantheism of Wordsworth's mimetic model, asserting that 'it is not possible for a Christian man to walk across so much as a rood of the natural earth, with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength and *hope* from some stone, flower, leaf, or sound, not without a sense of a dew falling upon him out of the sky'. For Ruskin, nature also registers the promise of Christian revelation. Of course, that Shakespeare's scrupulous attention to natural detail 'without receiving strength and hope' did not sit comfortably with him. Turning inward, away from nature, closes the artist off from the divine by Ruskin's estimation. 'It seems to me', he concludes, 'that the real sources of bluntness in the feelings towards the splendour of the grass and glory of the flower, are less to be found in ardour of occupation, in seriousness of compassion, or heavenliness of desire, than in the turning of the eye at intervals of rest too selfishly within'.¹³³ Wolfgang Iser has concluded of Ruskin, then, that he 'did not view imagination as a means of expressing what the artist saw of what lay hidden in himself'.¹³⁴ Rather, nature as Christian revelation gives art a moral dimension that it lacked for all the normative rhetoric of a Romantic like Wordsworth. Ruskin deviates decisively in this way from an objective conception of nature by making art evidence of a divine presence in the world of fact. If Ruskin had anticipated Dowden's mistake of reading Shakespeare as a faithful observer of 'the fact' alone, then Yeats had pointed it out to him by appropriating Shakespeare as a visionary poet whether he suited the piety of Ruskin's aesthetics or not.

In 'At Stratford-on-Avon', Yeats had given the Shakespearean lyric his highest praise. But in his brief essay 'Emotion of Multitude' (1903) Yeats shows a keen interest in pushing his reading of Shakespeare's plays into new territory. 'The Shakespearian Drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the sub-plot which copies the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight', he observes:

We think of King Lear less as the history of one man and his sorrows than as the history of a whole evil time. Lear's shadow is in

¹³³ Ruskin, IV, p. 215, p. 216.

¹³⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. 12.

Gloucester, who also has ungrateful children, and the mind goes on imagining other shadows, shadow beyond shadow till it has pictured the world. In *Hamlet*, one hardly notices, so subtly is the web woven, that the murder of Hamlet's father and the sorrow of Hamlet are shadowed in the lives of Fortinbras and Ophelia and Laertes, whose fathers, too, have been killed. It is so in all the plays, or in all but all, and very commonly the sub-plot is the main plot working itself out in more ordinary men and women, and so doubly calling up before us the image of multitude.¹³⁵

That Lear would appear to bring about this 'evil time' himself by testing the love of his daughters does not matter much to Yeats as he sets up his own version of Plato's 'allegory of the cave' to convert 'Shakespeare's myth' into 'Shakespeare's metaphysics' here. He dismisses the 'clear and logical construction' of successful plays on the 'Modern Stage', blaming this aspect of contemporary dramaturgy on French neoclassicism, which 'delights in the well-ordered fable' alone but, because it lacks the chorus that gives Greek drama the 'emotion of multitude', leaves the fable to position action in isolation as 'mere will'. For Yeats, the chorus had 'called up famous sorrows, even all the gods and all heroes to witness, as it were, some well-ordered fable, some action separated but for this from all but itself'. By his estimation, the contemporary playwright can try, like Shakespeare, to realise the 'emotion of multitude' through an emphasis on the particular, 'the little limited life of the fable', but only to suggest the universal hidden in 'the many-imagined life of the half-seen world beyond it'.¹³⁶ The 'time out of joint' in *Hamlet* or the 'evil time' in *Lear* would otherwise go unseen as such had Shakespeare not provided a subplot showing the main plot also opening up onto other lives or, by implication here, showing it to come from the singularity of the metaphysical to the multiplicity of the physical.

But Yeats's reading of the 'emotion of multitude' as it appears in *Hamlet* or *Lear* depends far too heavily on whether the subplots clustering around Fortinbras, Ophelia, and Laertes or Gloucester, Edgar, and Edmund push audiences to understand the main plot in these explicitly abstract terms. Neither

¹³⁵ Yeats, 'Emotion of Multitude', in *Early Essays*, 159-60 (p. 159).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

the main plot that involves Hamlet nor—and perhaps even less so—that involving Lear necessarily filters this metaphysical reading into the reality of the plays on stage. In other words, Yeats leaves open the possibility that audiences might prefer to dwell, as Plato's own cave dwellers do, on the shadows flickering on the wall without also attending to their source, textual or otherwise. And yet, Yeats again follows Pater by putting the focus for the 'emotion of multitude' on the virtues of Shakespeare's careful handling of tragic, regal figures—those victims of 'the irony of kingship'—to colour his reading from a palette that Carlyle and Ruskin, Arnold and Dowden had variously rejected. It comes as no surprise, then, that Yeats had followed Pater in finding Richard II a supremely sympathetic figure, 'an exquisite poet if he is nothing else, from first to last, in light and gloom alike, able to see all things poetically, to give a poetic turn to his conduct of them, and refreshing with his golden language the tritest [*sic*] aspects of that ironic contrast between the pretensions of a king and the actual necessities of his destiny'.¹³⁷ But the Shakespeare of Yeats's early essays was a much longer time in coming than even these engagements with extant criticism would seem to suggest.

PLUME OF PRIDE

The Yeatses lived in London during the late 1870s, allowing Yeats's father to pursue his career as a painter. In March 1879, J. B. Yeats took advantage of his old Trinity ties to Stoker. Both had taken active roles in the Philosophical Society, for which each had achieved honorary membership in recognition of their records of distinguished service. Moreover, they still shared many acquaintances from Dublin, including Dowden. On St. Patrick's Day in 1879, J. B. Yeats wrote to Stoker thanking him for securing a box for his family at the Lyceum Theatre so his son, already fond of Shakespeare, could see Irving at work as Hamlet.¹³⁸ As Marvin Rosenberg has observed of Irving in his study *The Masks of Hamlet*, 'Irving went deep in developing Hamlet's inward qualities, the haunted,

¹³⁷ Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 194.

¹³⁸ See Paul Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker* (London: Pimlico, 2005), pp.132-3.

brooding, spiritual core'.¹³⁹ His reading in this way caught and held the mind of the young Yeats enthralled to the role, while the play itself would prove an abiding presence throughout his own development as a poet and playwright. As he would recall near the end of his life in 'Lapis Lazuli' (1938), perhaps his most compelling meditation on Shakespeare and certainly one of his more complex poems touching on death:

All perform their tragic play,
 There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
 That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
 Yet they, should the last scene be there,
 The great stage curtain about to drop,
 If worthy their prominent part in the play,
 Do not break up their lines to weep.
 They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
 Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.¹⁴⁰

Irving's awareness of his own physical limitations only served to reinforce his approach to playing Hamlet, including the strange gait that Yeats calls a 'strut' here and Gordon Craig compared to the movement in a dance.¹⁴¹ But Shaw saw that Irving himself figured too heavily into all his roles, imparting a stifling sort of continuity to his career.

'He had really only one part; and that part was the part of Irving', Shaw would observe in Irving's obituary for the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna:

His Hamlet was not Shakespear's Hamlet, nor his Lear Shakespear's Lear: they were both avatars of the imaginary Irving in whom he was so absorbingly interested. His huge and enduring success as Shylock was due to his absolutely refusing to allow Shylock to be the discomfited villain of the piece. The Merchant of Venice became the Martyrdom of Irving, which was, it must be confessed, far finer than the Tricking of Shylock. His Iachimo, a very fine performance, was better than Shakespear's Iachimo, and not a bit like him. On the other hand, his Lear was an impertinent intrusion of a quite silly conceit of

¹³⁹ Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Hamlet* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992), p. 114.

¹⁴⁰ Yeats, *Selected Poems*, p. 179.

¹⁴¹ Gordon Craig, *Henry Irving* (London: Dent, 1930), p. 74.

his own into a great play. His Romeo, though a very clever piece of acting, wonderfully stage-managed in the scene where Romeo dragged the body of Paris down a horrible staircase into the tomb of the Capulets, was an absurdity, because it was impossible to accept Irving as Romeo, and he had no power of adapting himself to an author's conception: his creations were all his own; and they were all Irvings.¹⁴²

In his own reviews for the *Daily Express* and later in his *Reminiscences*, Stoker would instead situate Irving's career as a series of triumphant reinterpretations of familiar roles. Irving opened old parts up to new analyses, playing into the hands of those in the pit who wished to read more into the Shakespearean text. As Frank A. Marshall's introduction to the published prompt copy of Irving's *Hamlet* stresses, Irving intended the Lyceum's lavish 'scenic illustrations' to supplement the script that the company might draw to the theatre audiences for Shakespeare's plays who 'might otherwise turn away from them as dull and unattractive'.¹⁴³ For Irving, even his own meticulously researched costumes and scenes painted by the Lyceum's own Hawes Craven must not appear as mere spectacle. Stagecraft otherwise seemed to Irving a distraction from the play as Shakespeare has it.

But Hamlet's instructions to the traveling players before their performance of his play penned to 'catch the conscience of the king' serve to problematise Irving's own histrionic approach:

HAMLET Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the towncrier had spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to see a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear

¹⁴² *Shaw on Shakespeare: An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Production of Shakespeare*, ed. by Edwin Wilson (New York: Applause, 1961), p. 252.

¹⁴³ See Frank A. Marshall, 'Preface', in *Hamlet, A Tragedy in Five Acts by William Shakespeare, as Arranged for the Stage by Henry Irving, and Presented at The Lyceum Theatre on Monday, December 30th, 1878* (London: Chiswick, 1883), pp. v-xiii (p. v).

a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise: I could have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant: it out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it. (3.2.1-10)

Irving did not doubt that Shakespeare intended Hamlet's lines here to serve as a coy command to his own company.¹⁴⁴ As Rosenberg has pointed out, 'Irving's great objective was to capture sympathy, and he succeeded'.¹⁴⁵ Precisely how, though, appeared less clear to some reviewers.

For example, *Vanity Fair* tried in vain to explain the appeal of his Hamlet the year that Yeats saw it himself, 1879:

Admit that this neuralgic Prince, part bellman, part hysteric, and part histrion, is as remote from Shakespeare, is as purely a thing of the nineteenth century as Mr. Burne Jones' Venus herself; admit that it examples nothing, touches nothing, prevails nothing; admit that where [Tommaso] Salvini's Hamlet, the best and noblest man that ever stepped in black velvet, awoke in you a longing to be good, to have to suffer and to live and die royally, the Hamlet of Mr. Irving affects you morally as little as a mathematical problem; admit all this, and what more of disparaging you please. The fact of Mr. Irving's cleverness remains; and with it so much of intellectual interest and excitement as to out-weigh fifty fold the objections made. [...] It is not the actor's fault that his Prince is much less suggestive of a wounded lion than of a cat upon the tiles. No man can be other than he has been made. And Mr. Irving, with his exquisite accomplishment, his egregious affectation, his vast and notable [...] capacity, is to us so much the aesthetic child of his age that we have long since ceased to judge him by any bit his age's canons. [...] With all his shortcomings to detract from it, with all these blunders to weigh it down, his Hamlet is never tedious, is never unintelligible, is never stupid. [...] Irving is

¹⁴⁴ Rosenberg, p. 552.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Irving, and is only great because he is himself. He is incomplete, and fails to impose himself bodily upon his critics, but he is himself.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Stoker's second review of *Hamlet* at Dublin's Theatre Royal in 1876 had praised Irving take on the role, if only further refined:

There is another view of Hamlet, too, which Mr. Irving seems to realise by a kind of instinct, but which requires to be more fully and intentionally worked out.... The great, deep, underlying idea of Hamlet is that of a mystic.... In the high-strung nerves of the man; in the natural impulse of spiritual susceptibility; in his concentrated action, spasmodic though it sometimes be, and in the divine delirium of his perfected passion there is the instinct of the mystic, which he has but to render a little plainer in order that the less susceptible sense of his audience may see and understand.¹⁴⁷

Irving had, in fact, overwhelmed Stoker with his performance. But Stoker manages to maintain a mixture of compliment and criticism throughout his review, which he proudly points up in his *Reminiscences*. And his insightful comments on Hamlet's final parting from Ophelia had indeed endeared him to Irving:

To give strong ground for belief, where the instinct can judge more truly than the intellect, is the perfection of suggestive acting; and certainly with regard to this view of Hamlet Mr. Irving deserves not only the highest praise that can be accorded, but [also] the loving gratitude of all to who his art is dear.¹⁴⁸

Irving would himself write about playing Hamlet with a 'suggestive' style in mind. His own thoughts on the part appeared in the *English Illustrated Magazine* of September 1893, eight years after he had played Hamlet for the last time:

For Hamlet I have that affection which springs naturally in the actor towards the most intensely human of Shakespeare's creations [...] All the striving, all the most lovable weaknesses of humanity, the groping after thoughts beyond the confines of our souls, the tenderest attributes of our common nature, fate and free will, love and death,

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁷ Stoker, p. 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

passions and problems, are interwoven in the character of Hamlet, till he touches us at every point of our strange compound of clay and spirit [...] But to represent in Hamlet the type of filial love, to suggest that sense of the supernatural which holds the genius of romance like a veil, and that haunted look of one who is constantly with the spirit which has 'revisited the glimpses of the moon', to disentangle the character from traditions which are apt to overlay with artifice one of the most vividly real of all the conceptions in art, to leave upon your generation the impression of Hamlet as a man, not as a piece of acting—this is, perhaps, the highest aim which the English-speaking actor can cherish [...] Something of the chivalry, the high-strung ecstasy, the melancholy grace of the man clings to the mind when the sterner grandeur of other creations of the poet may have lost its spell.

But Irving's approach to playing Hamlet required an emotional as well as intellectual engagement with the performance that exceeded his other Shakespearean roles.

Stoker does well to caution Irving in his reviews of *Hamlet*, then, that to leave more open in the manner which the actor's method encouraged might also mean that much of the nuance, which he eagerly tried to introduce to all of his roles, may miss the mark with his 'less susceptible' audience members. In this way, Stoker introduces a sort of double bind to Irving's stage presence in his reading of *Hamlet*: Playing a part according to convention might appear inauthentic or even wooden, and yet too heavy a measure of originality may confound or even infuriate audiences. Of course, Shaw saw a third possibility: Irving playing Irving and not the character as Shakespeare has it. And yet, his Hamlet came—largely, in the manner that Stoker had himself understood the performance—to personify for Yeats the artist figure forever engaged in the pursuit of ideal and spiritual essences, 'broken away from life by the passionate hesitation of his reverie'. The play would come to typify for Yeats tragic art itself, 'supreme among the arts' for its ability 'of alluring us almost to the intensity of

trance'.¹⁴⁹ After a performance in 1877, Stoker would indeed observe that any of the faults which he had found Irving had himself ironed out within the year:

Hamlet, as Mr. Irving now acts it, is the wild, fitful, irresolute, mystic, melancholy prince that we know in the play; but given with a sad, picturesque gracefulness which is the actor's special gift.... In his most passionate moments with Ophelia, even in the violence of his rage, he never loses that sense of distance—of a gulf fixed—of that acknowledgment of the unseen which is his unconscious testimony to her unspotted purity....¹⁵⁰

Yeats nevertheless struggled alongside many Irish writers of his generation—not least, Stoker himself¹⁵¹—with the complexities of trying to reconcile a love of Ireland with an admiration of English literature and, specifically, Shakespeare. George Moore would, for example, name Shakespeare 'our national bard' in 1888 only to recant in 1901, pointing up the momentous shift in the cultural politics of Dublin during the intervening decade: 'We in Ireland would keep in mind *our* language, teach *our* children *our* history, the story of *our* heroes, and the long traditions of *our* race, which stretch back to God'.¹⁵² But Yeats held firm to his initial conviction before committing it to his appropriation of *Hamlet* in 'Lapis Lazuli'.

He had first drawn on Irving's Hamlet to shield himself from the wider world throughout his time in school, first in London and later in Dublin. As Yeats would report in 1914, 'For many years Hamlet was an image of heroic self-possession for the poses of youth and childhood to copy, a combatant of the battle with myself'.¹⁵³ Jonathan Allison has argued that the adolescent Yeats pursued Irving's reading of Hamlet as a 'mask to imitate; he was an escape from

¹⁴⁹ Yeats, 'The Tragic Theatre', in *Early Essays*, pp. 174-79 (p. 178).

¹⁵⁰ Stoker, *Reminiscences*, p. 30.

¹⁵¹ See Murray, pp. 179-1. As Murray has scrupulously noted, much but by no means all of this influence did Irving mediate. Indeed, quite the opposite would appear to have obtained between them. Irving's lavish Lyceum productions of Shakespeare owe a great deal of their famous detail to Stoker's historical research on Shakespeare's source materials, the emphasis on the supernatural something that Stoker also brought to Irving's attention. This work for Irving registers in the many references to Shakespeare in Stoker's novel, *Dracula*. See Murray for the connections in this way with *Macbeth* (pp. 180-1).

¹⁵² George Moore, 'Literature and the Irish Language', in *Ideals in Ireland*, ed. by Augusta Gregory, et al. (London: At the Unicorn, 1901), p. 19. My italics.

¹⁵³ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 30.

childhood weakness and teenage awkwardness, but he was also an image of power'.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Yeats considered the bearing of others against the model of the moody Dane as a mystic that Irving forged before audiences. His reflections in this way included Morris and the English author William Ernest Henley. Yeats indeed describes Henley in terms similar to those he used for Irving's Hamlet, observing that Henley's 'eyes steadily fixed upon some object in complete confidence and self-possession, and yet as in half-broken reverie' in a lithograph by the English painter William Rothenstein that hung over his mantelpiece. As Yeats continues, his reflection that Henley 'was most human—human, I used to say, like one of Shakespeare's characters', points to the mythology growing up around the Shakespearean text in his mind.¹⁵⁵ He has it later in *Autobiographies* that a portrait of Morris by the English Symbolist George Frederic Watts, which also hung over his mantelpiece, captured 'the dreamer of the Middle Ages'. And yet, for Yeats, Morris:

has no trait in common with the wavering, lean image of hungry speculation, that cannot but because of certain famous Hamlets of our stage fill the mind's eye. Shakespeare himself foreshadowed a symbolic change, that is, a change in the whole temperament of the world, for though he called his Hamlet 'fat' and even 'scant of breath', he thrust between his fingers agile rapier and dagger.¹⁵⁶

Hamlet serves Yeats as an example here of a supremely tragic figure forced to the edge of one age while gesturing towards the coming of the next, an actor at the edge of the stage urging the audience to come forward and take on his role. As Allison provocatively investigates, the single source for Yeats's fixation with Hamlet as a tragic figure caught between the old feudal order and the onset of modernity in this way originated with Irving's performance. It comes as no surprise, then, that Yeats developed his later readings of the Shakespearean text into appropriations of not only Hamlet, but also Richard II and Lear, in plays such as those of his Cuchulain cycle, an affinity to which critics routinely point.

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Allison, 'W. B. Yeats and Shakespearean Character', in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. by Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 114-35 (p. 117).

¹⁵⁵ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

But Allison fails to develop the biographical continuity of his argument, abandoning an image of a younger Yeats inspired by Irving for a discussion of a much older Yeats still struggling to reconcile English and Irish literary history along only those lines established by Dowden.

Yeats routinely indicated that his enduring emotional identification with *Hamlet* stemmed from his appreciation of the play in terms of ritual. He wrote to John Martyn Harvey in 1909 after watching the English actor play Hamlet in Dublin, for example, that:

A performance of *Hamlet* is always to me what High Mass is to a good Catholic. It is my supreme religious event. I see in it a soul jarred & broken away from the life of its world,—a passionate preparation of sanctity. I feel that the play should seem to one, not so much deep as full of lyric loftiness & I feel this all the more because I am getting tired of our modern delight in the Abyss.¹⁵⁷

Yeats points up this Shakespearean text here for sustained appropriation in his project to disconnect the new national drama from the mundane circumstances and the middleclass moralising that he thought commonplace to the naturalism informing much contemporary theatre, communicating in this way sentiments that had steadily matured and mutated since seeing Irving's performance at the Lyceum in 1879. In a note about this letter in his biography of Yeats, Foster points out that, along with Gregory on 6 March 1900, Yeats watched Benson play in an uncut version of *Hamlet*. Curiously, Foster speculates that this production started Yeats's 'obsession' with *Hamlet*.¹⁵⁸ As Yeats himself makes clear and Allison reiterates, however, this fascination with the play started with that first time watching Irving in the role. Irving's turn as Hamlet would lend itself to Yeats's commitment to reading the Shakespearean text as a contested site of national identities throughout his own career.

But Ben Levitas has carefully glossed the mutability of Yeats's nationalism as, frequently, 'Hostile to notions of received opinion, [as] the theatre offered space to voices silenced by its quite specific set of political ambitions. Rather than producing an increasingly rarified art, it became too rough for sensibilities

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Foster, *Yeats*, I, p. 413.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 606, n. 50.

more accustomed to gentle sentimentality'.¹⁵⁹ The centrality of two celebrated English actors—Benson and Irving—to Yeats's thinking about *Hamlet* not only complicates this point, it also underscores the extent to which Shakespeare remained for Yeats productively mediated in the theatre. And here another binary opposition between Dowden and Yeats emerges in the antinomy of oral versus print culture. Yeats had himself managed to keep the stage at the forefront of his reading, only ever finding Shakespeare's tragic figures fully realised in and through performance. Perhaps more to the point, Yeats came to connect with Shakespeare in a way that Dowden never did, namely, as a working dramatist in his own right worrying after the foundation of an Irish national theatre. He overturns Dowden's nostalgic conception of the Renaissance as 'an age eminently positive and practical' for a vision of an era expansive in emotions and sentiments that could still be intimately related through the theatre.

Yeats stated the significance of this project in the form of a succinct piece of political criticism in 1892, the year of Trinity's tercentenary: 'As Dublin Castle with the help of the police keeps Ireland for England, so Trinity College with the help of the schoolmasters keeps the mind of Ireland for scholasticism with its accompanying weight of mediocrity'.¹⁶⁰ Despite subsequent controversy, Yeats persisted for some time in his belief that the theatre could forge an Irish national identity apart from the 'apparatus of the State'. As he impressed upon the Irish journalist and Parnellite MP Thomas Patrick Gill in May 1899, 'The one thing I most wish to do is drama & it seems to be a way, the only way perhaps in which I can get into a direct relation with the Irish public'.¹⁶¹ Yeats committed his own talents to establishing the theatre as an institution that could compete in this way with these garrisons of the British Empire in Dublin. As Foster has observed, Yeats believed at this time that 'local inspiration and national culture produced pure art, and would raise a new standard against the derivative crassness of popular Dublin theatre'.¹⁶² The idea that Shakespeare had himself produced popular yet poetic works for the Elizabethan stage held the centre of Yeats's

¹⁵⁹ Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism 1890-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), pp. 86-7.

¹⁶⁰ Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, I, p. 233.

¹⁶¹ *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats. Volume II: 1896-1900*, ed. by Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 416.

¹⁶² Foster, *Yeats*, I, p. 199.

thinking about his intentions for the new national drama intact throughout a debate with Eglinton that raged across the pages of the conservative *Daily Express* throughout the autumn of 1898. As James Pethica has recently argued, Yeats's relationship with Irish fairy and folk lore, history and legend brought the 'two concerns' of his career together: Romanticism and a desire 'to assert the distinctiveness of "Irishness" as a cultural identity'.¹⁶³ Yeats would consolidate these concerns around Shakespeare during his debate with Eglinton, a debate billed as one between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

Eglinton's essay published that September under the title 'What Should Be the Subjects of a National Drama?' challenged Yeats to consider the possibility that the use of Irish folklore, history, and legend might stunt the aesthetic of the lately licensed Irish Literary Theatre.¹⁶⁴ 'Supposing a writer of genius were to appear in this country, where would he look for the subject of national drama?', he begins by reasoning. 'This question might serve as a test of what nationality amounts to in Ireland [...] would he look for it in the Irish legends, or in the life of the peasantry, or in life at large as reflected by his own consciousness?'¹⁶⁵ However fecund ancient Irish sources might have appeared to Arnold in his lectures on Celtic literature, the declaration of intentions for the new national drama signed by Gregory and Edward Martyn along with Yeats himself in 1897 did not adequately define, in Eglinton's estimation, the significance of these stories for modern Irish audiences. He expressed his doubts about 'whether anything but belles lettres, as distinguished from a national literature, is likely to spring from a determined preoccupation with them'. More worrisome to Eglinton, the ILT could in fact come to negatively affect efforts to achieve political independence for Ireland. Consequently, he adds that 'Ireland must exchange the patriotism which looks back for the patriotism which looks forward', and concluded his first piece by asserting that 'A national drama or literature must spring from a native interest in life and its problems and a strong capacity for life among the people'. As Edwards has observed, Eglinton correctly identified the

¹⁶³ James Pethica, 'Yeats, folklore, and Irish legend', in *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, pp. 129-143 (p. 129).

¹⁶⁴ See Gregory's *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (London: Colin Smythe, 1972) for the declaration of intentions drawn up in 1897 and the context of its creation.

¹⁶⁵ *Daily Express*, 10 September 1898.

paradox inherent to the view of cultural nationalism that Yeats would maintain throughout their debate.¹⁶⁶ An interest in ancient Irish stories simply could not sustain a national theatre for Eglinton.

Yeats gleaned his reply of the following week—the aptly entitled essay ‘A Note on National Drama’—from a previously published piece. Here he offers Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* (1867) and *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1857) as examples of works that had effectively fitted Norse folklore into the new national drama of Norway. For Yeats, the ILT would do well to bring Irish folklore to bear in a similar manner on the new national drama of Ireland. Moreover, he points out that ‘great poets—Dante not less than Homer and Shakespeare—speak to us of the hopes and destinies of mankind in their fullness; because they have wrought their poetry out of the dreams that were dreamed before men became so crowded upon one another’. Hitting a note here reminiscent of Arnold and Ruskin, Yeats rounds on Eglinton to conclude that the ILT would make Ireland ‘a holy land to her own people’. While pointing up the power of the past to shape the future, he argues that a poetic of ‘romantic nationalism’, if underpinned by Irish folklore, could indeed look at least as far into Ireland’s future as a ‘patriotism which looks forward’. Eglinton would not take the bait.

Published that October, his next essay, ‘National Drama and Contemporary Life’, sought to situate their debate on different grounds. Rather than descend into an argument about the merits of ancients versus moderns, Eglinton indicates that Yeats had tacitly conflated contemporary Bayreuth with ancient Athens. Wagner’s work nevertheless looked backwards to Eglinton, and thus he urges instead the example of Wordsworth as a poet ‘able to confer on even common things the radiance of imagination’. He pins his own hopes on an Irish drama that would turn away from the escapism that he read in Irish folklore, as any artist adopting this perspective ‘looks too much away from himself and from his age, does not feel the facts of life enough, but seeks in art an escape from them’. Although reminiscent of the hardheaded pragmatism upon which his friend Dowden relied in his own criticism, Eglinton did not tend towards the unionism upon which Dowden relied in his politics. Eglinton

¹⁶⁶ Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation: A Study in English and Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 203.

concludes, then, that escapism in art appears patrician, not patriotic. Yeats would pounce on this conclusion in his reply published later that October.

In 'John Eglinton and Spiritual Art', Yeats tries his hand at resituating their debate. He reads the issue between them along the lines of what he had already termed 'the Dowden controversy' in 1887.¹⁶⁷ Dowden had fully disclosed his indifference to the Revival, and his comments set Yeats off. He had accused Dowden of despising 'the Irish Literature movement and Irish literature generally'.¹⁶⁸ But being convinced that he now stood in the same position against Eglinton did not help Yeats to further clarify his position here. He embraces the idea that it entails a strict aesthetic elitism, offering a glimpse of the late Yeats early. Yeats accuses Eglinton of an overdeveloped belief 'in popular music, popular painting, and popular literature'. Moreover, Yeats associates the privilege of his position in their debate with a superior understanding of the Shakespearean text as both popular and poetic, a position stronger for privileging Shakespeare's lyric unity in his opinion than that maintained by either Eglinton or Dowden. For Yeats, popular art could do little more than serve the utilitarian goals of whoever employed it.¹⁶⁹ On the contrary, he insists that the new national drama should instead reveal 'a hidden life' of Ireland. Yeats turns to Shakespeare again as one of his examples. Significantly, he observes that Shakespeare used the knowledge that he shared in common with his audiences to give form to his vision. As Yeats concludes, 'the only permanent influence of any art [...] flows down gradually and imperceptibly, as if through orders and hierarchies'. Yeats sticks stubbornly to the idea that the ILT could imagine a national identity for Ireland—one of the hidden lives to reveal on stage—much as he thought Shakespeare had for a Britain just being born as the Scottish king, James VI, ascended the English throne as King James I. Yeats certainly hoped the new national drama would similarly change minds through the vision of an Ireland that plays rooted in its native folklore, history, and legend could provide.

¹⁶⁷ *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats. Volume I: 1865-1895*, ed. by John Kelly and Eric Domville (1986), pp. 446-7.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Ludwigson, p. 140. See above, pp. 110-1.

¹⁶⁹ Yeats articulates a position here similar to that found in his essay entitled 'What is Popular Poetry?' (1901). See *Early Essays*, pp. 5-11.

Eglinton would retort in ‘Mr Yeats and Popular Poetry’, then, that the poetic proper to the new national drama ran right from Wordsworth through Carlyle and Ruskin and had already found analogues across the Atlantic in Emerson and Whitman. For Eglinton, Wordsworth ‘was right, and by virtue of his simplicity and seriousness’ he wrote the best poetry of the past century. Yet to Yeats, Wordsworth wanted the artistry necessary to serve as a model for the Irish folk drama at which the ILT should aim. At the very least for Yeats, Keats or Shelley served as better examples from amongst the English Romantics than ‘malign Wordsworth’. Their debate had reached an impasse that contributions from Russell and William Larminie did little to resolve. Eglinton would not contribute again. But Yeats persisted in his thinking that the new national drama could turn back the ‘filthy modern tide’ of materialism washing over the urban centres of Ireland and spilling into the countryside.

With his last contribution, ‘The Autumn of the Flesh’, Yeats clarified the idea of cultural unity to which the ILT should aspire.¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, he argues against the ‘externality’ forced upon poetry by positivism. Yeats laments, then, that even ‘Shakespeare shattered the symmetry of verse and of drama that he might fill them with things and their accidental relations to one another’. He nevertheless echoes Arnold by predicting that poets would again ‘take upon their shoulders the burdens that have fallen from the shoulders of priests, and to lead us back upon our journey by filling our thoughts with the essences of things, and not with things’. Drama came out of his debate with Eglinton in two basic forms. Published the following May, Yeats argues in ‘The Theatre’ that drama like Shakespeare’s own ‘has one day when the emotions of cities still remember the emotions of sailors and husbandmen and shepherds and users of the spear and the bow’. Drama of the second day—a day, as he believed, about to break in Ireland—recovered ancient emotions through ‘thought and scholarship’. As Yeats concludes:

In the first day, it is the art of the people; and in the second day, like the dramas of old times in the hidden places of temples, it is the preparation of a priesthood. It may be, though the world is not old

¹⁷⁰ Yeats later published this essay under the title ‘The Autumn of the Body’ in *Ideas of Good and Evil*. See *Early Essays*, pp. 139-42.

enough to show us any example, that this priesthood will spread their religion everywhere, and make their Art the Art of the people.¹⁷¹

Yeats reiterates his hope for a national drama drawn from Irish folklore, history, and legend performed as secular ritual, a vision of the ILT that Eglinton had rejected from the start.

Their row over the poetic for the ILT reads as a brilliant publicity stunt conceived by Yeats and encouraged by Russell to whip up interest in the fledgling company. In *Ulysses* (1922), Joyce would have Buck Mulligan riff off the role played by the editor at the *Daily Express* in promoting the Revival as he chides Stephen while they leave the National Library by remarking that:

—Longworth is awfully sick, he said, after what you wrote about that old hake Gregory. O you inquisitional drunken jewjesuit! She gets you a job on the paper and then you go and slate her drivel to Jaysus.

Couldn't you do the Yeats touch? [...]

—The most beautiful book that has come out of our country in my time. One thinks of Homer.¹⁷²

With their fight in full flight, Russell had indeed confessed to Gregory on 12 November that:

I am the culprit with whom you must deal for the prolonged Yeats Eglinton [*sic*] controversy. I thought and still think it a good thing to create public interest in such a discussion and I carefully fomented the dispute on both sides. I had a little private joy in this as I have long been battered by Yeats on one side and Eglinton on the other for just those things they accuse each other of and so I have stood aside with much delight while they went for each other. However as you will see by this week's copy I have intervened, perhaps to make confusion worse confounded – for really they did not know exactly what they were arguing about – Willie thought the Celtic Renaissance was insulted and Magee did not understand Yeats.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Yeats, 'The Theatre', in *Early Essays*, pp. 122-27 (p. 124).

¹⁷² James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler, et al. (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), pp. 177-8.

¹⁷³ Quoted in Foster, *Yeats*, I, p. 198.

It certainly worked out this way, as both Foster and Levitas have recently observed. Yet the primary combatants hardly hurled hollow slogans at each other. Neither did Yeats appropriate Shakespeare alongside Ibsen and Wagner to support his argument out of vanity. Rather, a debate over the poetic proper to the new national drama offered an opportunity to clarify his opinions while sharing them amongst a wider audience. With their articles published in a single volume the following year under the title *Literary Ideals in Ireland*—the title of Russell's first contribution—the ILT had effectively capitalised on Longworth's sympathy with the Revival to build a bigger following until they found a suitable venue for the company.

Throughout their debate, Yeats had appropriated the Shakespearean text as an example illustrating that Ireland would play always already as a nation on stage, that it would appear prefigured by the Ireland of fairy and folk lore, history and legend just as the England of Shakespeare's sources appears to prefigure the British nation-state emerging under Elizabeth and James. In short, Shakespeare affirmed what Yeats had come to believe under O'Leary's influence by 1889: 'there is no fine nationality without literature, and [...] no fine literature without nationality'.¹⁷⁴ And yet, Yeats would also come to complicate his own injunction issued later in the year that Irish writers 'ought to take Irish subjects'.¹⁷⁵ As he suggestively has it at the end of 'At Stratford-on-Avon', meditating on Shakespeare's role in making his works of Renaissance literature 'English':

Had there been no Renaissance and no Italian influence to bring in the stories of other lands, English history would, it may be, have become as important to the English imagination as the Greek Myths to the Greek imagination; and many plays by many poets would have woven it into a single story whose contours, vast as those of Greek myth, would have made living men and women seem like swallows building their nests under the architrave of some Temple of the Giants. English literature, because it would have grown out of itself, might have had the simplicity and unity of Greek literature, for I can never get out of

¹⁷⁴ Yeats, *Letters to the New Island*, ed. by George Bornstein and Hugh Witemeyer (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 12.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

my head that no man, even though he be Shakespeare, can write perfectly when his web is woven of threads that have been spun in many lands. And yet, could those foreign tales have come in if the great famine, the sinking down of popular imagination, the dying out of traditional phantasy, the ebbing out of the energy of race, had not made them necessary?¹⁷⁶

Yeats asks the apposite question of his own Shakespeare here: Just how English are you? That his own identity as an Anglo-Irishman—to say nothing of his project to make an Irish national literature in English—remains a conflict left largely unresolved teases readers of ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ unto this last question. It remains clear, however, that Yeats forwards Shakespeare in this essay as an appropriative artist—a borrower from a range of classical and contemporary sources at the expense of English history—and in this way the sort of artist to which he might appeal against detractors in the Irish language movement who maintained that a new national literature could not be written in English. And yet, Yeats also manages with this same move to complicate his own reflections on ‘nation’, ‘state’, and ‘nation-state’ in the Shakespearean text. As he would close ‘A General Introduction for my Work’ by observing in 1937, ‘State and Nation are the work of intellect, and when you consider what comes before and after them they are, as Victor Hugo said of something or other, not worth the blade of grass God gives for the nest of the linnet’.¹⁷⁷ It comes as no surprise, then, that Yeats had to privilege the ‘extra-mundane’ in Shakespeare just as surely as he had in Irish folklore to synthesise the various binaries upon which not only Dowden’s unionism depended, but also the separatist Irish nationalism of some fellow Revivalists.

In his essay ‘The Tragic Theatre’ (1910), Yeats would shift his focus from the ‘tragic irony’ of the histories that he pointed up in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’ to the ‘tragic joy’ of the tragedies themselves to place Synge’s drama alongside Shakespeare’s own. He bemoans the ‘dogma of the printed criticism’ on Synge’s *Deirdre*, berates its focus on ‘the wheels and pulleys’ of producing *Deirdre* at the Abbey in January 1910, and thus he points out that the popular press had once

¹⁷⁶ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁷ Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, p. 526.

again missed Synge's point. Yeats observes that *Deirdre* indeed appears 'a Master's unfinished work', invoking Synge's death in March 1909, but only through the first two acts. He identifies in the third an example of what he calls 'tragic ecstasy' in this essay.¹⁷⁸ Not only had reading Nietzsche—'that strong enchanter'¹⁷⁹— in 1902 helped to initiate this radical change in his own thinking about the Shakespearean text, but also working alongside Synge, whose tragic sensibilities Yeats understood as Shakespearean in scope. And yet, as Neil Corcoran has recently pointed out, this concept also has its own Arnoldian roots 'since he would have found in Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* an appealing etymology for the always difficult and today in one respect impossible word "gay"'.¹⁸⁰ Arnold had identified the Celt as 'expansive, adventurous, and gay', observing that 'Our word *gay*, it is said, is itself Celtic. It is not from *gaudium*, but from the Celtic *gair*, to laugh'.¹⁸¹ But Arnold provides an entirely false etymology here lifted from Henri Martin and refuted in one of Lord Strangford's many footnotes to the first published edition of Arnold's lectures. The *OED* also makes it clear that 'gay', in Yeats's use *pace* Nietzsche as synonymous with 'joyous', does indeed come from 'gaudium'. Yeats has it both ways by observing a specious Celtic 'origin' for a Continental concept, then, that he would use to underwrite his later thinking about 'tragic joy'.

'Tragic art, passionate art, the drowner of dykes, the confounder of understanding, moves us by setting us to reverie, by alluring us almost to the intensity of trance', Yeats argues. 'The persons upon the stage, let us say, greaten till they are humanity itself. We feel our minds expand convulsively or spread out slowly like some moon-brightened image-crowded sea'.¹⁸² Yeats pays this compliment to Synge, his *Deirdre* appropriated in this essay like *King Lear* in 'Emotion of Multitude'. He has in mind here the movement of Synge's *Deidre*

¹⁷⁸ As the editors of his *Early Essays* have noted, Yeats 'invokes' *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Timon of Athens* much more frequently after 1901 as he increasingly focuses on the Renaissance as a tipping point in history towards 'modern fragmentation and subjectivity', the 'dissociation of sensibility' that Eliot would identify in 1921 with his famous review essay entitled 'The Metaphysical Poets'. See Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 334, and Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), pp. 59-67.

¹⁷⁹ Yeats, *Letters*, p. 379.

¹⁸⁰ Neil Corcoran, *Shakespeare and the Modern Poet* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p. 57.

¹⁸¹ Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p. 343.

¹⁸² Yeats, *Early Essays*, pp. 178-9.

from her questioning ‘isn’t it a poor thing we should miss the safety of the grave, and we trampling its edge?’ to the highly affective ‘reverie of passion that mounts and mounts till grief itself has carried her beyond grief into pure contemplation’. Yeats reads into Synge’s last play the ‘passion’ that becomes ‘contemplation’ as Deirdre asserts her own royal right—‘It was not by a low birth I made kings uneasy’—which draws a further parallel with his reading of *Richard II* in ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’. But his emphasis on the lyricism of Synge’s *Deirdre* draws out of his reading of this Shakespearean text an idea only implicit in his earlier essay, one that points up a more fundamental similarity between the two dramatists: a tension between comedy and tragedy that breaks over ‘character’. Yeats had written to his father from the Abbey just that February of Shakespeare that ‘he is always a writer of tragi-comedy’, observing that ‘there is indeed character, but we notice that it is in the moments of comedy that character is defined; in Hamlet’s gaiety let us say’.¹⁸³ Here he argues that comedy hinges on characterisation, the detail and specificity of a descriptive line as he had gathered it ‘from a certain letter of Congreve’s’.¹⁸⁴ By stark contrast, tragedy literally speaks for Yeats ‘amid the great moments, when Timon *orders* his tomb, when Hamlet *cries* to Horatio “absent thee from felicity awhile,” when Antony *names* “Of many thousand kisses the poor last,” all is lyricism, unmixed passion, “the integrity of fire”’.¹⁸⁵ Yeats appropriates the Shakespearean text in ‘The Tragic Theatre’ to defend Synge’s work against his detractors by leveraging lyricism to slot the pair side-by-side in defiance of contemporary drama that panders to popular tastes, nationalist or otherwise. But Yeats points up another, perhaps more significant similarity between Synge and Shakespeare.

T. R. Henn has identified in his introduction to *Deirdre* a plot parallel with Shakespeare in the doomed love of Antony and Cleopatra that Yeats also works into his assessment of Synge’s lyricism, Synge’s song. Deirdre dies, like Cleopatra, before her own beauty can succumb to old age, before her love affair with Naisi can settle into the humdrum of domestic life in the forests of Alban. She recognises only too late that their love cannot last, and thus it suddenly seems ‘a

¹⁸³ Yeats, *Letters*, p. 549.

¹⁸⁴ Yeats, *Early Essays*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175. My italics.

dream, but this night has waked us surely'.¹⁸⁶ The wedded bliss enjoyed in their youth will end inevitably with middle age. Both Deirdre and Naisi fear this fate before it has settled on either of them, though. As Naisi remarks to Fergus, 'I'll not tell you a lie. There have been days a while past when I've been throwing a line for salmon or watching for the run of hares, that I've a dread upon me a day'd come I'd weary of her voice (*very slowly*), and Deirdre see I wearied'.¹⁸⁷ Deirdre overhears their conversation and, as Kiberd observes in *Synge and the Irish Language*, 'This is Synge's brilliant innovation, for it makes Deirdre the motive force of the play'. Synge works directly with his Irish source, *Oidhe Chloinne Uisnigh*, to follow this innovation up with the denouement that sees death drive its wedge between the lovers. As Kiberd points out, now they 'become truly tragic and play an active part in their own destruction. They are not merely tricked into returning, but deliberately opt for death rather than the decay of youthful love'.¹⁸⁸ Synge consists in this way with the Irish original of their story, as he also insists on an explanation of their tragic end to set up the ironic twist that they should suffer death at the edge of the grave Conchubar has dug.¹⁸⁹ As Naisi remarks to Deirdre, 'There's nothing, surely, the like of a new grave of open earth for putting a great space between two friends that love'.¹⁹⁰ But Synge has one last thing in store for them.

As Conchubor rallies his soldiers to shelter Deirdre away to Emain Macha, Naisi must put his loyalty to his brothers Ainnle and Ardan on the line. They have taken up arms against Conchubor's forces in defence of Deirdre and Naisi, who also longs to fight at their side one last time. He must choose, therefore, between a last act of loyalty to his brothers and his love of Deirdre. 'Do not leave me, Naisi', she cries. 'Do not leave me broken and alone'. But Naisi ends their love, like Antony, by cursing it:

They'll not get a death that's cruel, and they with men alone. It's
women that have loved are cruel only; and if I went on living from
this day I'd be putting a curse on the lot of them I'd meet walking in

¹⁸⁶ J. M. Synge, *Deirdre of the Sorrows* in *The Complete Plays*, ed. by T. R. Henn (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 266.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁸⁸ Declan Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 187.

¹⁸⁹ Synge, p. 263.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

the east or west, putting a curse on the sun that gave them beauty,
and on the madder and the stoncrop put red upon their cloaks.¹⁹¹

Presumably, 'them' refers here to the 'women that have loved'. And yet, as Naisi reaches his 'curse of the sun', it seems that 'them' might just as felicitously refer to his brothers. It would appear, then, that Naisi makes his decision with one speech still to come:

There's not be many'd make a story, for that mockery is in your eyes
this night will spot the face of Emain with a plague of pitted graves.

Deirdre understands that their return to Ireland fulfills the destiny foretold at her birth. As Lavarcham remarks throughout the play, 'she'd bring destruction on the world'. Synge gathered this emphasis on foreknowledge in the story from his medieval manuscript sources.¹⁹² But Synge's Deirdre also wishes that their love might live forever in folktales and songs, and in the end Naisi feels that she has failed him out of vanity. He parts with a 'hard word from [her] lips': 'I'm well pleased there's no one in this place to make a story that Naisi was a laughing-stock the night he died'. Like Caesar's comment on Cleopatra—

Bravest at the last,
She leveled at our purposes and, being royal,
Took her own way. (5.2.380-3)

—Conchubar concludes of Deirdre that 'She will do herself harm'.¹⁹³ For Yeats, Synge balances his sources off against his own dramatic interests in *Deirdre* just as Shakespeare does in *Antony and Cleopatra*. What had in this way went for Yeats had also held true for Synge: Irish drama proved 'popular' much as Elizabethan drama did in its day only insofar as it sourced from and returned to 'the people' their myths in the theatre. A disappointed reviewer for the *Freeman's Journal* complained nevertheless of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* that the Abbey's directors 'were expected to fulfill the true purpose of playing – 'to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature', to banish the meretricious stage, and give, for the first time, true pictures of Irish life and fulfillment of that pledge'.¹⁹⁴ But Synge does well to defend with all sincerity his connection to the

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁹² Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, p. 183.

¹⁹³ Synge, p. 272.

¹⁹⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 29 January 1907. See *Hamlet*, 3.2.15-6.

workaday world outside the Abbey as, in essence, early modern: 'It is probable that when the Elizabethan dramatist took his ink-horn and sat down to his work he used many phrases that he had just heard, as he sat at dinner, from his mother or his children. In Ireland, those of us who know the people have the same privilege'.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of Western World: A Comedy in Three Acts* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1907), p. vii. Synge dated his 'Preface to *The Playboy of Western World*' as 'January 21st 1907'.

By overlooking the ideological mooring of Arnold's Celticism to his Liberal unionism, Yeats left himself open to the regular abuse of some Irish nationalists.¹ Not only did Yeats specifically and the Revival generally serve as two of Moran's favourite targets, but in 1904 his animosity would inform a series of political travesties that featured in *The Leader*. Moran established his weekly review in 1900 with the help of Irish economist Father Thomas Finlay and a dissident faction of the Gaelic League in Dublin to serve as a clericalist rival to Griffith's secularist newspaper, *United Irishman*. Moreover, Moran would wield the Shakespearean text in this round of his fight with Yeats. Both 'Hamlet among the Celts' and 'The Bigots of the Wood' illustrate that appropriations of Shakespeare in Dublin during the renewed debate over Home Rule led by the reorganised Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond could conceal beneath the tension of a neat sectarian surface of Fenians versus Orangemen a more complex play on nationalist identities between clericalists like Moran, separatists like Griffith and, not least, Celtic revivalists like Yeats himself.

Hamlet's sojourn 'among the Celts' unfolds in a series of brief encounters that move the moody Dane rung-by-rung 'up' Dublin's social ladder in Stephen's Green 'on a beautiful Sunday in May', an afternoon outing that he enjoys from his 'seat under a flowering hawthorn'.² True to form, Hamlet plays both the fool and the philosopher here as he replies in overwrought verse to the clumsy prose of his interlocutors. 'D'ye know anything misther?' Clod the 'Coachman' asks Hamlet, to which he answers:

In modesty, I think
That nature's great eternal book of truth
Before the eye and vision of my mind
Is not unopened quite.

'What the divil is he sayin' at all?' a confused Lump the 'Police Pensioner' wonders as Clod clarifies his question: 'Ah—I mane misther are you backin' anything to-morra?' Not one for betting on horses, Hamlet replies:

¹ See Yeats, 'The Celtic Element in Literature', in *Early Essays*, pp. 128-38, for an early defence. See Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation*, for a recent discussion of his ongoing antagonism with D. P. Moran in this context.

² 'Hamlet among the Celts', *The Leader*, 2 July 1904, pp. 300-2.

If ever shall the sun that morrow see;
 With gratitude, I'll take my humble course
 In life's mysterious race.

'Begoh this bloke is dotty', Clod concludes. 'Mad as a March hare', Lump observes. 'An escaped lunatic, I'll bet a bob', Patch the 'Huxter' adds just to make things more interesting. 'Be the hokey, let us clear off. Who knows but the next turn of the fit might mane murther'. After these 'weedy offspring of a bloated age' exeunt, two 'Young Tradesmen' enter. Hamlet's conversation with McGinty and Breen follows a similar pattern, ending once more with talk of the racetrack and a peeler's tip on a horse, 'Hooligan's mule', the name of a stage-Irish song bemoaned by many nationalists.³ But 'these sparrows of humanity' do not disappoint Hamlet quite like the last pair to disturb his urban idyll, the 'Two Grave, Respectable-looking Gentlemen' Block and Mallet.

Hamlet listens quietly as this pair of West Britons sing Blackpool's praises and lament that 'Our Irish watering places, besides being deficient in style and class, are also woefully behind in Christies and coons. They may talk as much as they like about majestic scenery and the wild muse of the waves, but I'd rather have a promenade and a brass band than tons of scenery, and music of that sort'. For Hamlet, their praise of singers in blackface working the tourists in Blackpool seems woefully symptomatic of an Anglo-Irish upper class beholden to English tastes. He finds this insight confirmed by their mistaken pinning of a verse on the vice of solitude to the Irish poet Thomas Moore, whom they select as the more likely candidate over another Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan. 'In the lyrical handicap Moore was the winning horse', Block observes. 'The rest were nowhere'. That neither Moore nor Mangan wrote the trite lines recited only occurs to Hamlet, who forwards the Irish-American world heavyweight boxing champion John L. Sullivan—listed amongst the 'many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity' in Joyce's hyperbolic description of The Citizen's attire in the 'Cyclops' episode of *Ulysses* (12.187)—as their likely author:

Oh, solitude where are the charms
 Which sages have seen in thy face?
 Better dwell in the midst of alarms

³ Maume, 'Introduction' to *Irish Ireland*, p. xvi.

Than reign in this horrible place.

But talk has taken its inevitable turn to horses and, with the pubs now opening their doors for the day, the pair 'notice a general movement of people towards the gates' of Stephen's Green. Block and Mallet decide on a drink at Philip's across the way. Hamlet declares the welcome exodus 'A movement truly national, with Bacchus at its head'. 'Alone again' as the play ends, Hamlet converts to the philosophy of 'Irish Ireland' and confesses in his closing soliloquy a wish to 'breathe an air un-Anglicised and free':

From jockeys, stables, and the music halls.
 From coons and Christy nigger troupes exempt.
 Oh! that some Irish Hercules would rise
 And with the waters of another styx
 Rinse clear away the rank Augustan stuff
 Congested here through rotten ages past.
 Oh! here he'd find full more than seven tasks
 Before the work colossal could be done.
 The brazen bulls of bigotry inflamed
 Would have to fall before his quelling club.
 The fiery dragons and ferocious hounds
 Of rancour, fury, ignorance, and hate
 Would in the dirt congenial have to be.
 And in their fall resuscitate the land.
 That done, the rest would be a gentle peace
 And silence.

Hamlet finds much to his disenchantment, then, that the Celts of ancient lore and contemporary poetry live nowhere near modern Dublin. But Moran would publish an even more direct attack on Yeats's position with 'The Bigots of the Wood', a parody of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which Puck dispatches with a drunken Orangeman and terrorises an amateur troupe of Protestant actors at work further north.

Puck makes his first move at midnight on Samhain in 'a wood near Castle Saunderson', the family seat of Colonel Edward Saunderson—an influential

Protestant and the Unionist MP for North Armagh—in county Cavan.⁴ Here he plays his tricks neither on young Athenian lovers lost in the woods nor an affable Bottom the Weaver but the enemies of ‘Irish Ireland’:

An Orangeman drunk I diverted from home,
And now he is stuck in a bog cursing Rome.
With signs and guiles a Freemason I led
For fully six miles from his home and his bed.

After rerouting his first victim, Puck comes across a ‘cast of bigots’—Bottom, Billy, Boyne, Howler, and Scorcher—rehearsing a skit entitled ‘The Triumph of the ‘Saved’’, which celebrates a short-lived victory over all things Catholic and nationalist in Ireland. Bottom supplies his own lines cribbed from *Richard III*—‘Now is the Summer of our discontent | Made roaring Winter by the Winds of Rome’—that ‘his striking histrionic attitude’ in the role of ‘Ascendancy’ cannot redeem. Scorcher then sings:

Sound the loud timbrel o’er famed Sandy Row:
Rome is defeated and Popery low.
Sing for the glorious great battle victorious
Where Toleration has met his death blow.
Sound the loud timbrel o’er famed Sandy Row, etc.

Puck refuses to suffer their charade any further. ‘While the others are conversing apart, Puck puts an ass’s head upon Bottom’ and shortly thereafter ‘divers animal’s heads’ upon those of his supporting cast. ‘When they perceive each other’, the bigots start ‘a horrible screaming’ about ‘Popery and witchcraft’ as they ‘rush madly off in various directions’. After Puck exits, Bubble the ‘Minor Poet’ enters the wood only to find Bottom there. ‘Ha, a satyr’, Bubble remarks. ‘Oh, blest the night | That I did hither roam’. ‘Rome, you say’, Bottom retorts. ‘To hell with Rome, | And the Pope too’. But Bubble also appears far too enchanted by this ‘rare adventure of great Celtic note’ for Puck, who promptly puts ‘a donkey’s noodle on poor Bubble, | So he will help to give the bigot’s [*sic*] trouble’. True to form, Puck eventually removes their bestial headgear, though, not without protest: ‘bigots always should wear asses’ heads’. Yet Bubble does not come back on stage with Bottom, Billy, Boyne, Howler and Scorcher ‘looking

⁴ ‘The Bigots of the Wood’, *The Leader*, 29 October 1904, pp. 152-53.

marvelously tired and bedraggled' as the play draws to a close. Rather, he appears as an ass still to deliver its final lines:

Oh, such enchanted sights I've seen this night,
Such fauns and Satyrs, hamadryads, elves,
And sylvan gods miraculous and strange.
Oh, let me haste to set in rhythmic rings
Those Pagan gems of wonder.

This parody could not pledge Moran's own editorial allegiance to clericalist nationalism anymore openly over both unionism and, significantly, Celticism. Not only did 'The Bigots of the Wood' offer *The Leader's* readers a glimpse of an 'Irish Ireland' aggressively Catholic and nationalist in the face of a Protestant and unionist threat, but it also deviated from Shakespeare's own offer of peace in Puck's declaration of the play as 'but a dream' (5.1.498). 'The Bigots of the Wood' fights hard alongside 'Hamlet among the Celts' in this way to overturn the popular conception of the Irish as effete, mystical Celts. But it remains locked in a binary opposition with Anglo-Saxonism just the same.

Moran's hermeneutic nationalism had led him to declare in his essay 'The Battle of Two Civilizations' (1899)—collected as the last chapter of his political manifesto *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*—that 'I think I have read somewhere that the great Duke of Marlborough knew no English history except that which he learned from Shakespeare's works':

I mention this in order to point out that it takes an Englishman to get the most out of English literature, as it takes a Frenchman to get the most out of French literature. A literature steeped in the history, traditions, and genius of one nation, is at the best only an imperfect tutor to the people of another nation; in fact, the common, half-educated people of another nation will have none of it. The Irish nation has, this century, been brought up on English literature. Of course it never really kindled their minds or imaginations; they were driven to look at literature as a thing not understandable and above

them—a position, I need scarcely say, not making for the development of self-respect or intellectual self-dependence.⁵

On the one hand, Moran argues here that the notion of nation as narration must necessarily have its limits. For Moran, the Irish can no more write a new literature in English—contrary to what some in the Revival, including Yeats, had advocated—than they can appreciate English literature as such. On the other hand, this move requires him to take the ties that bind person to place in and through language for granted. Literature becomes a gloss on history for Moran and, fortunately for Marlborough, the English have their Shakespeare. Moreover, Moran diminishes the place of the professional and denies altogether the recreational study of English history and literature in Ireland as well as Irish history and literature in England during, at least, the preceding decade in order to forward a nativist definition of national identities realised in and through language alone. But his polemical use of English to this end eschews a place for the performative in any discourse on identity. Neither does he observe the irony of his position here. Moran has it instead, then, that the question of style in the formation of national canons does not deserve a hearing.

Instead, he argues here that reading English literature has, naturally, pushed the Irish further from rather than pulled them towards full integration with the Union. For Moran, the Irish may appropriate the Shakespearean text, but even the best readers amongst them cannot come as close in their own understanding to the fundamental significance of his works as the English themselves. Although Moran leaves this level of significance largely undefined, he concludes that language understood over and against history has something to do with it. He mocks the stylistic hybridity cultivated in Ireland under the Union, the Anglo-Celtic poetic central to the Arnoldian critical project that Yeats had, in Moran's mind, put to merely furthering his own ends.

'Romances in which Irish heroes of a couple hundred years ago, who probably never spoke a word of English in their lives, were made to prate heroics in English of the 'Seest thou yon battlements' type' during the nineteenth century, Moran observes. 'Criticism had died, and this sort of thing, along with

⁵ Moran, *Irish Ireland*, pp. 100-1.

“oratory,” was allowed to swell like soap bubbles all over the land’.⁶ For Moran, Yeats ‘arose’ in this situation alongside other Anglo-Irish writers simply ‘by proclaiming from the house-tops that they were great Irish literary men’.⁷ He concludes dismissively, then, that ‘no one in Ireland understands Mr. Yeats or his school’.⁸ ‘Who are the Celts?’ he wonders. ‘As if it mattered to anyone, beyond a few specialised scholars, who *they were*’. Moran recommends that his Irish readers ponder another question instead: ‘Who and what *are we*?’⁹ As Moran argues, Celtic revivalists had emphasised a false tradition at a time when the Irish needed a genuine definition of their identity:

A certain number of Irish literary men have “made a market”—just as stock-jobbers do in another commodity—in a certain vague thing, which is indistinctly known as “the Celtic note” in English literature, and they earn their fame and livelihood by supplying the demand which they have honourably and with much advertising created. We make no secret of the reason why we have dropped our language, have shut out our past, and cultivate Anglo-Saxon ways. We have done them all in the light of day, brutally, frankly—for our living. But an intelligent people are asked to believe that the manufacture of the before-mentioned “Celtic note” is a grand symbol of an Irish national intellectual awakening. This, it appears to me, is one of the most glaring frauds that the credulous Irish people ever swallowed.¹⁰

Moran stresses here as elsewhere in *Irish Ireland* that the Irish were certainly not Celts, but he also appears at pains to point out that his argument against the ‘Celtic note’ does not stem from ‘an English literary point of view’. He does not make his case based on taste. Moran rightly thought of himself as categorically unqualified to judge the Anglo-Celtic poetic from this perspective. Rather, he remarks on the pathos of a situation in which ‘We were recently asked to swell ourselves out with pride after contemplating the English debt to Irish

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79. My italics.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

literature'.¹¹ For Moran, Celtic revivalism looked like the most recent in a long line of naïve nationalisms whose adherents hoped to achieve Irish independence but did not really know 'Ireland a nation'. Likewise, he brutally criticises his contemporaries for their admiration of the Protestant, Anglo-Irish patriot tradition of 'Grattan, Flood, Tone, Emmett, and all the rest who dreamt and worked for an independent country, even though they had no conception of an Irish nation'.¹² Moran considered any movement structured by Ireland's colonial legacy doomed to failure. 'The foundation of Ireland is the Gael, and the Gael must be the element that absorbs', he argues in 'The Pale and the Gael'. 'On no other basis can an Irish nation be reared that would not topple over by force of the very ridicule that it would beget'.¹³ Moran's many conflicts with his contemporaries underscored the crisis of authenticity undermining the concerted effort undertaken by cultural figures like Yeats to speak on behalf of the Irish in English after the fall of Ireland's 'uncrowned king', Parnell. But the appropriations of the Shakespearean text in *The Leader* also speak to this point, albeit indirectly.

Their authorship itself is made deliberately anonymous, as the ambiguous initials of 'A. M. W.' appear appended to both pieces.¹⁴ *The Leader's* regular contributors fit into two distinct camps marshaled under Moran's capable management. The first included provincial priests like Denis Hallinan of Newcastlewest, who later became Bishop of Limerick and denounced Carnegie libraries for putting faith and morality in peril, and David Humphreys, who wrote lengthy pieces advocating the appropriation of funds for Catholic schools from the Erasmus Smith educational foundation.¹⁵ The second group includes Swift along with middleclass Catholic professionals such as Hugh Kennedy and Arthur Clery, figures from the same milieu as Joyce himself who nonetheless 'found in Moran an expression and possible resolution of the tensions they

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹² Ibid., p. 36.

¹³ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴ See Matthew Creasy, 'Hamlet among The Celts': Shakespeare and Irish Ireland, in *Shakespeare and the Irish Writer*, ed. by Janet Clare and Stephen O'Neill (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010). Creasy points out that these initials stand for 'A Man Who Was There', the pseudonym used by the satirist John Swift. He also provides a more complete account of Swift's contributions to *The Leader's* regular series of political travesties than those discussed here.

¹⁵ See Patrick Maume, *D. P. Moran* (Dublin: Historical Association of Ireland, 1995).

experienced between their youthful nationalism, their self-consciously Catholic education, and the vertiginously unsettling intellectual and professional possibilities (or temptations) laid open to them by their training and socialisation'.¹⁶ But 'Hamlet among the Celts' and 'The Bigots of the Wood' also sound undoubtedly characteristic of Moran's own slangy, strident style of writing and register his gift for crafting catchy slogans—he coined the phrase 'Irish Ireland'—as well as derisive nicknames for his opponents.

Moran considered separatism a reckless political doctrine. He believed that nationalists should accept their British connections in return for the Irish control of internal affairs, a devolutionary position not necessarily in keeping with Home Rule. Griffith denounced Moran as 'D. P. Hooligan, editor of the *Oracle*, who thinks Ireland can be saved by advertisements'. Moran mocked supporters of Griffith's 'Hungarian policy' as 'the Green Hungarian Band'.¹⁷ He quickly developed an audience amongst precisely those Catholic graduates and white-collar workers that he took aim at through campaigns exposing the Protestant domination of certain professions and the higher reaches of the civil service in Dublin. Thanks to Father Finlay's own efforts, many Catholic priests also supported *The Leader*. In addition, Moran's promotion of Irish industries secured its financial stability by attracting advertisements from firms that wanted to appeal to an 'Irish Ireland' audience. He came to brand this aspect of *The Leader's* campaign for homegrown modernisation the 'Irish Industrial Revival', suggesting a direct competition with Yeats himself. Yet Moran's own cultural politics feature rather problematically alongside the traces of the Shakespearean text present in both of these appropriations, as Hamlet's sceptical intellect and Puck's benign mischief permit Swift's 'new' plots to situate Moran's position *vis-à-vis* the Revival satirically.

Moran's break with parliamentary nationalism resonated during the years when Tory politics—the maligned Colonel Saunderson's politics—dictated policy at the start of the twentieth century. Saunderson had joined the Orange Order following the Land Wars of 1879 to 1882. The Protestant perception of betrayal by British political parties—particularly, by Gladstone's Liberals—

¹⁶ Maume, 'Introduction' to *Irish Ireland*, pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁷ Maume, *D. P. Moran*, p. 26.

combined naturally with the fear of a rapidly redeveloping movement for Home Rule throughout the 1880s to fuel the growth of independent unionist institutions such as the Irish Unionist Alliance in which Dowden had played his own part as president. Saunderson remained highly active in this countermovement until his death in 1906. He actively criticized Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. After the defeat of Lord Salisbury's Conservative government in 1892, many regarded Saunderson as the single most influential unionist. With the return of the Conservatives to power, Saunderson would come to occupy an increasingly significant position in parliament. When Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill came before the Commons in 1893, Saunderson echoed his earlier arguments against the measure, helping to defeat Home Rule again. Afterwards, he concentrated on the economic interests of the Anglo-Irish gentry instead of the broader political interests of his old allies. He opposed the Liberal's Land Bill of 1895 and the Conservative's Land Act of 1896 on the grounds that neither initiative served the interests of his own powerbase. This act of defiance nearly cost Saunderson his political life, angering the Conservative leadership on the one hand and the tenant lobby within Ulster unionism on the other. Saunderson defeated James Orr in the general election of 1900, despite business leaders and tenant farmers largely defecting to his opponent's camp. But by the time Puck comes to attack him in *The Leader*, Saunderson was himself laid up in Castle Saunderson ailing from a heart weakened by his recent battle with pneumonia.¹⁸ The situation that made Swift's political parodies mean something intensely political by Shakespeare when Moran ran them in Dublin had nevertheless remained one of increased hostility registered just as surely between as amongst those in nationalist and unionist camps after the long fight for Home Rule looked lost for good, in part, because of Saunderson's efforts. And yet, this scenario captures only part of the story.

Sectarian politics contextualise 'The Bigots of the Wood' up to Bubble's entrance, when his Celticism emerges as an issue alongside Bottom's ravings about Protestantism and unionism, and does not necessarily contextualise in the same manner other appropriations, including *The Leader's* own 'Hamlet among

¹⁸ Alvin Jackson, 'Saunderson, Edward James (1837-1906)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

the Celts' in which alcoholism, Celticism, West Britonism, and—albeit tacitly—Moran's own racism appear at issue. But the Shakespearean text serves Moran as a site for contesting Irish identities in English just the same. Joyce would put it to a similar purpose first with his criticism and later within his fiction in order to turn the question of identity as realised in and through language into one of performative style as understood over and against history to effectively supply Stephen Dedalus with the denial that Swift denied *The Leader's* Puck.

5. JAMES JOYCE

DESDEMONA I am not merry, but I do beguile
The thing I am by seeming otherwise.
Come, how wouldst thou praise me?

—*Othello*, 2.1.134-6

That adolescent who vanished from us at the beginning of his life and who will always haunt lofty, pensive minds with his mourning is very present to me now as I see him struggling against the curse of having to appear. For that is precisely, uniquely the kind of character that Hamlet externalizes on the stage, in an intimate and occult tragedy.

—Mallarmé, 'Hamlet' (1886)¹

THOMAS That is the whole crux of the matter. I am not a king. I am the
servant of a king. I am only one of the stewards of his Irish city.

—Sebastian Barry, *The Steward of Christendom* (1995)²

SHAKESPEARE EXPLAINED

Not long before he collected 'At Stratford-on-Avon' in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, Yeats bumped into a young James Joyce on the steps of the National Library, from where they ducked into a café on O'Connell Street together. In the interview, Joyce proved every bit a precocious upstart. 'Why had I concerned myself with politics, with folklore, with the historical setting of events', Yeats has Joyce demand of him in a preface penned for but never published in that volume. 'Above all why had I written about ideas, why had I condescended to make generalizations?'³ Yeats recalls 'explaining the dependence of all good art on popular tradition', a relationship to which Shakespeare testifies for him here as elsewhere. 'In big towns, especially in big towns like London, you don't find what old writers used to call the people; you find instead a few highly cultivated, highly perfected individual lives, and great multitudes who imitate and cheapen them'. To this defence of the folk and their lore against the debasing forces of

¹ Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Hamlet', in *Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters*, trans. by Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), pp. 56-60 (p. 57). Mallarmé first published his thoughts on *Hamlet* in *La Revue Indépendante*, 1 November 1886.

² Sebastian Barry, *The Steward of Christendom* (London: Methuen, 1995), p. 43.

³ Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 2nd edn (New York: OUP, 1982), p. 103.

modernity—a defence that he made in essays and introductions written up and down the 1890s—Yeats has it that Joyce simply replied: ‘Generalizations aren’t made by poets; they are made by men of letters. They are no use’. A hefty generalisation on Joyce’s part, to be sure, but one that forced Yeats to face an inconvenient truth: the game of Anglo-Irish cultural politics in which he wagered his early reputation as an Irish poet had played to a stalemate. Joyce points out that Yeats and his Shakespeare could only retain value now as a commodity—that of folk artist—in a marketplace of ideas—that of literary criticism—commensurate with Celticism as the currency servicing their transaction as such. Yeats had attempted to ‘Neither a borrower nor a lender be’ (*Hamlet*, 1.3.78) in this economy but, by Joyce’s estimation, he stood to lose his shirt just the same. Joyce suggests, then, that Shakespeare criticism had become a closed shop in Dublin since Trinity hired Dowden in 1867, a situation to which the Revival contributed its clichés that riffed off Arnold’s ‘Celtic note’. But Joyce’s sleight has a history all its own, representing his initial break with Anglo-Irish cultural politics and the Shakespeares that its terms had helped Arnold, Dowden, and Yeats to create.

Joyce read his essay entitled ‘Drama and Life’ before the Literary and Historical Society of University College, Dublin, on 10 January 1900, just three weeks shy of his eighteenth birthday. He would argue to the mixed reception of his peers that:

Drama is essentially a communal art and of widespread domain. The drama—its fittest vehicle almost presupposes an audience, drawn from all classes. In an artloving [*sic*] and art-producing society the drama would naturally take up its position at the head of all artistic institutions. Drama is moreover of so unswayed, so unchallengeable a nature that in its highest forms all but transcends criticism. [...] In every other art personality, mannerism of touch, local sense, are held as adornments, as additional charms. But here the artist forgoes his very self and stands a mediator in awful truth before the veiled face of God.⁴

⁴ James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. by Kevin Barry and trans. by Conor Deane (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 26.

Joyce expounds here a similar definition of the ritualistic potential of the theatre to that championed by Yeats while reiterating the impersonality of the dramatist as observed by both Ruskin and Pater. But he breaks with this company in favour of a demotic rather than a hieratic reading of the Shakespearean text. Moreover, Joyce keeps Ibsen's social realism and the new school of naturalistic theatre at the forefront of his thinking, much as he does in his other early criticism, and depends heavily on Wagner's famous essay 'Art-Work of the Future' to bracket off drama from the rest of literature.⁵ Indeed, he deploys Wagner's distinction to establish Shakespeare for the purposes of this essay as a 'literary artist' rather than a writer of 'mere drama'. For Joyce, Shakespeare wrote 'literature in dialogue':

Human society is the embodiment of changeless laws which the whimsicalities and circumstances of men and women involve and overwrap. The realm of literature is the realm of these accidental manners and humours—a spacious realm; and the true literary artist concerns himself mainly with them.

Yet Shakespeare rules over this 'spacious realm' at his own expense. For Joyce, Shakespeare surveys its rich surface textures but captures none of its real substance. On the other hand, Ibsen offers drama proper:

By drama I understand the interplay of passions to portray truth; drama is strife, evolution, movement in whatever way unfolded; it exists, before it takes form, independently; it is conditioned but not controlled by its scene. It might be said fantastically that as soon as men and women began life in the world there was above them and about them, a spirit, of which they were dimly conscious, which they would have had sojourn in their midst in deeper intimacy and for whose truth they became seekers in after times, longing to lay hands upon it.

⁵ See Joyce's review essay on *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) entitled 'Ibsen's New Drama', in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, pp. 30-49. See Richard Wagner, 'Art-Work of the Future', in *Prose Works*, trans. by William Ashton Ellis, 8 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1895), I, pp. 69-213 (pp. 144-5): 'Thus by the taking up of Drama into literature, a mere new form was found in which the art of Poetry might indite herself afresh; only borrowing from Life the accidental stuff which she might twist and turn to suit her solitary need, her own self-glorification. All matter and each form were only there to help her introduce to the best graces of the reader one abstract thought, the poet's idealised, beloved "I"' (p. 144).

Drama appears epiphanic or revelatory to Joyce here, and Shakespeare's 'literature in dialogue' simply lacks this essential quality. Shakespeare's works look just as played out as those of 'the Greeks' with whom Joyce opens up this essay. 'Whatever form it takes must not be superimposed or conventional', he cautions the budding dramatist. 'In literature we allow conventions, for literature is a comparatively low form of art'. The category addressed by Joyce in these terms does not denote a particular genre, and thus poetry as well as prose can also qualify as dramatic art.

Contrary to the treatment of Stephen's presentation of this paper in *Stephen Hero* (1906), Joyce capably addressed the complaints of his critics afterwards.⁶ That Stephen does not appear altogether significant, though, as this essay contains the earliest and perhaps the strongest statement that Joyce would ever publicly make about his own intentions as an artist. 'Shall we put life—real life—on the stage?' he wonders. 'No, says the Philistine chorus, for it will not draw. What a blend of thwarted sight and smug commercialism. Parnassus and the city Bank divide the souls of the peddlers'. The 'sad bore' that Joyce calls life here abounds in an aesthetic potential that he would attempt to realise with his own works. As Kiberd has recently argued, Joyce's exploration of the 'everyday' in *Ulysses* 'offers many models of how a more honest kind of teaching might work' and, to this end in particular, defines his own 'free play with texts like the *Odyssey* or *Hamlet*'.⁷ Joyce stayed in this way one step ahead of Stephen, outpacing the alter ego he had yet to creatively engage. 'Still I think out of the dreary sameness of existence, a measure of dramatic life may be drawn', he professes. 'Even the most commonplace, the deadest among the living, may play a part in a great drama'.⁸ Ellmann reads hindsight into the pledges made by Joyce here:

His defense of contemporary materials, his interest in Wagnerian myth, his aversion to conventions, and his insistence that the laws of life are the same always and everywhere, show him to be ready to

⁶ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 70-1.

⁷ Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Living* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 16, p. 10.

⁸ Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, p. 28.

fuse real people with mythical ones, and so find all ages to be one as in *A Portrait, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake*.⁹

But it still seemed strange to Joyce's audience that he should see drama at work on this level in Ibsen, whose plays they considered vulgar, written for the contemporary moment, rather than Shakespeare, whose works they considered utterly moral, written for all time thanks to the light they shed on the darkest recesses of the human soul.

For Joyce, their position represented as dogmatic a conception of the Shakespearean text as anything that he had himself proposed of Ibsen's plays, in part, out of protest. He could not stomach the practise of criticism on the level of character alone. As Joyce has it in *Stephen Hero*:

He [Father Butt] took 'Othello' more seriously and made the class take a note of the moral of the play: an object-lesson in the passion of jealousy. Shakespeare, he said, had sounded the depths of human nature: his plays show us men and women under the influence of various passions and they show us the moral result of these passions. The dramas of Shakespeare have a distinct moral force and 'Othello' is one of the greatest of tragedies.¹⁰

Father Butt assiduously observes Shakespeare's unmatched skill at offering up Othello as a character blackened—inside as out—by the 'tragic flaw' of jealousy. In its more pernicious form as envy, the Moor's condition becomes a mortal sin against which Father Butt must instruct his students. Yet the Shakespeare that rushes to Father Butt's aid to this end appears readymade to Stephen here, the *papier-mâché* Shakespeare of nineteenth-century biographies, such as Dowden's, and public-school curricula, such as Dr. Arnold's, that dispenses eternal wisdom. In *Ulysses*, Joyce would offer up a Shakespeare assembled by Stephen on site. But first he needed to finish off his own portrait of the artist as a young aesthete against this model of steady artistic growth and spiritual development.

Joyce's early representations of Stephen provide a narrative of the artist's coming of age that complicates the accounts of Shakespeare's biography which privilege, like Dowden's own, the maturation of his moral character. He suggests

⁹ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 73.

¹⁰ Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. by John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions, 1944, 1963), p. 29.

in and through Stephen, then, that the conventional novel, against which critics have traditionally read his works,¹¹ and the contemporary biography of the artist bear a fundamental resemblance. A Shakespeare and a Stephen can serve both the biographer and the novelist equally well for representation as the subjectivity under scrutiny. For Joyce, an altogether different trajectory carries the conception of the artist as primarily a moral agent away from the object lessons and character criticisms of *Stephen Hero* into the territory mapped in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Indeed, the absence from *A Portrait* of the many meditations on and conversations about the Shakespearean text from *Stephen Hero* surely ranks as one of the more conspicuous differences between the two novels. Stephen's development as an artist—significantly, never consummated in a substantial work of his own making—registers, however tacitly, Joyce's own resistance to the terms of and, no less decisively, initial effort to right the wrongs in contemporary accounts of Shakespeare's artistic growth and spiritual development as the steady progress towards total self-possession, the record of an exemplary teleology.

For Stephen, ideas of good and evil emerge in bad art alone. 'The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire and loathing', he observes for the benefit of his friend Lynch in *A Portrait*. 'Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something'. Stephen separates spectacle from drama here, a static art that must elicit both pity and terror, as Aristotle asserts in his *Poetics* but fails to define adequately for Stephen, an observation he makes just before defining both on his own terms. The aesthetic emotions of pity and terror transcend the visceral emotions of desire and loathing for Stephen in 'an esthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal terror'. He reminds Lynch that *visa*—deployed by Aquinas 'to cover esthetic apprehensions of all kinds'—even 'though it is vague, is clear enough to keep away good and evil which excite desire and loathing'. At the very least, the beauty of dramatic art must suspend the operation of these categories in the minds of audience members. He aligns beauty to truth against morality in this

¹¹ See Cheryl Herr, *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) and R. B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). For a recent example, see Tracey Teets Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

way. Aesthetic emotions stand for Stephen outside of mere meaning or simple significance within a systematic treatment of ethics. Put another way, 'Truth is beheld by the intellect which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the intelligible; beauty is beheld by the imagination which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the sensible'. As he turns to consider 'artistic conception, artistic gestation and artistic reproduction', Stephen argues that the artist must first apprehend an object apart from other objects 'as self-bound and self-contained'. The artist must then analyse an object's formal properties, 'the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious'. Finally, the artist must recognise 'the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing'. As Stephen concludes, 'The image, it is clear, must be set between the mind or senses of the artist himself and the mind or senses of the others'.¹² Drama outranks lyric and epic forms of poetry in a 'progression from authority to impersonality', from first-person discourse to third-person narration to a multiplicity of voices on the same stage.¹³ The theatre appears to Stephen the only space free from the personality of the artist.

During his disquisition, Stephen directs Lynch's attention 'to a basket which a butcher's boy had slung inverted on his head'. That he chooses the basket for apprehension over and against the boy cleverly masks Joyce's own recognition of Stephen and, in particular, his enigmatic formalism as the *quidditas* of his adolescent aesthetics.¹⁴ Stephen concentrates on the artist's ability to apprehend, analyse, and recognise the essence of an object first and later conceive of a place for it and, crucially, the apprehending, analysing, and recognising subject within 'the sensible, visible' artwork into which both enter, image and perspective alike. Biographies of the artist must subject their object of study to a similar treatment. The rules of the game do not change for Joyce, just the angle, should a Shakespeare instead of a Stephen come up for representation as the subjectivity under scrutiny. He offers an aesthetic theory in and through Stephen, then, that cuts across all categories of literary representation, the biography no less than the novel.

¹² Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 204-15.

¹³ Ian Crump, 'Refining himself out of existence: the evolution of Joyce's aesthetic theory and the drafts of *A Portrait*', in *Joyce in Context*, ed. by Vincent J. Cheng and Timothy Martin (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), pp. 223-39 (p. 228).

¹⁴ See Joyce's Paris and Pola notebooks in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, pp. 102-7.

Moreover, Joyce thought at Stephen's age that the Shakespearean text no longer challenged the sensibilities of its audience. Stanislaus Joyce adds a suggestive insight on this problem as his older brother had gleaned it from contemporary criticism, Shakespeare himself:

His attitude towards Shakespeare was vitiated by his cult of Ibsen and by his preference which, the more he read, grew all the stronger, for the artistic tenets of classicism in the drama. Yet he seemed to know by heart many passages and most of the songs of Shakespeare's plays, and for some purpose he had learned them or for some reason they had remained in his memory. He had attacked *Macbeth* vigorously for its formal deficiencies in an essay to which Thomas Arnold had assigned a high classification, but it was not the lack of form in Shakespeare's plays that he chiefly objected to. I should say that his aversion sprang from something deeper than a sense of form that he disliked in Shakespeare his total lack of faith or its equivalent, a capacity for an all-or-nothing devotion to something, regardless of whether it was conducive to his earthly comfort or not. He considered Shakespeare a time-server, ever ready to write what he hoped would please, but gifted with a mastery of words that made him the mouthpiece of mankind.¹⁵

Stanislaus highlights here the 'strong misreading'¹⁶ behind his brother's early distaste for the 'treacherous instinct of adaptability' that Shakespeare seemed to share with Yeats himself. The absence of 'all-or-nothing devotion to something' left these poets turned playwrights open to all comers, if not a few mummers.

In his essay entitled 'The Day of the Rabblement' (1901), Joyce argues that 'an esthete has a floating will, and Mr Yeats's treacherous instinct of adaptability must be blamed for his recent association with a platform from which even self-respect should have urged him to refrain'.¹⁷ That platform, the Irish Literary Theatre, had in his strict opinion caved to the conservative cultural

¹⁵ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*, ed. by Richard Ellmann (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2003), pp. 99-100. Thomas Arnold, Matthew Arnold's younger brother, served as professor of English literature at UCD from 1882 until his death in November 1900.

¹⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: OUP, 1973), *passim*.

¹⁷ Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, p. 51.

politics of its nationalist base of support since slating for the evening of 8 May 1899 a double bill that consisted of Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and Martyn's *The Heather Field*. The performance had to proceed under police protection at the Antient Concert Rooms in Brunswick Street, as Yeats's play had come to anger some nationalists since its publication nearly a decade earlier. Now it would produce a backlash against the ILT in the weeks that followed the premiere not seen again in Dublin until the rioting of 1907 over Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. With his pamphlet *Souls for Gold*, Frank Hugh O'Donnell would denounce Yeats's play as filled with 'wild incoherencies [...] revolting blasphemies and idiotic impulses which sicken and astonish [...] This is not Mysticism. The great mystics are intellectual and moral glories of Christian civilization. This is only silly stuff, and sillier, unutterable profanity'.¹⁸ Some of Joyce's Catholic classmates, including his friend Francis Skeffington, with whom he published this essay, denounced Yeats's play after Cardinal Logue condemned it as heretical.¹⁹ That many of them never bothered to see the play themselves did not stem the tide of dissent. 'We feel it our duty', their letter published on 10 May in the *Freeman's Journal* declared, 'in the name and for the honor of Dublin Catholic students at the Royal University, to protest against an art, even a dispassionate art, which offers as a type of our people a loathsome brood of apostates'.²⁰ But the ten signatories could not secure the endorsement of the headstrong Joyce, who numbered amongst the supportive side on the night and publicly refused to join theirs the next day.

Joyce understood perhaps better than most that fraught public relations would pester the ILT. He also thought that inauthenticity would plague its poetic for most Irish Catholics. Should the ILT insist on a connection to 'the common people' of Ireland—those at whom Yeats had up to this point aimed the new national drama but with whom he lacked any substantial connection himself—then it would invariably encounter the brute fact that they lacked the essential prerequisite of the Yeatsian equation as Joyce had it: 'an artloving [*sic*] and art-producing society'. Joyce invokes 'the Nolan', the heretical Italian Renaissance

¹⁸ Quoted in Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre*, p. 267, p. 269.

¹⁹ Sheehy-Skeffington's essay entitled 'A Forgotten Aspect of the University Question' took up the issue of women's admission to university.

²⁰ Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 67.

scholar Giordano Bruno, to criticise the ‘parochial’ spirit guiding the ILT during the two years since it had opened.²¹ After cheerfully finding it ‘the latest movement of protest against the sterility and falsehood of the modern stage’, Joyce feared that the ILT ‘must now be considered the property of the rabblement’. No fan of popular taste himself, Joyce now accused Yeats of pandering to it. Yet Yeats had argued just a month after opening night in 1899 that a significant change to Irish drama looked as necessary as ever. The ILT would have to adapt in order to thrive.

‘The popular poetry of England celebrates her victories’, he observes, ‘but the popular poetry of Ireland remembers only defeats and defeated persons’.²² Yeats meant to restage these battles in order to reverse the hierarchy of victor and victim. In 1903, he urged the cultivation of Ireland’s own heroic tradition in an article written for the ILT’s journal *Samhain* on ‘The Reform of the Theatre’. Here as elsewhere he encourages Revivalists ‘to write or find plays that will make the theatre a place of intellectual excitement—a place where the mind goes to be liberated as it was liberated by the theatres of Greece and England and France at certain great moments of their history’.²³ Yeats would write along these lines again in 1906 ‘On the Season’s Work’ for *The Arrow*, another of the, now Abbey, theatre’s publications: ‘Every national dramatic movement or theatre in countries like Bohemia and Hungary, as in Elizabethan England, has arisen out of a study of the common people, who preserve national characteristics more than any other class, and out of an imaginative re-creation of national history or legend’.²⁴ This recreation of Ireland’s heroic tradition must take the form of stories adapted from ‘the common people’ for Yeats, the question of authenticity remaining one of fidelity in spirit rather than letter. As he had insisted of his early folklore collections, for example, these achieved ‘a fair equivalent for the gesture and voice of the peasant tale-teller’.²⁵ Yeats turns his

²¹ Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, p. 50.

²² Yeats, ‘The Literary Movement in Ireland’, in *Ideals in Ireland*.

²³ Yeats, *Explorations*, p. 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²⁵ Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, I, p. 174. Of course, this statement does not represent the final word for Yeats on the matter. Rather, his initial effort to relate the ‘fair equivalents’ of Irish folklore would morph first into a desire to capture the ‘divine substances’ of his sources and later into his spiritualised conception of personality. Significantly, Yeats deploys the example of Shakespeare at

‘treacherous instinct of adaptability’ into a virtue here, appropriation. But Joyce would shift the terrain of this conflict elsewhere by embedding his criticism of cultural nationalism in his fiction to blur the old battle lines.

In April 1907, he argued before an audience assembled at the Università Popolare in Austrian occupied Trieste that ‘the common people’ of Ireland hardly had the consolidated racial identity that some of its cultural nationalists insisted on tapping. ‘Our civilization is an immense woven fabric in which very different elements are mixed, in which Nordic rapacity is reconciled to Roman law, and new Bourgeois conventions to the remains of a Siriac religion’, he observes, deploying these contradictory types to cancel out the binary oppositions of Irish nativism. ‘In such a fabric, it is pointless searching for a thread that has remained pure, virgin and uninfluenced by other threads nearby’.²⁶ Likewise, Joyce has it that Yeats’s own identification of ‘the common people’ with the countryside over the cityscape, the farmer over the labourer, privileged the past over the present. Celtic revivalism looked less like cultural nationalism and more like nostalgia the closer that Joyce got, and he hits in this way upon a problem pestering it from the start. But Moran’s ‘Irish Ireland’ of Catholic Gaels—a trope, ironic in this context, to which Arnold had himself retreated in his late essays on Irish politics—also comes under heavy fire from Joyce here:

To deny the name of patriot to all those not of Irish stock would be to deny it to almost all the heroes of the modern movement: Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Robert Emmet, Theobald Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy, leaders of the 1798 rebellion; Thomas Davis and John Mitchel, leaders of the Young Ireland movement; many anti-clerical Fenians; Isaac Butt and Joseph Biggar, founders of parliamentary obstructionism; and, finally, Charles Stewart Parnell, perhaps the most formidable man ever to lead the Irish but in whose veins not a single drop of Celtic blood ran.²⁷

Renan had himself observed that ‘Ireland in particular (and herein we perhaps have the secret of her irremediable weakness) is the only country in Europe

each stage in this evolution. See Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 40-97.

²⁶ Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, p. 118.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

where the native can produce titles of his descent'. Renan's argument resembles Joyce's own, as he observes—though, not without overstating his case—that 'the most noble countries, England, France, Italy', have 'most mingled' their constituent elements.

As Joyce himself remarks of Ireland, 'various elements intermingled and renovated the ancient body' in the struggle against 'British tyranny'. For Joyce, political progress in Ireland had historically represented communities coming together and identities merging in order, more often than not he thought, to fight a common enemy. 'Racial considerations have then been for nothing in the constitution of modern nations', Renan concludes. 'The truth is that there is no pure race'.²⁸ The Shakespearean text had represented a problematic case to Joyce precisely because it mingles a multiplicity of voices at the expense—perhaps, necessarily—of formal unity. But this dialectic between rival aesthetic and political virtues would, in time, direct Joyce's own work.

After meeting Joyce in front of the National Library, Yeats invited the young poet to pen a play for the ILT. Joyce promised Yeats that he would write something in five years. He told his mother that it would take him ten.²⁹ Yeats kept the poems and epiphanies that Joyce left with him at the café to read later. 'You have a delicate talent but I cannot say whether for prose or verse', he wrote to Joyce on 2 November 1902 before, it would appear, redeploying the charge leveled against him in 'The Day of the Rabblement':

The qualities that make a man succeed do not show in his work, often, for quite a long time. They are much less qualities of talent than qualities of character—faith (of this you have probably enough), patience, *adaptability* (without this one learns nothing), and a gift for growing by experience and this is perhaps rarest of all.³⁰

Joyce still seemed a bit green to Yeats, who places priority on the cultivation of personal character over individual talent in the account of artistic growth and spiritual development that he offers here. It took time for Yeats's advice to take root, but Joyce would replace the Stephen of *A Portrait* with a Stephen able,

²⁸ Renan, *Poetry of the Celtic Races*, p. 5, p. 72.

²⁹ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 104.

³⁰ See Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, pp. 208-9. Ellmann remarks in *James Joyce* that it 'is perhaps a combination of two letters, each incomplete' (p. 757, n. 17). My italics.

albeit reluctantly, to adapt in *Ulysses*. Joyce redresses the initial imbalance in Stephen's character towards obstinate proclamations, and nowhere does Stephen's new mercurial capacity show more heroically through than in the bawdy 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode in which he performs his *Hamlet* theory. His routine in the National Library contrasts dramatically with the dreary lecture on aesthetics given Lynch in Lower Mount Street. Joyce has it, then, that Stephen playfully defends his *Hamlet* theory in and through multiple dramatic voices. Stephen's ability to revise and eventually betray his position secures its success as *perforce* a performance.

STEPHEN HEROIC

Stephen emerges from the National Library bruised but an alternative to the colonial reading subject after confronting Shakespeare's fundamental alterity. His *Hamlet* theory highlights how the terms of Anglo-Irish cultural politics had combined with those of contemporary criticism to codify the Shakespearean text's significance in Dublin during the Revival, eliding its singularity. As Stephen challenges A.E.'s assertion that 'the words of Hamlet bring our minds into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas' with his sarcastic remark 'Horseness is the whatness of allhorse' in his own head, he mocks amongst other things the Neoplatonic idealism that Yeats's Shakespeare had inherited from the Romantics.³¹ Joyce then points up the political implications of this approach to the Shakespearean text as A.E. claims that 'movements which work revolutions in the world are born out of the dreams and visions in a peasant's heart on the hillside' (9.104-06), a claim akin to Yeats's own made on the day that the pair first met in front of the National Library. But Stephen also plays fast and loose with the few known material 'facts' from Shakespeare's life that feature in his theory, only to learn from Eglinton that the local authority on the matter, Dowden, will not speculate about their connection to 'the mystery in Hamlet' (9.1072-73). Buck gives Dowden's reluctance his own characteristically lewd twist, as he remarks that 'I asked him what he thought of the charge of pederasty brought against the bard. He lifted his hands and said: *All we can say is that life*

³¹ Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 152, p. 153. Hereafter cited parenthetically by episode and line number.

ran very high in those days. Lovely!' (9.731-3). Dowden had served as a mentor to Eglinton at Trinity just as he had to Stoker before him. He later helped Eglinton to secure a position with the National Library after a period of unemployment and personal struggle as a poet with Yeats's early example. And yet, Joyce's Shakespeare appears no more an artist of the new Celtic, idealist dispensation than the older Anglo-Saxon, materialist one in the Dublin of *Ulysses*. Neither does he appear more of a poet and playwright than the 'cornjobber and moneylender' that Stephen calls him (9.743). Rather, Joyce has it that Stephen's performance demonstrate the pernicious manner in which the terms of Anglo-Irish cultural politics had come to mediate the relationship between the colonial reading subject and its object in Dublin to mark the point where the discourse of literary history ends and that of the literary as such starts.

Joyce combats the tribalism, then, that he read as rotting the core of contemporary criticism by circulating a fiction of his own about the relationship between *Hamlet* and Shakespeare. As Buck puts it for the English interloper Haines near the end of the opening episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen 'proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father' (1.555-57). Early critics generally agreed that Buck's summary of Stephen's theory—although largely sarcastic—gets it about right.³² But a couple of possible objections to the consensus present themselves, as John Gordon has recently argued:

First, obviously Hamlet has no grandson, and nothing that Stephen will say could reasonably be interpreted as suggesting that he does. Second, I defy anyone to identify, with any confidence, the antecedent of "he himself." The point is that Mulligan, here as elsewhere, wants to undermine the whole idea of integrity, of anyone being committed to one established self rather than another: it is all part of his "[m]ercurial" main-chancer's campaign against accountability (*U* 1.518).³³

³² See William T. Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 123-4. Harry Levin has called it 'possibly an oversimplification' but not problematically so in *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1960), p. 118.

³³ John Gordon, 'Getting Past No in "Scylla and Charybdis"', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 44.3 (Spring 2007), 501-22 (p. 518, n. 9).

Even though Gordon takes Joyce's point about Buck on board here, he unfortunately takes Joyce's in-joke about Stephen far too literally. Hamlet's progeny include not only a Shakespeare embodied in and through the act of reading *Hamlet*, but also Joyce and Stephen—like Goethe and Wilhelm Meister before them—in the mystical estate of an Aryan 'consubstantiality of the Son with the Father' (1.648). Buck later mocks Stephen as an 'inquisitional drunken jewjesuit' (9.1159) for his relentless theorising along these lines. But Joyce points up through his thinking about the play that particular dramatic and thematic affinities obtain between *Hamlet* and *Ulysses* itself.

As Stephen proceeds to identify Shakespeare with the late king rather than his troubled son, the lingering identification of Joyce with the adolescent version of himself in *A Portrait* rather than the adult author of *Ulysses* also slips away. Joyce lays bare a framework for situating the past in terms of the present as experienced on a continuum between actuality and potentiality.³⁴ In the moment of creation—artistic or otherwise, as Stephen teasingly hints—two becomes one. Likewise, Shakespeare serves as the antecedent and referent of the phrase 'he himself'. As Stephen later puts it, Shakespeare spoke to his dead son Hamnet from beneath the boards when he himself said in the role of King Hamlet's ghost: '*Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit*' (9.170). Stephen stubbornly refuses to separate Shakespeare's life, Hamnet, from his art, Hamlet, in his theory. Of his history plays in particular, Stephen suggests that Shakespeare has ghostwritten the events that came to define the world in which his grandfathers had indeed lived necessarily unaware of their full significance.

Gordon overlooks the fact that Stephen appropriates Buck's *précis* during the delivery of his theory to accomplish the same for himself by treating it as prescriptive of the performative style that he uses—and serves Joyce so well, by Gordon's own estimation—rather than descriptive of that theory in itself. Stephen suggests early in 'Scylla and Charybdis' that his own method deceives knowingly. He can only achieve clarity 'by seeming otherwise' (*Othello*, 2.1.135), forcing his audience to plug their own values into the variables of his equation. A significant number of these A. E. and, in particular, Eglinton appropriate from the

³⁴ Alistair Cormack, *Yeats and Joyce: Cyclical History and the Reprobate Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 100-1.

discourse around the Anglo-Irish cultural politics of the Revival. Buck may celebrate the virtues of a mercurial identity—not least, when playing the game of identity politics—but only Stephen performs that quicksilver quality, which allows him to slip the grasp of his own theory, no less. Eglinton, caught between the competing cultural and political allegiances informing his own position, estimates that the truth must lie ‘midway’, deducing a Shakespeare who ‘is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all’ (9.1018-19). But Stephen denies this truth once his algebra has secured Eglinton’s qualified support, pointing up the positive hypocrisy, the fiction, which Joyce has used to remake Shakespeare after his own image here. Eglinton can only deny Stephen’s theory circulation in his monthly literary magazine, *Dana*.

Despite the scholarship that supports the numerous allusions in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’, Stephen’s reading of *Hamlet* roundly rejects the academic edification of his interlocutors in favour of an approach that principally draws a biographical sketch of Shakespeare taken in large part from the plays and poems themselves, emphasising the creative potentiality encoded therein. Throughout *Ulysses*, Stephen quotes from the Shakespearean text over one hundred times.³⁵ Yet he censures himself during his performance not to ‘tell them he was nine years old when it [Shakespeare’s sexual desire] was quenched’ (9.936). It comes as no surprise, then, that Stephen employs a largely fictional account of Shakespeare’s biography—‘a parable of art’, as Ellmann calls it—to convince ‘Besteglyster’ of his theory’s veracity.³⁶ The National Library serves as a theatre in this way for a dramatic performance: Stephen’s defence of his *Hamlet* theory. Joyce even assigns the event the coveted status of ‘much anticipated’ after first adverting to it during ‘Telemachus’ and ‘star studded’ by casting several of Dublin’s literati in the episode’s leading roles. But the National Library of an Ireland that retained no political status outside of the Union in 1904 seems—initially, at least—an odd place for the staging of Stephen’s performance.

‘Stephen’s sense of the National Library as alien ground, of himself as an Irish-Jew in a colonized Egypt-Ireland reflects a Catholic sensibility’, Len Platt

³⁵ William M. Schutte, *Joyce and Shakespeare: A Study in the Meaning of Ulysses* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971), p. 191.

³⁶ Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 85.

has remarked of the venue.³⁷ And indeed Stephen finds there that the Revival reifies old divisions even as it promotes an all-inclusive sense of Irish identity. As he wonders of his interlocutors, ‘Will they wrest from us, from me, the palm of beauty?’ (9.740). As Platt points out, Stephen registers with a measure of suspicion the Protestant backgrounds of both Eglinton, who has ‘A sire in Ultonian Antrim’ (9.818), and A.E., who grew up in ‘The northeast corner’ (9.203). The National Library itself grew out of older Anglo-Irish and principally Protestant organisations that included the Royal Dublin Society, which donated its antiquarian collection to establish the initial holdings. Members of the Ascendancy such as Francis Rawdon-Hastings, first marquess of Hastings and second earl of Moira, and the Church of Ireland, including the bishops of Cloyne and Derry, served on its first antiquarian committee. In 1808, the Catholic Reverend Dr. John Lanigan took a post as the first librarian of the Royal Dublin Society. His study *An Ecclesiastical History of Ireland from the First Introduction of Christianity among the Irish to the Thirteenth Century* (1822) ran to four volumes and extensively employed the RDS Library’s resources to challenge recent Protestant histories of the same subject. In particular, Lanigan took aim at Edward Ledwich and his *Antiquities of Ireland* (1790, 1804). Ledwich had rejected the historical mission of St. Patrick in Ireland and maintained instead that the Anglo-Norman conquest of the twelfth century had started the process of settling the island’s native population, Scandinavians. As Platt observes, the RDS Library nevertheless refused the application for reader membership of Dr. Daniel Murray, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin during the Tithe War of the 1830s. But by the time Stephen comes to defend his *Hamlet* theory there in the early afternoon of 16 June 1904, the antiquarian interest in Ireland’s Celtic literature had only just that March helped to establish a position for the National Library’s first Celtic scholar, Richard Best.³⁸ And yet Joyce subjects Best to an unflattering caricature as a dim aesthete in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’, despite publication of his

³⁷ L. H. Platt, ‘The Voice of Esau: Culture and Nationalism in “Scylla and Charybdis”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 29.4 (Summer, 1992), 737-50 (p. 740).

³⁸ For Lanigan, see Patrick J. Corish, ‘Lanigan, John (1758–1828)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2004). For Ledwich, see Clare O’Halloran, ‘Ledwich, Edward (1739–1823)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2004). For Best, see Rolf Baumgarten, ‘Best, Richard Irvine (1872–1959)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

celebrated translation of Marie Henry d'Arbois de Jubainville's *The Irish Mythological Cycle* in 1903.

Stephen relies on his own wit to draw Best, Eglinton, and Lyster onside, even though Joyce hints at his recognition that the endeavour largely depends in this way—like virtually all biographies of Shakespeare since Nicholas Rowe's of 1709—on an imaginative depiction of Shakespeare making a success of himself in the Elizabethan world. As Ellmann remarks in *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 'Stephen propounds a theory of *Hamlet*, but behind his words [...] is something else'.³⁹ Throughout the first 'half' of *Ulysses*, which Joyce concludes with 'Scylla and Charybdis',⁴⁰ Stephen has come to rely less and less on the use of exile and silence as defense mechanisms. Now he reluctantly performs his various identities—aesthete, Daedalus, heretic, Irishman, Japheth, Jesuit, Kinch, knife-blade, mummer, and son—to keep not only church and state at a safe distance, but also increasingly his family and friends. As Stephen frames up the difficulties of being an Irish Catholic intellectual living in Dublin to Haines, however, a third 'master' emerges:

—I am the servant of two masters, Stephen said, an English and an Italian.

—Italian? Haines said.

A crazy queen, old and jealous. Kneel down before me.

—And a third, Stephen said, there is who wants me for odd jobs.

—Italian? Haines said again. What do you mean?

—The imperial British state, Stephen answered, his colour rising, and the holy Roman Catholic and apostolic church.

Haines detached from his underlip some fibres of tobacco before he spoke.

—I can quite understand that, he said calmly. An Irishman must think like that, I daresay. We feel in England that we have treated you rather unfairly. It seems history is to blame. (1.38-49)

Stephen observes here that Irish men and women—enthralled to both the English crown and the Papal court since Adrian IV, Nicholas Breakspear, the first

³⁹ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁰ See Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 442. A copy of Joyce's manuscript sold to John Quinn features a note at the end of 'Scylla and Charybdis' that reads: 'End of first part of *Ulysses*, New Year's Eve, 1918'.

and only English pope, issued the 'Laudabiliter' (1155), a Papal Bull granting Henry II the right to invade Ireland and bring its church into the Roman fold—every so often have another master, Irish nationalism. But he must now address this master equipped with the only weapon that Joyce has left to him, cunning.

Before he departed Dublin for Paris, Stephen finished his journal with two well-hedged yet seemingly hopeful entries. At its close, *A Portrait* records Stephen's solemn vow to forge in the 'smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' along with his prayer to the mythic craftsman Daedalus for aid in this heroic endeavor: 'April 27. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead'.⁴¹ Stephen's prayer would appear to go unanswered, though, as his Daedalian 'flight' to Paris ends in his Icarian 'fall' back to Dublin. Stephen has become bitter about having accomplished so little while away and in mourning over the death of his mother from cancer when he resurfaces in *Ulysses*, her illness prompting his father's jumbled call to return: 'Nother dying come home father' (3.199). Stephen becomes, above all, an ironic character as he takes on an increasingly vocal role in Joyce's effort to wrest Ireland from English colonial control and the spiritual shackles of Catholicism. Joyce ensures, then, that allusions to these corrosive forces play significant parts alongside the claims of Irish nationalism during Stephen's performance.

This endeavour to undo the dichotomies underpinning contemporary criticism prompts Joyce to put Stephen's style out in front of the substantial scholarship informing his appropriation of the Shakespearean text. In *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction*, John Paul Riquelme has observed that:

As in 'Aeolus,' Stephen does by talking, by manipulating language to create an effect on his auditors. As in 'Nestor' and 'Aeolus,' he acts and speaks to protect himself. He defends himself, parrying and thrusting with opponents. His words are a poison poured into the ears of his listeners (9.465). Like the lapwing that he thinks of (9.953-4, 976, 980), Stephen hides his nest from others. Because he fabricates his theory as a fiction that he finally disclaims, we can take his acting as theatrical. Like Shakespeare, Stephen as playwright and actor both writes and speaks his lines. Although he denies his own theory, his act

⁴¹ Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 253.

convincing the audience. Stephen's pretense is genuine and effective. It implicates the audience in the fiction but leaves him free to disavow his own position.⁴²

Stephen indeed sneers his first line of 'Scylla and Charybdis', deriding the trite conversation on Goethe that he encounters in the National Library with a mocking jab he likely picked up during his time in Paris: 'Monsieur de la Palice [...] was alive fifteen minutes before his death' (9.16-7). He indexes an infamous mantra on the ridiculously obvious here, the frustrated expression of a banal truth attributed to the soldiers of the French Maréchal de la Palisse after their Pyrrhic victory in the 1525 battle of Pavia.⁴³ Joyce initiates in this way the two cunning techniques that will serve Stephen well throughout his performance. Stephen's combativeness intrigues his interlocutors: he both repels them from and attracts them to the discussion by retorting at times rather 'rudely' (9.228) and, at others, 'superpolitely' (9.56). In addition to cultivating this compelling stage presence for Stephen, Joyce supplies him with a good yarn:

—It is this hour of a day in mid June, Stephen said, begging with a swift glance their hearing. The flag is up on the playhouse by the bankside. The bear Sackerson growls in the pit near it, Paris garden. Canvasclimbers who sailed with Drake chew their sausages among the groundlings. (9.154-7)

If Stephen directs the attention of his audience to the performative elements—both appropriative and interrogative—of his own theory, then his imaginative approach to Shakespeare's biography itself serves Joyce's own interests in the Shakespearean text.

Throughout Stephen's performance, Joyce forces a closer examination of the network of references he uses to ground an outlandish account of *Hamlet* in order to take aim the terms of Anglo-Irish cultural politics informing the appropriations of contemporary biographers and critics. The use of secondary sources on Shakespeare in this way ranging from newspaper clippings to speculative scholarship underscores Joyce's role as the arranger of this

⁴² John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction: Oscillating Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 204.

⁴³ Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. 193.

symphony of miscellany.⁴⁴ These arrangements, whether isolated in snippets of reading recalled or conversation overheard, hold a mirror up to Joyce's own prose style in its weaving of fictional and nonfictional discourses into the narrative fabric of *Ulysses*.

Although Stephen combats both Eglinton and A.E. in the main event, Joyce ensures that Arnold, Dowden, and Yeats do not linger long outside of the ring. Lyster purrs the episode open amidst a litany of literary references to not only Shakespeare and Goethe, but also Shelley and Arnold, from whom Lyster lifts the phrase 'beautiful and ineffectual dreamer' to describe Hamlet before putting the affinity of these literary figures to the floor for debate by recalling 'Goethe's judgment' from 'those priceless pages of *Wilhelm Meister*' that Hamlet came to 'grief against hard facts' (9.10-11). Joyce calls Dowden out here, as the Romantic consensus that put Hamlet down as Shakespeare himself came up in *Mind and Art* against the 'hard facts' of Dowden's own research before it also received his qualified approval. For Dowden, Shakespeare had exorcised his overweening intellect through Hamlet. Eglinton adopts this position along with Lyster, who would also remain friends with Dowden during the Revival. The librarians fulfill the role of Dowden's scholarly disciples for Joyce here. Since the late 1870s, Dowden had encouraged Lyster to 'invade the magazines' by publishing articles on 'interesting writers in German literature since Goethe'. On 31 March 1878, Dowden suggested as possible subjects for further study Nikolaus Lenau, Robert Hamerling, Hermann von Lingg, Christian Friedrich Hebbel—'(two b's, I think, in the latter?)'—and Karl Gutzkow, who played a prominent part in the Young Germany movement of the 1830s and 1840s.⁴⁵ As William M. Schutte notes in *Joyce and Shakespeare*, Lyster caught a lot of flak from fellow Revivalists for openly adopting Dowden's ideas as his own and 'must have seemed a bore to bright young men like James Joyce'.⁴⁶ But Stephen's own references to Shelley—'In the intense instant of imagination, when the mind, as Shelley says, is a fading

⁴⁴ Hugh Kenner has appropriated the term 'arranger' from David Hayman, who first used it 'to designate a figure or a presence that can be identified neither with the author nor with his narrators, but that exercises an increasing degree of overt control over his increasingly challenging materials' (David Hayman, *Ulysses: The Mechanics of Meaning*, rev edn (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 84. See also Hugh Kenner, 'The Arranger', in *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Casebook*, ed. by Derek Attridge (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp. 17-32).

⁴⁵ Dowden, *Letters*, p. 120-1.

⁴⁶ Schutte, p. 33.

coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility may come to be' (9.381-3)—do not radically deviate from Dowden's own conventional reverence for the Romantic poet. By Bloomsday, Dowden's apologetic biography of Shelley had indeed reached the superlative status that it would retain until the 1930s. Likewise, Dowden's thoughts on Arnold's judgment of Shelley appear alongside Lyster's own but receive little attention from Stephen as he starts to feel his way into the conversation. And yet, Joyce consolidates the Anglo-Irish opposition to the Revival around Dowden and against Stephen just the same. Joyce knew Dowden's scholarship well and makes use of it here as elsewhere.⁴⁷ In 'Scylla and Charybdis', Joyce adds the various antipathies of and towards the Revival to frame its opening salvos. What is more, he forges this resistance to Stephen's theory in order to complicate the dichotomies that had positioned the Shakespearean text in the rows over the relationship of English to Irish literature during the 1890s.

Stephen petulantly wonders at one point of Lyster whether, as a Quaker moving in the literary circles of Catholic Dublin, simple 'courtesy or an inward light' keeps him from leaving a discussion in which he appears ill prepared and ideologically promiscuous (9.332-3). Even though Lyster figures quietly into the narrative and ducks out to help Leopold Bloom locate an advertisement in the *Kilkenny People* during much of Stephen's performance, his presence in this episode speaks loudly to the antagonism between Dowden and Yeats. Joyce has it that he moves 'a sinkapace forward on neatsleather creaking and a step backward a sinkapace on the solemn floor' (9.5-6), suggesting his conflicting loyalties to both Dowden and Yeats. But Joyce never resolves this conflict. Lyster had helped a young Yeats as he worked on his play *The Island of Statues* (1885), serving as a guide to his readings in Elizabethan literature. Yeats had himself described the finished product as 'an Arcadian play in imitation of Edmund Spenser'.⁴⁸ As Andrew Gibson has observed in *Joyce's Revenge*, the opinions of both Dowden and Yeats echo throughout the early chatter of the episode to point up the clash of Anglo-Irish cultural politics during the Revival.⁴⁹ Indeed, Yeats

⁴⁷ See William H. Quillian, 'Shakespeare in Trieste: Joyce's 1912 "Hamlet" Lectures', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 12.1/2 (Fall 1974 – Winter 1975), 7-63.

⁴⁸ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 92. See Foster, *Yeats*, I, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Gibson, p. 60.

enters not long after Dowden when Eglinton brings up 'the mystic mind' of 'WB' to mock Stephen's own limitations as the poet of a proposed riposte to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, 'The Sorrows of Satan he calls it' (9.27-8, 19-20).

With these polarizing figures in place, Joyce proceeds to sharpen the focus on the Shakespearean text and Stephen's *Hamlet* theory, the gist of which his audience appears acquainted with already. But Eglinton attempts to cut off all possible discursive avenues to critical authority Stephen might travel by observing that 'Our young Irish bards [...] have yet to create a figure which the world will set beside Saxon Shakespeare's Hamlet though I admire him, as old Ben did, on this side idolatry' (9.43-5). Stephen remains unmoved by this slight as he settles into his position somewhere between the extremes of Celtic revivalism and Anglo-Saxon materialism, idealism and positivism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, 'Yeats' and 'Dowden'. He answers A.E.'s charge that any theoretical consideration of the relationship between Shakespeare's life and his art 'is the speculation of schoolboys for schoolboys' with 'Aristotle was once Plato's schoolboy' (9.46, 53, 57). A.E. cannot countenance the conception of concrete identities, let alone the biographical account of the Shakespearean text that Stephen proposes here. As Stephen muses, A.E. believes that 'This verily is that' (9.63), a total fluidity of identity in the abstract which figures his position as the whirlpool Charybdis of the episode's Homeric title. Eglinton nevertheless joins A.E. against Stephen on this point, 'waxing wroth' that 'Upon my word it makes my blood boil to hear anyone compare Aristotle with Plato' (9.79-81). Stephen looks set to play the materialist here and, as Gibson observes, he does sail his argument close to the solid rock of Dowden's *Mind and Art* by rifling off 'more facts about Shakespeare in "Scylla", and more quotations from a larger range of his work known in more intimate detail, than in the whole of Dowden's supposedly classic study'.⁵⁰ As Stephen reminds himself early in the episode, establish 'Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices' (9. 158). Stephen works in at least enough knowledge of Shakespeare's biography to have A.E. dismiss his theory as 'interesting only to the parish clerk' (9.184). His approach nevertheless turns Dowden's *Mind and Art* on its head.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

Throughout the episode, Stephen paints his own portrait of the artist as a sexually frustrated young man over and against Dowden's influential depiction of Shakespeare as a Stratford burgher at home in the wider Elizabethan world. For Gibson, Joyce establishes a deep sense of urgency through Stephen in this way that makes resistance to the English cultural establishment in Ireland central to every form of political rebellion. But Stephen also resists Yeats's reading of the Shakespearean text. Yeats had taken issue with the approval of cosmopolitanism and materialism praised in Dowden's writings on all matters English. Their dispute manifests itself in a debate about Shakespeare in 'Scylla and Charybdis', as Yeats had understood Dowden's chilly attitude towards the Revival as open disdain for both Irish literature and the organisations giving it a new lease on life in the English language.

If the opening pages of 'Scylla and Charybdis' index the critical rancor between Dowden and Yeats, then Eglinton and A.E. embody that controversy within the episode for Gibson. But Joyce never figures the analogy as neatly as Gibson suggests. Both figures challenge Stephen over the relationship posited between art and life in his *Hamlet* theory. Yeats and A.E. had understood 'the Dowden controversy' to concern not only literature, but also its purpose in Ireland to liberate the 'native' culture from the hegemony of English sensibilities as rearticulated by Arnold in his lectures on Celtic literature. Dowden and Eglinton had each made positive comments on the various effects of the English presence in Ireland, however, especially on its literature. As Schutte observes, Eglinton thought it ridiculous to attribute any of Ireland's political problems to the significant use of the English language, as some in the Revival had argued, and instead pointed out that the Anglo-Irish had always served as the leaders in the fight for independence.⁵¹ Moreover, Dowden had argued that because English culture had so firmly taken its hold in Ireland, all significant Irish cultural products were effectively English. For Yeats, Dowden had simply regurgitated received English wisdom on the matter. Only later did Yeats embrace the notion of an Anglo-Irish aristocracy responsible for protecting the 'native' literary traditions of Ireland from the cultural fragmentation and distorting influence endemic to modernity. For Dowden, Yeats and the Revival would represent the

⁵¹ Schutte, p. 43.

admiration of a 'second-rate' literature just the same. Yet like Yeats, Joyce addresses the dominance of English in Ireland directly as a maker of a 'minor literature' written in a 'major language'.⁵² 'I'd like a language which is above all languages, a language to which all will do service', Joyce had himself remarked, expressing his wish for a metalanguage that might free him from the double bind of history and language in which Irish writers working in English find themselves. 'I cannot express myself in English without enclosing myself in a tradition'.⁵³ In this polemical environment, Dowden's Shakespeare plays the part of an Anglo-Saxon colonist to the Celtic bard of Yeats's 'At Stratford-on-Avon' for Joyce. Their conflict gatecrashes headlong into Stephen's performance, as Joyce has it that Stephen's approach to the Shakespearean text here edges past the perimeter of their debate. He proposes an account that ingeniously invokes a Shakespeare who observes a 'stern fidelity to fact' without sticking slavishly to any. As Gibson has registered, this move allows Stephen to surpass Dowden in three significant ways.⁵⁴ But neither does Joyce have it that Stephen retreat to the Celticism behind Yeats's position.

As Gibson observes, Dowden had first emphasised a particular kind of empirical approach to historicising the Shakespearean text. In *Mind and Art*, he portrays Shakespeare as a man of the material world both obsessed by the bottom line and distressed at the excesses of his own personality. As Yeats knew, Dowden had inverted Arnold's argument that just such a materialist worldview embodies an endemically English perspective in order to praise philistinism in Ireland as cosmopolitanism. Dowden had indeed argued after Arnold that the Celts did amount to 'rebels against fact' at their own expense. But Gibson points

⁵² See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16.

⁵³ Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 397.

⁵⁴ Gibson avoids in this way repeating the problematic position of Irish historian F. S. L. Lyons, for whom Yeats emerged during the Revival 'trying to hold a middle position between the anonymity of cosmopolitanism and the parochialism of Irish Ireland' (*Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. 71). But Joyce the stubborn cosmopolitan belongs for Lyons alongside Dowden in their mutual refusal to back either 'Anglo-Ireland' or 'Irish Ireland', Celtic or Gaelic revivalisms. For Dominic Manganiello's Joyce, 'the battle of two civilisations was, in effect, pointless' (*Joyce's Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 25). Emer Nolan has observed, however, that Joyce's 'rejection of Revivalism is a characteristic gesture of the world of native Catholic nationalism' (*James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 48). Gibson's own position on Stephen's moves past Dowden's Shakespeare in this episode consists—particularly, in its treatment of Malone's scholarship—with Nolan's argument that Joyce's 'effective exclusion of Anglo-Irish culture from his fiction indeed parallels its exclusion by nativist nationalism'.

out that Stephen begins his performance by delivering a discourse driven ‘by an indomitable resistance to the terms of the Arnoldian position’.⁵⁵ Stephen indeed provides a roughly factual account of Shakespeare making his way in Elizabethan London rather more suggestive than that offered by Dowden’s *Mind and Art*, and yet the quantity of information on Shakespeare that Stephen uses to fill out his theory in this way cannot guarantee its success. Joyce has it instead that Stephen overtakes Dowden’s position on two more important points.

Second, Stephen’s theory appropriates and complicates Dowden’s teleological account of Shakespeare’s progression to the total self-possession professed, apparently, in Prospero’s epilogue to *The Tempest*. On one issue in particular, ‘lord of language’ (9.454), however, Stephen’s theory leaves the prevalent view of Shakespeare intact. Gibson has it, then, that Stephen seeks to strip Shakespeare of the cultural importance which Dowden had taken as a given on these grounds. Although Stephen seems to toe Dowden’s line by making a much more materialist reading of the Shakespearean text than Yeats had himself, Gibson points out that Stephen similarly rejects Dowden’s austere conflation of Shakespeare with an ‘auratic Englishness’.⁵⁶ In an ironic move, though, Stephen replaces the Protestant Shakespeare of Dowden’s *Mind and Art* by indexing Catholic writers and describing Shakespeare in largely Catholic terms:

[John Shakespeare] rests, disarmed of fatherhood, having devised that mystical estate upon his son. Boccaccio’s Calandrino was the first and last man who felt himself with child. Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. (9.835-45)

⁵⁵ Gibson, p. 67.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Stephen questions Dowden's position on Shakespeare's solidly Protestant credentials here, despite taking a circuitous route along the bedrock of 'facts' found in *Mind and Art*. He suggests instead that Shakespeare rewrote the history of a once Catholic England in largely but not exclusively Protestant terms to suit the tastes of its post-Reformation censors, reinventing the English national narrative along the way. Joyce's Shakespeare gives birth to his grandfather as both begetter and begotten of this Protestant 'tradition'.

Stephen extends an insight onto the fraught relationship between the English language and Irish history in this way that he had reached not long before leaving Dublin for Paris. As he had wondered of his English dean of studies at the time, 'How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine!'⁵⁷ Likewise, the odd Anglo-Saxon word 'tundish' had pointed up and politically charged the dean's presence and conversion to Catholicism for Stephen, who 'read Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour' in *Stephen Hero*.⁵⁸ He had come to understand that these strange words—and, significantly, the dean's own ignorance of their etymology—testified to an entire history of cultural as well as political usurpation in Ireland, a history to which he, problematically, gains access through the 'acquired speech' of the usurper. Stephen's innocent contemplation of English words as 'manycoloured and richly storied',⁵⁹ however, helps him to weave and unweave the oppressive narrative of Irish history as narrative and close, albeit briefly, the hermeneutic circle.⁶⁰ As Robert Spoo points out, Joyce gestured towards the overabundance of aesthetic potential locked up in historical texts with a brief poem published in 1904:

Thou leanest to the shell of night,
 Dear lady, a divining ear.
 In that soft choiring of delight
 What sound hath made thy heart to fear?
 Seemed it of rivers rushing forth

⁵⁷ Joyce, *A Portrait*, pp. 188-9.

⁵⁸ Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, p. 26. In 1864, Furnivall pressed the English philologist Walter William Skeat into editorial service on the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Material that he collected and collated for the *OED* became his own *Etymological Dictionary* (1879-82, 1910). In 1878, Skeat took the new Elrington and Bosworth professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge.

⁵⁹ Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 167.

⁶⁰ Robert Spoo, *James Joyce and the Language of History* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 54.

From the grey deserts of the north?
 That mood of thine, O timorous,
 Is his, if though but scan it well,
 Who a mad tale bequeaths to us
 At ghosting hour conjurable –
 And all for some strange name he read
 In Purchas or in Holinshed.⁶¹

Had Saxo Grammaticus or François de Belleforest rhymed with ‘read’, Joyce might have replaced Holinshed and Shakespeare’s histories here to put his emphasis on *Hamlet* as a text itself historically sourced. As it stands, his poem points up the power of language as wielded by a Coleridge or a Shakespeare to conjure up a Kubla Khan or a Bolingbroke from ‘some strange name’ otherwise lost to history. Joyce suggests, then, that such figures do not present the poet with political allegories. Rather, they offer tropes to translate as cultural requirements shift. But odd words and strange names appropriated from and mixed with the language of the contemporary moment alone cannot account for these works.

Yeats’s own reading of Shakespeare’s histories comes under fire here, as Stephen proposes that the vital psychological elements represented by Shakespeare’s biographers require further examination. Ellmann comments on this aspect of Stephen’s theory that it attempts a synthesis of Shakespeare’s private life as a poet with his public life as a playwright and in this way a prominent man ‘in the world interpenetrated, so that his art quite literally held the mirror up to nature’.⁶² For Stephen, the Shakespearean text necessarily reflects the life of its author. He suggests, then, that political reality and personal history appeared as one to Shakespeare. Stephen hones in on the vulnerability of both Dowden’s and Yeats’s accounts on this point. They had followed Arnold in variously privileging the reading of Shakespeare’s plays and poems in and for themselves, as these opened up to their own cultural and political ends largely to the discredit of such biographical speculation.

Finally and, Gibson argues, of perhaps greatest import for understanding

⁶¹ Joyce, *Poems and Shorter Writings*, ed. by Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz, and John Whittier-Ferguson (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 38.

⁶² Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, p. 84.

Stephen's theory, Dowden had depicted a sexless Shakespeare in his studies. The humour of Buck's lewd comment—'All we can say is that life ran very high in those days. Lovely!' (9.733)—hinges on Stephen's audience recalling the first sentence of Dowden's chaste literary primer, *Shakspeare*: 'In the closing years of the sixteenth century the life of England ran high'.⁶³ Wilde had famously brought the charge of pederasty against Shakespeare's Sonnets with *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.* (1889). But Best, an admirer of his fellow Irishman's work, appears unaware of this fact and much else about *Mr. W. H.*: 'The most brilliant of all is that story of Wilde's, Mr Best said, lifting his brilliant notebook. That *Portrait of Mr W. H.* where he proves that the sonnets were written by a Willie Hughes, a man all hues' (9.522-4). Eglinton corrects the better part of Best's mistake. Yet a source for Stephen's denial of his *Hamlet* theory remains in Wilde's denial of his own conceit that the 'only begetter' of Shakespeare's Sonnets was not only the popular trope of the 'fair youth', but also a boy actor in his company. The narrator of *Mr. W. H.* serves as one of Cyril Graham's reluctant converts and later an advocate of this theory only to find that 'the mere effort to convert any one to a theory involves some form of renunciation of the power of credence'. Like Graham, Stephen seems 'more anxious to convince others than to be himself convinced'.⁶⁴ But the bisexual English writer and artist Samuel Butler was himself convinced by Wilde's short story. In 1899, he saw fit to suspect Shakespeare of pederasty based, in part, on the evidence that he also found in the Sonnets.⁶⁵ Butler stood in solidarity with Wilde in this way after Wilde's conviction in 1895 for offenses similar to those that he brought against Shakespeare in *Mr. W. H.*

As Kenner observes, in the 1890s 'it was normal to speculate on the presumed time of darkness in Shakespeare's life, to which the Third Period [of *Mind and Art*] responded; normal also to create a Shakespeare in one's own image'.⁶⁶ And Joyce certainly has it that Stephen works a bit of what he knows about himself into his performance, imbuing Shakespeare with endowments

⁶³ Dowden, *Shakspeare*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.*, in *Complete Short Fiction*, ed. by Ian Small (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 49-79 (p. 75).

⁶⁵ See Samuel Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered* (London: Cape, 1927).

⁶⁶ Kenner, *Ulysses*, rev edn (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 113.

similar to those on display: 'He had a good groatsworth of wit [...] and no truant memory' (9.245). In her study *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses*, Karen Lawrence has observed that the founding premise of Stephen's theory—that Shakespeare reveals his emotional and intellectual obsessions in 'disguised and multiple forms' through his plays and poems—makes sense of Stephen's complex reading of *Hamlet*. Lawrence remarks that his exposition on 'paternity, betrayal, and the relationship between the artist and his work' in the Shakespearean text closely matches his own feelings on these subjects and serves to comfort him in the denial of his own parents.⁶⁷ Simon Dedalus does indeed squander his family's fortune like John Shakespeare and Joyce's own father, John. Stephen suggests that Shakespeare looked to achieve material success as a means to the end of recovering his own good name through art. That he set about securing a coat of arms in 1596 serves in Stephen's theory like the purchase of New Place the following year does in Dowden's own. Gibson finds this fact far from surprising given the episode's political subtext, remarking of Dowden that his Shakespeare 'is interested in power, not sex'. Shakespeare stood for Dowden as a mark of thoroughgoing Englishness, 'the very image of English mastery'.⁶⁸ But Stephen's account conflates his reading of *Hamlet* with the biography of a Shakespeare whose art radiates out from the sexual trauma of cuckoldry, a sexual harm that will not heal, and the sexual harm to which Joyce subjects Bloom.

Stephen also feels usurped as an Irishman by the English presence in his country and now in his home. 'I will not sleep here tonight', he decides that very morning. 'Home also I cannot go' (1.739-40). Joyce has it that Stephen reads the Shakespearean text over and against not only contemporary criticism like Dowden's own, but also the hackneyed conceptions of Ireland's history as the politically betrayed bedfellow in Britain's imperial project. The metaphor of marital infidelity, of union betrayed, helps Joyce to achieve both of these aims here as elsewhere in *Ulysses*. Although he does not know it himself, Stephen's theory sheds a harsh light on Bloom's fragile marriage to Molly as Blazes Boylan makes his way to 7 Eccles Street and their bed. Joyce relies for this aspect of Stephen's theory on his fellow Irishman Frank Harris and his study *The Man*

⁶⁷ Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 81.

⁶⁸ Gibson, p. 68.

Shakespeare and His Tragic Life-Story (1909). This move may tighten the association of Stephen with Wilde, but Joyce leaves Wilde—along with Shaw—in London as a writer working out of a different cultural moment to focus on Stephen in Dublin as a reader during the Revival. Harris’s only successful play, *Mr and Mrs Davenport* (1900), employs a plot that he bought from Wilde, a longtime friend. Through the character Ashurst, Harris explores his own interests in adultery and sexually emancipated women. Harris proved a social force collided with rather than encountered, even for Wilde. ‘To survive you, one must have a strong brain, an assertive ego, a dynamic character’, he wrote with tongue characteristically in cheek to Harris in 1897. ‘In your luncheon-parties, in old days, the remains of the guests were taken away with the *débris* of the feast’.⁶⁹ After his release from Reading Gaol in May of that year, Wilde drifted from friend to friend and enjoyed a short stay with Harris in Napoule, France, in 1899 while Harris thought through some of the material that made its way into *The Man Shakespeare* ‘at the top of his voice’.⁷⁰ Harris would publish a sympathetic biography of Wilde in 1916 that included Shaw’s own memories of Wilde alongside ‘the hitherto unpublished Full and Final confession by Lord Alfred Douglas’.⁷¹ For Harris, however, the project did not exclusively seek the vindication of either Wilde or the vilification of Douglas. Rather, he pursued it, in part, as an exercise in sexual apologetics. Harris had secured a damaging reputation as a profound egomaniac and prodigious philanderer during the 1890s. He would father several illegitimate children on both sides of the Atlantic. Joyce would gather from Harris a Shakespeare similarly ravaged by his sexual obsessions and fear of sexual betrayal.

In 1899, *The Man Shakespeare* started out auspiciously enough as a series of contentious articles published in the otherwise Conservative *Saturday Review*, which Harris bought not long after losing the editorship of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1894.⁷² The introduction to *The Man Shakespeare* makes it clear that Harris regarded biographical criticism of the sort he practiced an alchemical art similar

⁶⁹ *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 608.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 778.

⁷¹ Frank Harris, *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confession* (New York: Printed and published by the author, 1916).

⁷² Richard Davenport-Hines, ‘Harris, James Thomas [Frank] (1856?-1931)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

to Stephen's 'mixture of theologicophilological. *Mingo, minxi, mictum, mingere*' (9.761-2):

We dream of an art that shall take into account the natural daily decay and up-building of cell-life; the wars that go on in the blood; the fevers of the brain; the creeping paralysis of nerve exhaustion; above all, we must be able even now from a few bare facts, to re-create a man and make him live and love again for the reader, just as the biologist from a few scattered bones can reconstruct some prehistoric bird or fish or mammal.⁷³

Wilde's dialogue 'The Critic as Artist' (1888) resonates in the conception of criticism as itself an art and progenitor of style that Harris forwards here. Joyce owes Wilde a debt of his own for the structure of 'Scylla and Charybdis' as a conversation about the relationship between art and life. Best, unaware of this affinity, calls attention to it just the same by suggesting that Stephen should write up his theory as a dialogue, 'like the Platonic dialogues that Wilde wrote' (9.1069). Of course, the form already suits Stephen's appropriative, interrogative style as crafted by Joyce. But he also has it that Stephen inherits from Harris a pronounced scorn for recent treatments of the Shakespearean text.

'The likenesses between Brutus and Hamlet are so marked', Harris comments, 'that even the commentators have noticed them'. Dowden serves as the target for much of Harris's scorn for the 'professors' throughout his study. 'Much of this is Professor Dowden's view and not Shakespeare's', he observes with particular disgust at the treatment given Brutus and Hamlet in *Mind and Art*.⁷⁴ As Harris remarked to the English writer Arnold Bennett in 1908, 'I am sending Dowden to-day to show you the best of what was known about Shakespeare before I began my work, you will see from that the incredible stupidity of the commentators'.⁷⁵ Harris hardly lacked hubris, and he makes his remarks even more personal elsewhere, asserting that 'all his [Shakespeare's] women are sensuous and indulge in coarse expressions in and out of season. This is said to be a fault of his time; but only the professors could use an

⁷³ Harris, *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life-Story* (London: Frank Palmer, 1909), pp. xvi-xvii.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁷⁵ *Frank Harris to Arnold Bennett: Fifty-eight Letters, 1908-1910*, ed. by Mitchell Kennerley (Merlon Station, PA: American Autograph Shop, 1936), p. 23.

argument which shows such ignorance of life'.⁷⁶ This exchange of one expertise, Harris's own as a philanderer, for another, Dowden's own as a professor, recommends *The Man Shakespeare* based on the open secret of its author's promiscuity. Stephen deploys Harris in his performance to complete his portrait of Shakespeare's complex personality:

He is always the same—a gentle yet impulsive nature, sensuous at once and meditative; half poet, half philosopher, preferring nature and his own reveries to action and the life of courts; a man physically fastidious to disgust, as is a delicate woman, with dirt and smells and common things; an idealist daintily sensitive to all courtesies, chivalries, and distinctions.⁷⁷

Shakespeare later acquires a sense of humour from Harris, who observes that he was, remarkably, 'even more irresolute and indisposed to action than Hamlet himself', that he was 'by nature a neuropath and a lover', and that 'his idolatrous passion for Mary Fitton is the story of his life'.⁷⁸ Harris dismisses, then, that 'monstrous hybrid of tradesman-poet' celebrated by the 'dryasdusts', Dowden and Lee, to find in the plays a Shakespeare trying to say instead that "'life itself is too transient, too unreal to be dearly held'".⁷⁹ Harris concludes of Shakespeare that, like Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, he cared for his friends far more than his own profit.

Significantly, Joyce would also find in Harris's study a Shakespeare who indentified with King Hamlet over the prince. With *The Man Shakespeare* at his disposal, Joyce can effectively situate Stephen's theory as the account of a sexual humiliation that, according to Eglinton, figures into the 'French triangle' of *Hamlet* (9.1065). Harris lends to Stephen's algebra a dash of the melodrama that made his study's name. When it appeared in 1909, the reviewers with the *Athenaeum* and *Times Literary Supplement* simply ignored Harris's work. Academic journals that might have otherwise taken an interest in such a study—*Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, for example, or *Modern Language Review*—did the same. But the popular press on both sides of the Atlantic lavished praise on Harris and

⁷⁶ Harris, *The Man Shakespeare*, p. 344.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46, p. 127, p. 217.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 188, p. 190.

his Shakespeare. 'This is the book for which we have waited a lifetime', Temple Scott crowed in his review for *The New York Times*. 'We know this now it is come, and we mark the day of its publication as a red-letter day in the history of literature'.⁸⁰ With the average reader of the Shakespearean text, at least, Harris had hit the mark. And Joyce brings the common touch of Harris's study to temper Stephen's erudite performance. In particular, Stephen borrows from Harris the sympathetic image of a Shakespeare finally limping home to his wife and children in Stratford 'weary of the creation he has piled up to hide him from himself, an old dog licking an old sore' (9.475-6). For both Stephen and Harris, Shakespeare's daughters begged that he mention their mother in his will.⁸¹ Lyster recognises yet fails to fully appreciate Stephen's debt exclusively to Harris's work on this point and hopes that he will make his ideas about Shakespeare public, like those of another Irish upstart, 'Mr George Bernard Shaw. Nor should we forget Mr Frank Harris. His articles on Shakespeare in the *Saturday Review* were surely brilliant. Oddly enough he too draws for us an unhappy relation with the dark lady of the sonnets' (9.440-2). But Shaw found Harris less than convincing.

'Mr. Harris's theory of Shakespear as a man with his heart broken by a love affair will not wash', he argued in his review of *The Man Shakespeare* for *The Nation* in 1910:

That Shakespear's soul was damned (I really know no other way of expressing it) by a barren pessimism is undeniable; but even when it drove him to the blasphemous despair of Lear and the Nihilism of Macbeth, it did not break him. He was not crushed by it: he wielded it Titanically, and made it a sublime quality in his plays.⁸²

Perhaps more to the point, Harris had absurdly accused Shaw of pilfering from both *The Man Shakespeare* and his own failure of a play on the same themes, *Shakespeare and His Love*, to write *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* (1910), a triumphant little promotional skit penned to raise funds for a national theatre in London. That Mary Fitton, Lord Herbert and, predictably, Queen Elizabeth all feature ends the parallels between their works, though. Harris gives his

⁸⁰ Temple Scott, 'Shakespeare's Tragic Story of His Life and Love', *New York Times*, 6 November 1909.

⁸¹ Harris, p. 367.

⁸² *Shaw on Shakespeare*, p. 199.

Shakespeare a weak part as the lovesick playwright familiar from *The Man Shakespeare*, leaving room for Jonson to play the man's man while Chettle provides some comic relief as the source for Falstaff. He also grants Essex, Raleigh, and Southampton minor roles alongside Chapman, Dekker, Fletcher, and Marston. In a nod to Wilde, it would seem, Willie Hughes comes on stage to sing a few songs.⁸³ 'Not that his Shakespeare is not worth stealing, but Shakespeare is common property; and I can dramatise him for myself in half the time it would take me to steal Frank's dramatization', Shaw told a reporter for the *Daily News* after *The Dark Lady* opened at the Haymarket on 24 November 1910. 'Besides, he will never really understand Shakespeare'.⁸⁴ Their row made the front page, providing the campaign for a national theatre with some free publicity.

Stephen preserves Shaw's sense that Shakespeare possessed a 'great spirit', an insight not altogether unlike that informing Dowden's own reading. But Joyce adds that this personal strength only makes sense as a response to an initial injury, not as an unfolding of the internal logic to Shakespeare's character. He makes room in this way for Stephen's account of a Nietzschean overcoming late in Shakespeare's life: 'Where there is a reconciliation [...] there must have been first a sundering' (9.334-5). Yet Gibson's explication of Stephen as a 'Fenian upstart' in this challenge to Dowden's critical authority and approval of Shaw's iconoclasm overstates Stephen's nationalist credentials while underplaying the contrasts of his cosmopolitan stance vis-à-vis Dowden's and Shaw's own. Moreover, Gibson leaves unanswered exactly why Joyce would choreograph Stephen's performance to move the apparently entrenched but, above all, nationalist audience that he faces in the National Library to acquiescence on these grounds. Stephen's project only becomes clear within the context of Joyce's own attempt to sail past the stylistic precedent set by Shakespeare and establish a polyphonic (inter)national narrative of his own for Ireland, an endeavor taken beyond its logical limit—if not entirely its borders—with *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and one that, significantly, brings his Shakespeare to the brink of drowning in the whirlpool Charybdis, as he has Stephen discourse increasingly on idealist approaches to historiography.

⁸³ See Schoenbaum, pp. 489-91. This discussion of Harris's career, including his conflict with Shaw, has closely tracked Schoenbaum's own.

⁸⁴ *Daily News*, 24 November 1910, p. 1.

Stephen's performance eschews the mimetic status of a merely 'this-worldly' relationship to his assertions early in the episode, toying with the parasitic status of fiction on reality as condemned in Platonic metaphysics. After reminding his audience that Plato's ideal 'commonwealth' would banish him as a poet (9.83)—an allusion to British imperial control of Ireland on Joyce's part, perhaps, as Plato's own republican credentials also appear wanting in this way—Stephen silently mocks A.E.'s idealism:

Unsheathe your dagger definitions. Horseness is the whatness of allhorse. Streams of tendency and eons they worship. God: noise in the street: very peripatetic. Space: what you damn well see. Through spaces smaller than red globules of man's blood they creepycrawl after Blake's buttocks into eternity of which this vegetable world is but a shadow. Hold onto the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past. (9.84-9)

Stephen recalls the infamous appeal to commonsense leveled against Platonic mystification by the cynic Antisthenes here: 'O Plato, I see a horse, but I do not see horseness'.⁸⁵ Joyce directs Stephen's meditation to criticise Neoplatonic Theosophy, a favourite doctrine of A.E. and, significantly, of Yeats himself.

In addition, Joyce indexes Aristotle's refutation of Plato's view of space as it appears in *The Republic*:

The spangled heavens should be used as a pattern and with a view to that higher knowledge; their beauty is like the beauty of figures or pictures wrought by the hand of Daedalus, or some other great artist, which we may chance to behold; any geometrician who saw them would appreciate the exquisiteness of their workmanship, but he would never dream of thinking that in them he could find the true equal, or the true double, or the truth of any proposition.⁸⁶

Joyce may cast Stephen's mind in the stuff of this 'vegetable world', but he reinforces the atemporal thrust of his theory by, ironically, coupling allusions to both Blake's poem *Milton* (1804)—

For every Space larger than a red Globule of Man's Blood

⁸⁵ Quoted in Gifford and Seidman, p. 199.

⁸⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*

Is visionary, and is created by the Hammer of Los:
 And every Space smaller than a Globule of Man's blood opens
 Into Eternity, of which this vegetable Earth is but a shadow.

—and Dante's *Inferno* with a reference to Augustine's *De Immortalitate Animae*:

For what is done needs expectation, that it may be done, and memory,
 that it may be understood as much as possible. And expectation is of
 future things, and memory is of things past. But the intention to act is
 of the present, through which the future flows into the past.⁸⁷

Joyce owned the Routledge edition of Blake's poems first published in 1905, which Yeats had selected and introduced.⁸⁸ Its influence over Joyce's lecture on Blake in Trieste points up the easing of his early hostility towards Yeats's Celtic revivalism, as he abhors 'hurried materialism' and lauds Blake's victory over the 'Dragon of natural experience' in 1912.⁸⁹ But Joyce had also read Blake in Yeats's and Edwin Ellis's edition of his prophetic writings published in 1893 and shelved at the National Library.

Joyce later argued in his lecture, then, that 'the continuous exertion of these journeys into the unknown and the abrupt returns to normal life slowly but infallibly eroded his [Blake's] artistic power'.⁹⁰ He considered Blake at his best as a poet rather than a prophet, in *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789, 1794) and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793). At Stephen's age, Joyce had nevertheless shared with Yeats a profound respect for Blake's idealism that, as his brother Stanislaus relates it, figures suggestively in this context. 'The mystical Blake was "of imagination all compact", and at that time the imagination was fighting hard for its rights in my brother's soul', he observes. 'It stirred him deeply that in an age of self-satisfied materialism, Blake dared to assert the all-importance of the imagination and to stake his long life in its affirmation'.⁹¹ Likewise, Stephen challenges himself to do more than just tell his audience yet another good story about Shakespeare based squarely on the 'facts' of his life: 'Speech, speech. But act. Act speech. They mock to try you. Act. Be acted on'

⁸⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (London: Faber, 1977), p. 102.

⁸⁹ Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, p. 179, p. 181.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁹¹ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 99.

(9.651-3). He knows that to convince his audience requires turning them into 'happy prologues to the swelling act' (9.259 and *Macbeth*, 1.3.138) by letting himself 'Be acted on' in turn, like Shakespeare: 'The boy of act one is the mature man of act five. All in all. In *Cymbeline*, in *Othello* he is bawd and cuckold. He acts and is acted on' (9.1020-2). Stephen cannot and does not force his performance on a passive audience.

Instead, Stephen plays off Eglinton's sceptical stance by introducing his *Hamlet* theory as an answer to Eglinton's censure that he just wants to tell them a 'ghoststory'. 'Like the fat boy in *Pickwick* he wants to make our flesh creep', Eglinton argues, to which Stephen replies:

—What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners. Elizabethan London lay as far from Stratford as corrupt Paris lies from virgin Dublin. Who is the ghost from *limbo patrum*, returning to the world that has forgotten him? Who is King Hamlet? (9.147-51)

Stephen freely appropriates from his audience on the trot no fewer than nineteen times during 'Scylla and Charybdis'. For Gordon, these appropriations 'typify Stephen's overall performance'.⁹² This technique encourages the greater participation of his audience. But it matters rather little to Stephen for the moment whether or not his performance does much whisking of A.E., Eglinton, or the others away to the imaginary Elizabethan world that these snippets from their conversation help him to create.

Stephen observes that Stratford and Dublin appear here similarly pure, if compared to London and Paris. Joyce redraws the cultural landscape of the contemporary moment as Yeats had mapped it in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' by altogether bypassing Britain to assert a new axis of orientation that excludes the imperial centre. But Stephen and Shakespeare have nevertheless, in this analogy, both become ghosts by leaving their homes to pursue their art in these corrupt European capitals. 'In rue Monsieur le Prince I thought it', Stephen recalls of the role that he has carved out for paternity in his *Hamlet* theory (9.858). He literally places his thoughts here. Stephen makes it true in the fictional Elizabethan world

⁹² Gordon, pp. 504-6.

of his 'ghoststory' that Shakespeare becomes a ghost through his absence from Stratford. He also understands himself to have changed utterly since returning from Paris: 'Five months. Molecules all change. I am other I now. [...] I, I and I. I.' (9.205, 212). Stephen has become, like his Shakespeare, a ghost by absence. But Shakespeare also appears as a ghost in the guise of King Hamlet, whose physical presence Shakespeare replaces at Elsinore with the spectral part that 'he himself' played. Stephen continues his act of storytelling:

—The play begins. A player comes on under the shadow, made up in the castoff mail of a court buck, a wellset man with a bass voice. It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied *Hamlet* all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre. He speaks his words to Burbage, the young player who stands before him beyond the rack of cerecloth, calling him by name:

Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit

bidding him list. To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever.

Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence, and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name (had Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been prince Hamlet's twin), is it possible, I want to know, or probable that he did not draw or foresee the logical conclusion of those premises: you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen, Ann Shakespeare, born Hathaway? (9.164-80)

Stephen appears throughout *Ulysses* not only in the 'nightly colour' of mourning, like Hamlet himself (1.2.67), but also in a pair of Buck's own castoff trousers. Likewise, Shakespeare wears the 'castoff mail of a court buck' for his cameo as King Hamlet's ghost during Stephen's performance (9.165). But A.E. cannot stand 'this prying into the family life of a great man' (9.181) and derides Stephen's approach to the Shakespearean text in favour of, remarkably, a commonsense

reading: 'I mean, we have the plays. I mean when we read the poetry of *King Lear* what is it to us how the poet lived?' (9.184-5).

This rebuke from A.E. sends Stephen into a tiny tailspin as he recalls his own very real financial debt of 'one guinea' to the mystic, captured by an amusing conflation of the English vowels 'A.E.I.O.U.' (9.213).⁹³ Yet this momentary lapse also recalls an earlier conversation with Mr. Deasy, an Orangeman and the headmaster of the school in Dalkey where Stephen teaches, in which he leveraged a commercially savvy, Anglo-Saxon Shakespeare to chastise Stephen for his spendthrift ways:

—Because you don't save, Mr Deasy said, pointing his finger. You don't know yet what money is. Money is power. When you have lived as long as I have. I know, I know. *If youth but knew*. But what does Shakespeare say? *Put but money in thy purse*.

—Iago, Stephen murmured.

He lifted his gaze from the idle shells to the old man's stare.

—He knew what money was, Mr Deasy said. He made money. A poet, yes, but an Englishman too. Do you know what is the pride of the English? Do you know what is the proudest word you will ever hear from an Englishman's mouth?

The seas' ruler. His seacold eyes looked on the empty bay: it seems that history is to blame: on me and on my words, unhating.

—That on his empire, Stephen said, the sun never sets.

—Ba! Mr Deasy cried. That's not English. A French Celt said that.

He tapped his savingsbox against his thumbnail.

—I will tell you, he said solemnly, what is his proudest boast. *I paid my way*. (2.236-51)

Eglinton snaps Stephen out of it by asking pointedly, 'Do you mean to fly in the face of the tradition of three centuries? Her ghost at least has been laid for ever. She died, for literature at least, before she was born' (9.214). Stephen does

⁹³ This play on abbreviations suggests a textual affinity with Shakespeare over and against the equivalent vowels of 'you' and 'I' in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.1.35-55), for example, which Gifford and Seidman do not point out (p. 206). In *Twelfth Night* (2.5), Shakespeare makes a lewd play on C.U. and (N.) T. as well as M.O.A.I. to fill out the humour of the scene in a manner similar not only to Joyce's A.E.I.O.U., but also his mysterious 'U.P.: up' of the previous episode (8. 258).

indeed intend to 'fly in the face of the tradition of three centuries', and Joyce himself even more:

She died, Stephen retorted, sixtyseven years after she was born. She saw him into and out of the world. She took his first embraces. She bore his children and she laid pennies on his eyes to keep his eyelids closed when he lay on his deathbed. (9.217-20)

Stephen questions the minor role given Anne Hathaway in conventional accounts of Shakespeare's biography in order to address the inherent interplay that he reads between Shakespeare's art and life. This move deeply unsettles Eglinton, and he reminds Stephen that 'The world believes that Shakespeare made a mistake [...] and got out of it as quickly and as best he could' (9.226-27). But Stephen has little time for such commonplaces. Rather, he offers Eglinton perhaps his most memorable line of the performance: 'A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery' (9.228-29). Joyce hints at his own methodology here, as Stephen sees himself deliberately tripping up like Socrates to help his audience locate the truth in his many calculated yet evidently clumsy rhetorical figures.

Shortly after Stephen finishes his biographical sketch of *Hamlet*, A.E. leaves for the offices of the *Irish Homestead* unimpressed (9.324). At this point, Eglinton takes as his primary concern the 'algebra' with which Stephen proves his theory. He informs Stephen that 'I was prepared for paradoxes from what Malachi Mulligan told us but I may as well warn you that if you want to shake my belief that Shakespeare is Hamlet you have a stern task before you' (9.369-71). Stephen appears unaffected, sensing that he has already rattled his only remaining opponent:

The burden of proof is with you not with me, he said frowning. If you deny that in the fifth scene of *Hamlet* he has branded her with infamy tell me why there is no mention of her during his thirtyfour years between the day she married him and the day she buried him. All those women saw their men down and under: Mary, her goodman John, Ann, her poor dear Willun, when he went and died on her, raging that he was the first to go, Joan, her four brothers, Judith, her husband and all her sons, Susan, her husband too, while Susan's daughter,

Elizabeth, to use granddaddy's words, wed her second, having killed her first. O, yes, mention there is. In the years when he was living richly in royal London to pay a debt she had to borrow forty schillings from her father's shepherd. Explain you then. Explain the swansong too wherein he has condemned her to posterity. (9.671-82)

Stephen means Shakespeare's last will and testament in which he 'Leftherhis | Secondbest | Leftherhis | Bestabed | Secabest | Leftabed' (9.701-6). Eglinton remains unconvinced of Anne's adultery and, moreover, the seminal impact that Stephen claims it had on the Shakespearean text just the same, forcing Stephen's return to the plays. 'The note of banishment', he observes, 'banishment from the heart, banishment from home, sounds uninterruptedly from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* onward till Prospero breaks his staff and buries it certain fathoms in the earth and drowns his book' (9.999-1002). From her emasculating sexual conquest of Shakespeare 'in a cornfield first (a ryefield, I should say)'—commemorated by Shakespeare, Stephen argues, in *Venus and Adonis* (1593)—Anne's sexuality spurred the Shakespearean text along (9.456-7). 'Age has not withered it', he concludes. 'Beauty and peace have not done it away. It is in infinite variety everywhere in the world he has created, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, twice in *As You Like*, in *The Tempest*, in *Hamlet*, in *Measure for Measure*—and in all the other plays which I have not read' (9.1111-5). Eglinton quickly backpedals into Stephen's camp, offering in the end to publish his account. Stephen agrees, though, for a price that Eglinton promptly refuses.

Returning to Ellmann's insight that 'Stephen propounds a theory of *Hamlet*, but behind his words [...] is something else', it might at first appear, then, that behind Stephen's words Joyce himself sits 'paring his fingernails' as a god refined out of the existence of his own creation, still trying to do Shakespeare one better. As Nora exclaimed with her husband hard at work on *Finnegans Wake* (1939): 'Ah, there's only one man he's got to get the better of now, and that's that Shakespeare!'⁹⁴ And as Gordon has it:

Behind *Hamlet*, in the person of the king, is Shakespeare. Behind Stephen's theory of *Hamlet* is Stephen. Behind Stephen, expounding

⁹⁴ Quoted in Clive Hart, *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 163.

that theory, is Joyce. It is the Joyce who, probably on or around the date *Ulysses* is set, was “overborne” (*U* 9.456), like Stephen’s Shakespeare, by a woman who, for the first time in his life, took the sexual initiative and demanded no payment in return.⁹⁵

But Joyce actively participates in the reading of this episode just as he does the others in *Ulysses*, as critics have routinely pointed out, the myriad of English prose styles and neologisms that he uses serving here as elsewhere to ‘tale’ the ‘telling’.⁹⁶ For example, the narrator of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ occasionally apes Elizabethan English: ‘Quoth littlejohn Eglinton’ (9.368). Joyce gestures with this move towards his anthology chronicling the gestation of the English language, the episode ‘Oxen of the Sun’, while the middle of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ also playfully includes musical notation that suggests its later use in ‘Sirens’.

Finally, the dialogue appears like the script of a play near the end of Stephen’s performance, suggesting the style used throughout ‘Circe’, where Shakespeare himself appears antlered alongside Bloom and Stephen in a mirror at Bella Cohen’s brothel:

LYNCH

(*points*) The mirror up to nature. (*he laughs*) Hu hu hu hu hu!
 (*Stephen and Bloom gaze in the mirror. The face of William Shakespeare, beardless, appears there, rigid in facial paralysis, crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hatrack in the hall.*)

SHAKESPEARE

(*in dignified ventriloquy*) ’Tis the loud laugh that bespeaks the vacant mind. (*to Bloom*) Thou thoughtest as how thou wastest invisible. Gaze. (*he crows with a black capon’s laugh*) Iagogo! How my Oldfellow chokit his Thursdaymornum. Iagogogo! (15.3821-9)

The narration of Stephen’s performance puts this dialectic of styles as well as that of content and style on conspicuous display in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’. Joyce complicates the neat distinctions, then, that Stephen’s audience insists on maintaining and by which he felt himself excessively restrained.

⁹⁵ Gordon, p. 512.

⁹⁶ Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), p. 213.

The interest that Joyce takes in the project of seeing Stephen refute A.E. and outdo Eglinton appears—paradoxically, perhaps—much more aligned with Yeats’s own insistence on a productive relationship with Shakespeare as stylistic precedent and national poet. As Benjamin Boysen has recently observed of this episode, ‘In order to attain one’s life, in order to add to life more life, it is necessary to answer for the dead, to live among spectres’.⁹⁷ Joyce must do on the page what Shakespeare did on the stage to sever his umbilical connection to Ireland and rewrite its nightmarish history. But it also means that he must also overmaster extant criticism on the Shakespearean text. As Stephen suggests, a similar narrative of overcoming obstacles as well as outperforming precedents *en route* to artistic achievement plays itself out in *Hamlet*. Joyce has the Shakespearean text do double duty in this way, as he deploys it to write both a book of the self and a book of Stephen, who observes that, like Adam in Eden, Shakespeare fell from a sexless grace in Stratford because of a woman. Stephen concludes, then, that Anne’s subsequent infidelity with two of Shakespeare’s three brothers, ‘the villain shakebags’ Edmund and Richard, is also ‘recorded in the works of sweet William’ (9.911, 899). Stephen sails straight past Dowden to find Shakespeare hard at work in defiance of his fall into the language of history here. The Shakespearean text, for Stephen, registers a confrontation with Anne’s betrayal throughout a life lived largely in and through exile. And yet, Stephen observes that Shakespeare hardly padded his landing in London after this ‘catastrophe’ with strongmen like Bolingbroke and his stout son, Henry V.

He takes his cues on this point from the Danish literary critic and political radical Georg Brandes. Joyce relies on Brandes’s *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study* (1898) in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ for eighteen of Stephen’s ‘facts’ to the fifteen that he lifts from Lee’s *Life* and the mere three that he takes from Harris’s *The Man Shakespeare*.⁹⁸ Brandes also represents the only authority on the Shakespearean text to which Stephen openly appeals during his performance (9.418). He seems a natural enough choice for Joyce, as Ibsen had found in the Jewish intellectual his own champion for the new social realism of European drama. Brandes courted controversy with a series of lectures on the *Main*

⁹⁷ Benjamin Boysen, ‘On the spectral presence of the predecessor in James Joyce – With special reference to William Shakespeare’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 60 (2005), 159-182 (p. 162).

⁹⁸ Schutte, p. 158.

Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature that he delivered in the autumn of 1871. Here Brandes would trace the Romantic revolt against Neoclassicism and its own demise down the century. The lectures appeared in six volumes and established Brandes as an iconoclast for his attack on the bourgeois cultural politics of Danish society. In 1877, the University of Copenhagen denied him its chair in aesthetics. He left for Berlin later that year. No other candidate dared to take up the post in his immediate absence. Brandes would himself take a professorship in aesthetics with the university in 1902, which his study of Shakespeare helped him to secure.

He brought the same intensity and independence of thought to bear on the Shakespearean text, assimilating and synthesizing much of the best in British, French, and German criticism and scholarship alongside the most colourful myths about Shakespeare's life to form a compelling narrative. These include old anecdotes about Shakespeare's deer poaching in Stratford and the company he kept at the Mermaid Tavern in London: Burbage, Chapman, Florio, Jonson, Lyly, and Raleigh. Yet new scholarship on the Sonnets also appears alongside cliché in *Shakespeare*, as Brandes follows the tireless Thomas Tyler to identify Mr. W. H. as William Herbert and Mary Fitton as the 'dark lady'.⁹⁹ For Brandes, Shakespeare had both redeemed himself with and revealed himself through *Hamlet*. 'He had suffered many a humiliation', Brandes argues, 'but the revenge which was denied him in real life he could now take incognito through Hamlet's bitter and scathing invectives'. Brandes pairs Hamlet with Shakespeare here, but Joyce makes sure Stephen does not lose the plot. 'He had seen high-born gentlemen play a princely part in the society of artists, players, men whom public opinion undervalued and contemned', Brandes observes of Shakespeare the company man, even though he might have said the same of Hamlet after leaving

⁹⁹ Tyler first proposed Mary Fitton as the 'dark lady' with his introduction to the facsimile edition of *Shakspeare's Sonnets: The First Quarto, 1609* (1886). His theory earned a second airing in his next edition, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1890). Tyler added for its substantial introduction his claim that Mr. W. H. was William Herbert and the 'rival poet' was Chapman. In *Gossip from a Muniment Room* (1897, 1898), Lady Newdigate-Newdegate challenged Tyler. From extant portraits at Arbury, Lady Newdigate-Newdegate showed that Mary Fitton had a fair complexion. Lee contests Tyler's view in his *Life*. Tyler would answer their criticism in *The Herbert-Fitton Theory of Shakespeare's Sonnets: A Reply* (1898) by disputing the authenticity of the Arbury portraits. See W. B. Owen, 'Tyler, Thomas (1826-1902)', rev. by Donald Hawes, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

the university at Wittenberg. 'Now he himself would be the high-born gentleman, would show how the truly princely spirit bore itself towards the poor artists, and give utterance to his own thoughts about art, and his conception of its value and significance'.¹⁰⁰ For Brandes, Shakespeare's falling out with Herbert over Fitton occasioned this seminal overcoming:

The woman he loved, and to whom he had looked up as to a being of a rarer, loftier order, had all of a sudden proved to be a heartless, faithless wanton. The friend he loved, worshipped, and adored had conspired against him with this woman, laughed at him in her arms, betrayed his confidence, and treated him with coldness and distance. Even the prospect of winning the poet's wreath had been overcast for him. Truly he too had seen his illusions vanish and his vision of the world fall to ruins.¹⁰¹

Brandes concludes, then, that Shakespeare came off the better for having loved and lost than never knowing love on this level or its betrayal at all. For Brandes, each of Shakespeare's figures wronged in love emerged from this 'fall to ruins'. But Brandes also explores other anxieties expressed in the Shakespeare text to which Stephen turns his own attention.

Significantly, Brandes links Shakespeare's interest in 'the ideas of acquisition, property, money-making, wealth' to *The Merchant of Venice*. Likewise, Stephen concludes that Shakespeare 'drew Shylock out of his own long pocket' (9.741-2). Yet Shakespeare appears altogether English in his avarice, as Brandes observes that 'like the genuine country-born Englishman he was, he longed for land and houses, meadows and gardens, money that yielded sound yearly interest, and, finally, a corresponding advancement in rank and position'.¹⁰² Stephen takes this trait as read, calling Shakespeare a 'cornjobber and moneylender' (9.743). But Brandes takes his insight a step further than Stephen does by figuring Shakespeare as a haughty patrician replete with a deep contempt for the Globe's groundlings:

¹⁰⁰ Georg Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, trans. by William Archer and Mary Morison, 3 vols (London: Heinemann, 1898), II, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, I., p. 179.

Their struggles are ridiculous to him, and their rights a fiction; their true characteristics are accessibility to flattery and ingratitude towards their benefactors; and their only real passion is an innate, deep, and concentrated hatred of their superiors; but all these qualities are merged in their chief crime: they *stink*.¹⁰³

Shakespeare is Coriolanus in his aristocratic contempt for the plebs here, an attitude in line with Brandes's own.¹⁰⁴ Artist and work appear as one for both Brandes and Stephen just the same. They agree that Shakespeare must have written *King Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida* at the most trying time in his life, *Pericles* just after it started to pass, his bitterness tempered by 'a girl, placed in his arms, Marina' (9.406). For both Brandes and Stephen, the birth of a granddaughter eased the trouble in Shakespeare's aging mind.

Although Brandes does not fit his study into strictly defined periods of artistic growth and spiritual development, he plots a line of linear progression towards total self-possession similar to Dowden's narrative in *Mind and Art*. Brandes follows Shakespeare through the troubled spots in his life, even where supporting documentary evidence appears completely absent from the record.¹⁰⁵ After the 'able English critic' Arthur Symons, Brandes finds 'a farewell to mirth' lurking in *Twelfth Night* and linked, like *Hamlet*, to the death of Shakespeare's son, Hamnet:

From this point, for a certain period, all his impressions of life and humanity become ever more and more painful. We can see in his Sonnets how even in earlier and happier years a restless passionateness had been constantly at war with the serenity of his soul, and we can note how, at this time also, he was subject to accesses of stormy and vehement unrest. As time goes on, we can discern in the series of his dramas how not only what he saw in public and political life, but also his private experience, began to inspire him, partly with a burning compassion for humanity, partly with a horror of mankind as a breed of noxious wild animals, partly, too, with

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁰⁴ See Schoenbaum, p. 364. This discussion of Brandes's career has closely tracked Schoenbaum's own.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 366.

loathing for the stupidity, falsity, and baseness of his fellow creatures. These feelings gradually crystallise into a large and lofty contempt for humanity, until, after a space of eight years, another revolution occurs in his prevailing mood. The extinguished sun glows forth afresh, the black heaven has become blue again, and the kindly interest in everything human has returned. He attains peace at last in a sublime and melancholy clearness of vision. Bright moods, sunny dreams from the days of youth, return upon him, bringing with them, if not laughter, at least smiles. High-spirited gaiety has for ever vanished; but his imagination, feeling itself less constrained than of old by the laws of reality, moves lightly and at ease, though a deep earnestness now underlies it, and much experience of life.¹⁰⁶

Brandes hits each of Dowden's notes here, orchestrating a melodramatic reprise of *Mind and Art* in this paragraph. Little wonder, then, that Joyce has Stephen also leave Brandes behind.

¹⁰⁶ Brandes, I, pp. 280-1.

CONCLUSION

Stephen argues that only by suffering through life exiled in London could Shakespeare 'father' himself through art. For Stephen, Shakespeare resurrects his son Hamnet as Hamlet on stage, restoring the father-son relationship broken by death. Manipulating the spatial variable of his 'algebra' in this way allows Stephen to infer that Shakespeare as a working playwright—like Joyce as a working novelist living in exile—became the sum of a nagging biographical equation finally solved by *Hamlet*:

When Rutlandbaconsouthhamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote *Hamlet* he was not the father of his own son merely but, being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his own unborn grandson who, by the same token, never was born, for nature, as Mr Magee understands her, abhors perfection (9.866-71).

Joyce exploits a wealth of theological training here—an education that neither Arnold, Dowden, nor Yeats underwent—in order to collapse the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit into a single creative energy, making a mockery of that other authorship question along the way. For Stephen, Shakespeare remakes the English literary tradition even as 'he himself' enters it. But Joyce comes dangerously close to simply issuing a Jesuit rejoinder to the Shakespearean theosophy that Yeats had effectively created with 'Shakespeare's myth'.

Joyce has it instead that Stephen starts his explication for Eglinton concretely enough by providing a 'Composition of place' (9.163) as recommended by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* (1548):

Here it is to be noted that, in a visible contemplation or meditation—as, for instance, when one contemplates Christ our Lord, Who is visible—the composition will be to see with the sight of the imagination the corporeal place where the thing is found which I want to contemplate. I say the corporeal place, as for instance, a Temple or Mountain where Jesus Christ or Our Lady is found, according to what I want to contemplate. In an invisible

contemplation or meditation—as here on the Sins—the composition will be to see with the sight of the imagination and consider that my soul is imprisoned in this corruptible body, and all the compound in this valley, as exiled among brute beasts: I say all the compound of soul and body.¹

In Stephen's 'visible contemplation', Shakespeare replaces 'Christ Our Lord'. His journey from 'the huguenot's house in Silver street' to the Globe replaces the pilgrimage to 'a Temple or Mountain' (9.159-60). But Stephen plots the more impressive moves of his theory through an 'invisible contemplation' along the lines of Sabellius, the 'subtlest heresiarch of all the beasts of the field' (9.862), over and against Aquinas, 'with whom no word shall be impossible' (9.863-64).

As Platt has pointed out, 'When he negotiates the difficult space between the life of the artist and the art that is begotten, not made, he does so with concepts and a language derived from the fundamental beliefs of Catholicism'. Platt notes that, in particular, 'The Athanasian Creed lies at the heart of Stephen's conception of art mediating between the actuality of "the world without" and the "possible" of "the world within" (*U* 9.1041-42), a begetting of the artist's "consubstantial" image':

The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father not three Fathers, one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.²

And yet, Joyce creates Stephen's Shakespeare in the image of a Trinitarian heretic, Sabellius, a deviant from the dominant strands of mediaeval theology represented by Aquinas. For Stephen's Sabellius, Aquinas had the Trinity all wrong. Rather, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit represented the three modalities of a single spiritual essence, or 'all in all'. The Father did not beget the Son and then, together, let the Holy Spirit issue. Suggestively, Stephen's own thoughts linger over the Sabellian heresy early in the episode:

¹ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. by Elder Mullan (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1914), p. 26.

² Quoted in Platt, p. 744.

He Who Himself begot middler the Holy Ghost and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer between himself and others, Who, put upon by His fiends, stripped and whipped, was nailed like bat to barndoor, starved on crosstree, Who let Him bury, stood up, harrowed hell, fared into heaven these nineteen hundred years sitteth on the right hand of His Own Self but shall yet come in the latter day to doom the quick and the dead when all the quick shall be dead already. (9.493-9)

Shakespeare may have played the part of King Hamlet's ghost—a largely biographical consideration of little concern to Stephen at this point in his performance—but he also begot Hamlet and as well as from Hamnet, art of as well as from life, realising the potentiality of his dead son in a fiction.

Little wonder, then, that Buck smells the 'scholastic stink' lingering about Stephen and his apparently solipsistic theories. He composes a ballad in which he lumps Stephen in with the monks and mystics of whose narcissism he reminds him: 'Being afraid to marry on earth | They masturbated for all they were worth' (9.1151-2). Moreover, he makes fun of Stephen for binding the genius of Shakespeare up in a theological farce more Restoration than Renaissance:

Everyman His Own Wife
or
A Honeymoon in the Hand
(a national immorality in three orgasms)
by
Ballocky Mulligan (9. 1171-4)

No doubt he hopes for a premiere at the new digs of the former ILT: 'Abbey Theatre! I smell the pubic sweat of monks' (9.1131-2). But Buck only hears half of Stephen's performance and hardly listens to a word while present for its denouement.

Stephen politicises 'the world without' Shakespeare by imbuing it with a level of significance for his plays that none in his audience—a 'Brood of mockers' now baited by Buck (9.492)—would appear to appreciate. Joyce has it, then, that Stephen's Shakespeare still clings to life in his art:

All events brought grist to his mill. Shylock chimes with the jewbaiting that followed the handing and quartering of the queen's leech Lopez, his jew's heart plucked forth while the sheeny was yet alive: *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* with the coming to the throne of a Scotch philosophaster with a turn for witchroasting. The lost armada is his jeer in *Love's Labours Lost*. His pageants, the histories, sail fullbellied on a tide of Mafeking enthusiasm. Warwickshire Jesuits are tried and we have a porter's theory of equivocation. *The Sea Venture* comes home from Bermuda and the play Renan admired is written with Patsy Caliban, our American cousin. (9.748-57)

Stephen rounds on Buck here by observing that Shakespeare confronted the world around him as the actuality of his own potentiality. '*If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep*', he remarks, reminding his audience of Maeterlinck's dictum in *La Sagesse et la Destinée* (1899). '*If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas that his steps will tend. Every life is many days, day after day*' (9.1042-4). Stephen insists on a 'cyclical reading'³ of Shakespeare's relationship to the world as read over and against the record of an exemplary teleology insisted upon by Brandes, Dowden, Harris, and Lee. For Stephen, Shakespeare leaves his lodgings in Silver Street only to return there that evening after encountering, just like anyone else, 'robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, widows, brothers-in-law, but always meeting ourselves' (9.1045-6). Shakespeare can no more think reality away than Stephen can history.

Joyce refutes conventional accounts of Shakespeare's progress towards total self-possession in and through his art as the source of his singularity, a conclusion that Yeats reached just as surely as Dowden did. He resists the terms of contemporary biographical criticism and Anglo-Irish cultural politics in and through Stephen's performance at the National Library to write a history of these representations in which Shakespeare features against an Elizabethan backdrop. Joyce does not offer in this way an appropriation of the Shakespearean text proper. Rather, he redeploys this history of representations in order to undermine the dichotomies of contemporary criticism, biographical or otherwise, rooted Anglo-Irish cultural politics, which Arnold, Dowden, and Yeats

³ See Cormack, pp. 99-103.

had each used to construct their own appropriations of the Shakespearean text. Joyce complicates the divide, then, that separates fictional representations of Shakespeare—not least, his own—from their nonfictional counterparts to enclose a third space for criticism, one that Stephen both inhabits and defends.

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