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SHAKESPEARE AND SELFHOOD

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Shakespeare never wrote a treatise on selfhood, but if he had, I think it might sound something like this:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd and cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?
>
> $(3.1.59–67)^{[1]}$

What makes Shylock's speech so arresting is the way it achieves depth through surface. On one hand, the speech is an affirmation of legal personhood issued through an appeal to basic equality and reciprocal rights. On the other, it's an act of moral agency that manifests Shylock as a self worthy of empathy. Importantly, though, Shylock's selfhood is rooted exclusively in outer life: hands, senses, food, germs, temperature, tickling, violence, social practices. It's not something unique about Shylock's mental or spiritual core that endows him with the complexity and emotional range prerequisite to selfhood. Rather, it's his invocation of a common stratum of creaturely life in which he partakes: his physical and formal presence, his vegetative need for sustenance, his sensory responses to outer stimuli. Shylock creates for playgoers a theater of recognition grounded in the physical: acknowledge my eyes, my hands, my form, all the manifestations of my creatureliness. It's a singular moment of appearing and we know, unmistakably, that we're supposed to care.[2]

In what follows, I will show how Shylock's speech is emblematic of what we might think of as 'Shakespearean selfhood' more generally. Rather than being a fixed and bounded entity, the self in Shakespeare's plays and poems emerges from a vital and interdependent world of things. It's a *dynamic process* involving an assortment of human and non-human agents in environments of exchange.[3] The twentieth-century

philosopher A.N. Whitehead would have called Shakespearean selfhood an 'actual entity'. He used the term to describe the way seemingly discreet people and things are in fact in states of constant interaction and change. Whitehead explains, 'An actual entity is a process, and is not describable in terms of the morphology of a stuff'.[4] This idea of dynamic process – of a gathering of different, relationally evolving agents – is important because whether it takes the form of social (human-human) or material (human-environment) relationality, it entails a way of thinking about non-individual selfhood that is distinct from the more rigidly object-oriented materialism that emerged in Renaissance studies in the 1990s. Work by scholars such as Patricia Fumerton, Margreta de Grazia, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass, as well as slightly later studies by Natasha Korda and Julian Yates, critiqued the Burckhardtian commitment to interiority and emergent individualism that characterized the field. Instead, they argued that selfhood inheres entirely in things, 'in bric-a-brac worlds of decorations, gifts, foodstuffs, small entertainments, and other particles of cultural wealth and show', to borrow Fumerton's words.[5] For these object-oriented materialists, selfhood is, contra Whitehead, precisely 'describable in terms of the morphology of a stuff'. I think that Shakespeare shows us a different way out of individualism, one that includes objects but which ultimately embraces a much broader and more eclectic world of relational life.

In this, Shakespeare's writing shares something with the rich body of materialist philosophy that has in various ways tried to describe the embedded and transactional aspects of human being. The political theorist Jane Bennett, for example, has argued that acknowledging 'interconnectedness' is necessary if we want to change public policy on issues like the environment, farming, and stem-cell research. The goal, according to her, is to recognize 'a political ecology of things' existing on a horizontal, rather than a vertical and hierarchical, plane.[6] Bennett's project, as she points out, draws on an established philosophical history of vibrant matter that includes the writings of Spinoza, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Darwin, Adorno, Bergson, Whitehead, and Deleuze. However, in thinking about the way vibrant matter forms an *ecology* of association and exchange, she is responding even more specifically to John Dewey, who was interested in the 'dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surrounding', and Bruno Latour, who pushed Dewey's ideas in a more assuredly materialist direction.[7] Bennett's notion of 'political ecologies' might even be seen as a synthesis of Dewey's idea of 'conjoint action' – the distributive, cooperative agency necessary to generate a public sphere – and Latour's rejection of the exclusive categories of 'nature' and 'culture' in favour of the 'collective'. As Latour explains in *Pandora's Hope*, 'Humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to other actants with which, with whom, they have swapped many properties, and with which, with whom, they form collectives'.[8] These collectives, or ecologies, are not simply the contexts in which a person exists. They need to be understood as a model for existence as such. 'Who can say', asks Henri Bergson in *Creative Evolution*, another important contribution to this strand of thought,

> where individuality begins and ends, whether the living being is one or many, whether it is the cells which associate themselves into the organism or the organism which disassociates itself into cells? In vain we force the living into this or that one of our molds. All the molds crack. They are too narrow, above all too rigid, for what we try to put into them.[9]

Where does individuality begin and where does it end? Is the living being one or many? These are questions that Shakespeare poses, too, and he does so through the uniquely speculative languages of theatre and poetry. Bottom's hybridity and Caliban's creature-liness ask us to reflect on the physical limits of the human; Othello's handkerchief and Macbeth's dagger stage the materiality of thinking. Selfhood for Shakespeare is an open, inclusive, and heterogeneous system, one marked by a variety of exchanges between body and environment, human and non-human.

Of course, the philosophical context I have been sketching out so far consists entirely of modern philosophers. What about the intellectual culture of Shakespeare's own time? Depending on the perspective you take, Shakespearean selfhood can be seen as either moving with or working against the intellectual currents of the Renaissance. This is because there was no single, uniformly accepted way of understanding the self in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sweeping histories of selfhood from antiquity to modernity by scholars like Charles Taylor, Timothy J. Reiss, and Jerrold Seigel offer linear narratives that trace how one version of selfhood gradually evolved, or was cataclysmically transformed, into another, with the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods generally identified as key rupture points when communal forms of identity gave way to increasingly rational, interiorized, and individual ideas of selfhood.[10] But this is only partially accurate. On one hand, the notion that people possessed unique inner lives was widely available in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as studies by Katharine Eisaman Maus and Elizabeth Hanson have shown.[11] René Descartes provides the exemplary philosophical expression of this idea. In Part 4 of *Discourse on the Method* (1637), Descartes famously writes, '*I think, therefore I am*', describing 'this truth' as 'the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking'. He continues:

> Then, examining with attention what I was, and seeing that I could pretend I had no body and that there was no world nor any place where I was, I could not pretend, on that account, that I did not exist at all, and that, on the contrary, from the fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed very evidently and very certainly that I existed; whereas, on the other hand, had I simply stopped thinking, even if all the rest of what I had imagined had been true, I would have had no reason to believe that I had existed. From this I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is simply to think, and which, in order to exist, has no need of any place nor depends on material things. Thus this 'I', that is to say, the soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body, and even if there were no body at all, it would not cease to be all that it is.[12]

This is the opposite of distributed selfhood. For Descartes, the self 'has no need of any place nor depends on material things'. Dislocated and disembodied, this is an 'I' that exists in entirely self-referential terms. A vast and unbridgeable epistemological chasm yawns between the Cartesian 'I' and the ultimately unknowable outer world of people and things. Milton's Lucifer said memorably, 'The mind is its own place' (1.254).[13] For Descartes, the self is its own place.

Perhaps because of the power and precision of his theory, Descartes is routinely either blamed for or credited with the next three to four hundred years of individualism and scientific scepticism. Yet for all its influence, Descartes's philosophy can hardly be taken

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as emblematic of Renaissance notions of the self. Richard Strier has even argued that the hermetic model of selfhood, based entirely on inner life and available in other forms in writings by Augustine, Martin Luther, and Montaigne, was exceptional rather than dominant.[14] It was at any rate only part of the total picture. Humoral theory, for example, described both physical and mental experience as dictated by the balance of four substances, or 'humors', common to all people. These are black bile, linked to the qualities of dry and cold and prominent in those with a melancholic temperament; phlegm, linked to the qualities of wet and cold and prominent in those with a phlegmatic temperament; blood, linked to the qualities of hot and wet and prominent in those with a sanguine temperament; and yellow bile, linked to the qualities of dry and hot and prominent in those with a choleric temperament. Keeping the humors in balance depended on how one managed six external factors known as the 'non-naturals': air, food and drink, exertion and rest, sleeping and waking, retentions and evacuations, and emotions (or 'passions').[15] Humoral theory was systematized by the Roman physician Galen and became deeply entrenched in both high and vernacular intellectual cultures in Renaissance Europe. One study estimates that between 1500 and 1700 there were approximately 590 different editions of the works of Galen published.[16] In stark contrast to Descartes, humoral theory is remarkable for the way it relates the body to the mind, and both to the environment. The inner world of emotions and thought, what we would call psychological states, are understood in material terms, as substances or fluids, in humoral theory.[17] And the dependence of those humors on external elements like food and drink, and activities like eating, excreting, and sweating, which cross the boundary between inner and outer, knit the self into a physical scene that extends beyond the threshold of the body and certainly beyond the threshold of the mind.[18] This is a form of selfhood that *does* 'have need of . . . place' and certainly 'depends on material things'.

Humoral theory was just one of the languages available for thinking about selfhood in non-proprietary terms. The Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, for instance, argued vigorously that the world, its inhabitants, and even the thoughts generated by those inhabitants were formed of a single substance. This idea is the foundation of his seminal work, *The Ethics* (1677), and he devotes the first fifteen propositions of Part I to proving it. Spinoza positioned himself against Descartes and the medieval-Platonic tradition from which Descartes's dualism derived. The notion that one could separate the body from the mind, one person from another, humans from animals, and anything from the larger natural environment was, as far as Spinoza was concerned, a metaphysical illusion. Thoughts, bodies, people, animals, plants, and rocks were, according to him, merely different *modes* of the same infinitely variable substance. He writes, 'We are a part of Nature which cannot be conceived independently of other parts'. This means, in the first place, that we are not autonomous. Instead, our actions, thoughts, and emotions need to be understood as the result of a collaborative form of agency that involves multiple minds, multiple bodies, and the whole of the material environment. 'The force whereby a man persists in existing', Spinoza writes, 'is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes'.[19] Selfhood in this account is a finite mode of a larger vital ecology.

Spinoza formulated this argument at a level of detail and with a degree of moral rigour that made *The Ethics* unique. But his basic ideas about the relationship between individual selves and the larger material world were not entirely new. Diverse examples of distributed selfhood could be found in Renaissance literature, for example. A poem like Henry Vaughan's 'The Morning Watch', which opens, 'O joys! Infinite sweetness! with

what flowers,/And shoots of glory, my soul breaks, and/buds' (1–3), articulates a vitalism that is at once violent and exhilarating. The poet-speaker's soul, that immaterial entity 'through which', in Descartes's *Discourse*, 'I am what I am', is here shot through with roots and flowers and gloriously disfigured by buds. There is no hierarchy of substance in these lines and no privileged inner world; everything is democratically enmeshed in what Vaughan describes later in the poem as 'the quick world' (10).[20] Another alternative to hermetic selfhood is found in the conventional Renaissance trope of two bodies – typically the bodies of two lovers – sharing one soul. I quote here from John Donne's 'The Ecstasy':

> But as these several souls contain
> Mixture of things, they know not what,
> Love, these mixed souls doth mix again,
> And makes both one, each this and that.
>   (33–6)[21]

These lines are interesting because they describe how love makes the souls of the man and woman 'one' while also presenting the more challenging idea that each soul remains itself at the same time as it becomes something entirely distinct from itself (i.e. another soul): 'Each' is 'this *and* that'. There is a kind of monism at work here, but one that preserves, even highlights, the paradox of being both one thing and another thing. This is a kind of playfulness that programmatic philosophy like Spinoza's *Ethics* cannot afford to indulge in, but which poetry certainly can. The verb Donne coins slightly later in the poem, 'interanimates', indicates more precisely the way the lovers' merged souls are to be imagined as forming a co-dependent life-world rather than simply a single substance.[22]

The trope of the merged souls, or merged selves, is one that Shakespeare is particularly fond of. In *The Comedy of Errors*, for example, Adriana says to Antipholus of Syracuse,

> O, how comes it,
> That thou art then estranged from thyself?
> Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
> That, undividable incorporate,
> Am better than thy dear self's better part.
> Ah, do not tear away thyself from me;
> For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled thence that drop again,
> Without addition or diminishing,
> As take from me thyself and not me too.
>   (2.2.119–29)

The idea that one can be estranged from oneself might sound rather mundane to us, living as we do in a culture where people regularly profess not to be themselves, or insist on the need to pull themselves together or spend more time with themselves. Yet common as they may be, these expressions correlate to a way of thinking about self-hood that is scattered, mobile, and permeable.[23] So too does Adriana's concern about self-estrangement – the idea of somehow *being* apart from one's *self* – and her sub-sequent image of her metaphysical relationship to Antipholus of Syracuse as being like

a drop of water in a 'breaking gulf'. This is a distributed and pointedly non-individual version of selfhood; 'a kind of self resides with you', as Cressida puts it in *Troilus and Cressida* (3.2.148).

We find other versions of these ideas in Shakespeare's sonnets, where selfhood is frequently built from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. Hannah Arendt describes how the Romans used the terms for *being alive* and *being among men* interchangeably, recalling for us a way of thinking about sentience as collective experience.[24] A similar current of thought runs throughout the sonnets. Consider sonnet 138, which reimagines truth – typically conceived of as absolute, transcendent, and singular – as something *made* collaboratively in the world of action and decision. As long as there is agreement among the parties involved, truth can be assembled from anything – even lies. The opening lines declare:

> When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her though I know she lies,
> That she might think me some untutored youth,
> Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.
>   (1–4)[25]

Truth (the woman is faithful, the man is young) is not keyed to what the individual knows, but instead to what the social unit actively chooses to believe. Collective participation is the substance of truth and its necessary condition. Is there a cynical streak in Shakespeare's presentation of this idea? Perhaps. But there's also optimism, even delight, in the notion that truth can be a matter of social contract. Sonnet 138 invites us, briefly, into a scene where the content of each individual's claims – the question of whether they are correct or not – is less important than the conditions of mutual recognition under which those claims are made. Truth, the sonnet proposes, is not a thing in itself; it's an effect of shared discourse and common acknowledgment, a matter of form not of substance.

Other thematizations of sociality can be found in sonnets 1–17, the 'procreation group'. This sequence advances multiple versions of the same basic argument: the young man is too beautiful not to have children; if he does not produce 'another self' (10.13) to preserve his beauty, he is committing a crime against 'the world' (1.13). The key to this argument is the belief that beauty belongs not to the individual fortunate enough to possess it, but rather to the larger public world that desires to experience it. Beauty is 'the world's due' (1.14), a common resource loaned by Nature to particular men and women who then bear the responsibility of distributing and maintaining it: 'Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,/And being frank she lends to those are free' (4.3–4). The young man's failure to live up to his social responsibility is castigated in a variety of ways. He is presented as 'glutton[ous]' (1.13), 'Unthrifty' (4.1), and 'self-willed' (6.13). Even more sensationally, he is described as 'possessed with murd'rous hate' (10.5). The speaker of sonnet 9 avers: 'No love toward others in that bosom sits/That on himself such murd'rous shame commits' (13–14). Murder is the most profoundly anti-social behaviour. The logic of its inclusion in these sonnets has to do with two assumptions the procreation group makes about selfhood: first, that a self is not reducible to a single person, but is constituted instead by an inter-generational network of family members who share the same core attributes. Second, and in a very similar spirit, that you do not

belong to you. You belong to the commons, to society. So, when a beautiful person fails to have children, they not only fail to complete themselves, they also deprive society of what is rightfully theirs. It's a form of self-murder and an affront to the community. Sonnet 13 addresses these matters explicitly:

> O that you were yourself; but, love, you are
> No longer yours than you yourself here live.
> Against this coming end you should prepare,
> And your sweet semblance to some other give.
> So should that beauty which you hold in lease
> Find no determination; then you were
> Yourself again after your self's decease
>
> (1–7)

The argument here is not simply: you will die someday, so have a child and triumph over death. The idea, more precisely, is that living in a singular sense – living exclusively as and for the self – is not really living at all. Life becomes meaningful, and ethical, when conceived of in terms of others. This can be 'the world', whose demand for recognition is heard so often in the procreation group, or it can be the inter-generational community of parents and progeny. 'You had a father', sonnet 13 concludes, 'let your son say so' (14).

  I want to offer one final example of distributed selfhood in Shakespeare, and in doing so return to the theatre. In *Macbeth*, towards the end of Act 2.1, we find the title-character alone on stage. His servant has gone to bed; so has Banquo. Left by himself to ponder for a moment the crime he is about to commit, Macbeth stares intently into empty space and says the following:

> Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch
>   thee:
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
> Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
> To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
> I see thee yet, in form as palpable
> As this which now I draw.
>
> (2.1.33–41)

There has been a tendency in criticism devoted to *Macbeth* to view this speech as a moment during which some form of interiority is disclosed: 'the growth of evil in the mind', 'the divided soul', or 'the functioning of conscience', to give a few examples.[26] But this is only part of the picture. If we focus too narrowly on the idea of interiority we risk obviating what, in my view, makes the speech unique and intellectually potent: its complex marshalling of mind and matter. Rather than simply staging interiority, the dagger scene treats the process of becoming criminal in a way that makes physical sensation integral to mental conception. The initial question that Macbeth poses – 'Is this a dagger which I see before me,/The handle toward my hand?' – has to do not only with *what* at that moment Macbeth knows, but also, as we quickly discover, with *how* he

knows it: through vision ('see') and through touch ('Come, let me clutch thee'). These lines describe knowledge and thought as part of a larger sensual experience that extends beyond the mental or spiritual into a real, material world of things and actions. This is not to say that Macbeth does not *think* himself into the criminal event, but rather that the thinking he does he does at least in part with his body. Knowledge requires a physical extension outward, which means the kernel of thought is not mental activity *per se* but the objects and environments that generate that mental activity when perceived by the senses. Thinking exceeds the boundaries of the purely physical or purely mental since it entails an act of quasi-physical mental acquisition, one which in this soliloquy is literalized when Macbeth reaches out for the mental dagger, eventually replacing it with his own real dagger.

What we see in the dagger scene, then, is not so much criminal *intent* as it is something we might call criminal *intentionality*. Criminal intent – the premeditation of a murder, for example – refers to something mental. And though it also presupposes a will towards an action in the objective world outside, it still designates the mental inception of that act as chronologically prior to its materialized performance and, to that extent, as separate from it. As Jonathan Gil Harris reminds us, chronological thinking is 'a practice [that] works to separate time into a linear series of units . . . each of which is partitioned from what precedes and follows it'.[27] Intentionality, on the other hand, is a phenomenological concept that models mind-body relations in a rather different way. In Edmund Husserl's formulation, the doctrine of intentionality states that every act of consciousness, every thought, is directed towards an object of some sort. That is to say, consciousness is always consciousness *of* something: the thought and the thing are never readily separable.[28] Indeed, the *thing* – what Husserl would call an 'intentional object', or *noema*[29] – creates the thought, creates the very conditions of sentience; not the other way around. In Macbeth's soliloquy, the dagger takes on the role of the intentional object. It catalyses Macbeth's consciousness of his own criminality and at the same time teeters playfully on the frontier between idea and object. Treason is not anchored to a founding moment of *cogito* in this scene. Instead, it should be viewed as evolving out of something Tim Bayne calls 'agentive experience', a distributed and dynamic process involving both thinking and feeling, imagination and action.[30]

So far, this essay has devoted itself to *describing* Shakepearean selfhood, both its conceptual structure and its historical coordinates. The question that might remain for some readers is why such an undertaking matters. Does an understanding of the self in Shakespeare's plays and poems get us any closer to a broader sense of why those works matter? I think it does, and I'll explain why by returning to the speech with which I opened. At the end of that brief discussion, I noted that audiences experiencing Shylock's words know unmistakably that they're supposed to care. Why is that? Why do we tend to feel that a recognition of Shylock on the terms he's established matter? The reason, I think, is quite simple and it forms the basis of what I have described elsewhere as Shakespeare's 'ethics of exteriority'. It matters because acts of collective recognition are socially affirming; they ground us in an environment of shared experience and common imagination and establish, therefore, the only possible conditions for responsible world-making.[31]

Shakespeare's ethics of exteriority accrue from scenes of collective thought, interpersonal experience, and material embeddedness of the sort discussed in this essay. They come most fully into view when we start posing fundamental questions about distributed

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selfhood: what does it mean to imagine alternatives to interiority? What are the implications of looking outward instead of inward? Modern philosophers have offered their own answers to these questions. For Emmanuel Levinas, for example, exteriority is a force that pushes back against humanity's deeply entrenched egotism. Disasters like the Holocaust, he argued, were always, at their root, the result of a simple yet catastrophic failure to recognize the other. Exteriority becomes a crucial concept for him precisely because it describes a way of living that is keyed to the ethical demand of the not-you.[32] Charles Taylor makes a similar point when he asserts that 'a self only exists in … "webs of interlocution"'.[33] He writes:

> I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out.[34]

Building on Charles Taylor's arguments, Paul Ricoeur points out that a disregard for these 'webs of interlocution' has led to the deeply entrenched, liberal legal fiction of a 'subject of law, constituted prior to any societal bond'. To recognize the role of otherness in the formation of selfhood, he explains, is to strike at the root of this fiction and to create the conditions whereby individuals 'participate in the burdens related to perfecting the social bond'.[35] Hannah Arendt addressed the idea of exteriority, too, though she used a different term: 'conditional existence'. In *The Human Condition*, she writes:

> Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence. This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings. Whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition. The impact of the world's reality upon human existence is felt and received as a conditioning force. The objectivity of the world – its object- or thing-character – and the human condition supplement each other; because human existence is conditional existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence.[36]

Arendt's notion of conditionality comes close to the idea of exteriority. Both terms denote a way of understanding human existence as a product of the social and material *world out there*, in all of its plurality. In Arendt's view, this insight has important implications for how we understand politics. In order for political action to be human, which is to say *humane*, it must first be conceived as something contingent upon the needs of other stakeholders. Like Levinas, Arendt felt that the alternative, an egotistical view of politics centred on individual *making*, led eventually to totalitarian disasters like Stalinism and Nazism. In *The Human Condition*, therefore, Arendt lays the philosophical groundwork for a political practice based on collaboration, acknowledgement, and responsibility. Shakespeare's ethics of exteriority lack, as they should, the programmatic specificity of philosophical argument, but the plays and sonnets I've explored in this essay nevertheless diagram a situated, relational, and distributed form of selfhood that Levinas, Taylor, Ricoeur, and Arendt all take as prerequisite to responsible living.

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Related topics

See Chapters 1, 4, 5, 29, 30

Notes

1 References to Shakespeare's plays are from Blakemore Evans (1997).
2 This commentary on Shylock's speech is drawn from a larger discussion in my *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies* (2017).
3 See further, Witmore (2008). Witmore asserts that 'finding our way to a truly Shakespearean metaphysics . . . should not be an exercise in transcendence, but an attempt to unearth a new and different kind of materialism, one that is grounded in bodies but emphatic in asserting the reality of their dynamic interrelations' (3).
4 Whitehead (1978: 41).
5 Fumerton (1991: 1). See also, de Grazia et al. (1996: 3), Jones and Stallybrass (2000: 14); Korda (2002: 8), Yates (2002: 1).
6 Bennett (2010). For a similar argument, see Latour (2004: 237).
7 Dewey (1927) and (1934), Latour (1999) and (2004).
8 Latour (1999: 198).
9 Bergson (2005: xx). See also Michel Serres (1995) who I think is particularly eloquent on the relationship between the one and the many. He states, 'We've never hit upon truly atomic, ultimate, indivisible terms that were not themselves, once again, composite. Not in the pure sciences and not in the worldly ones. The bottom always falls out of the quest for the elementary. The irreducibly individual recedes like the horizon, as our analysis advances' (3).
10 Taylor (1989), Reiss (2003), Seigel (2005).
11 Maus (1995), Hanson (1998).
12 Descartes (1998: 18–19).
13 Milton (1998).
14 Richard Strier (2011: 207–47). See also Weintraub (1978).
15 Cook (1986: 423).
16 Wear (1995: 253).
17 Schoenfeldt (1999).
18 Paster (2004) and Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan, eds. (2007), as well as Floyd-Wilson (2003), Paster et al. (2004), and Kahn et al. (2006).
19 Spinoza (1992).
20 Vaughan (1995).
21 Donne (1977).
22 See Selleck (2008).
23 See Lakoff and Johnson (1999), especially 267–89. Kuzner (2011) coins the useful term 'open subjects' in reference to similar ideas in seventeenth-century writing that engages with republicanism.
24 Arendt (1998: 7–8).
25 References to the sonnets are from Shakespeare (2002).
26 Wells Slights (1981: 111), Wilks (1990: 130), Stoll (2008: 132–50).
27 Harris (2009: 2).
28 Husserl dealt with these ideas throughout his career, but the foundational texts are his (2000) and (1983).
29 Husserl (1983: 211–325).
30 Bayne (2008).
31 Curran (2017). See also Kuzner (2016), another study that resists the view of Shakespeare's works as harbingers of liberal subjectivity.
32 See especially, Levinas (1969).
33 Taylor (1989: 36).
34 Taylor (1989: 35).

35 Ricoeur (1992: 181).
36 Arendt (1998: 9).

Further reading

Joel B. Altman, 2010. *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

  Focusing on Shakespeare's *Othello*, this book explores the rhetorical underpinnings of theatrical selfhood.

Kevin Curran, 2017. *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

  This book considers the relationship between law and selfhood in Shakespeare's language and dramaturgy.

Peter Holbrook, 2010. *Shakespeare's Individualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

  This book gives a detailed account of how Shakespearean drama contributes to modern philosophies of the individual.

James Kuzner, 2016. *Shakespeare as a Way of Life: Skeptical Practice and the Politics of Weakness*. New York: Fordham University Press.

  This book presents a Shakespeare who is skeptical of autonomy, revealing instead an ethics of sociality at the centre of his work.

Michael Witmore, 2008. *Shakespearean Metaphysics*. London: Bloomsbury.

  This book offers a short account of Shakespeare as a metaphysical thinker, alongside Spinoza, Bergson, and Whitehead.

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