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Hollingsworth, Mark (2007) Nineteenth-century Shakespeares: nationalism and moralism. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

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Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares: Nationalism and Moralism

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2007

Contents

Part Two Case Study

Long Abstract

This thesis shows that 'Shakespeare' (both the works and the man) was at the forefront of literary activity in the nineteenth century. By focusing on concerns about the identity of the British nation and its people it shows that Shakespeare was a constant presence in the debates of the day and that a number of agendas were pursued through what were ostensibly writings about Shakespeare's plays and the biography of their author.

The Introduction first notes Shakespeare's transition from Elizabethan playwright to Victorian cultural icon and proceeds to outline nineteenth-century critical practice and changes in the social organisation of knowledge. From here the shift in how Shakespeare was considered is noted as well as the fact that, despite increasing interest in the history of the phenomenon, the nineteenth century has been largely neglected. What exploration there has been of this period has tended, by its nature as part of larger surveys or issue-specific studies, to oversimplify the complexities of nineteenth-century criticism. Further to this, the nineteenth century itself is often treated as a time of unsophisticated development and as a precursor to modern thought rather than a period of interest in its own right. A variety of what this thesis terms 'literary pursuits' during this period are then contextualised, as well as the changing role of the critic in nineteenth-century society. This is accompanied by an exploration of the community of readers and writers who would have engaged with these works. Finally, the methodological decisions which have directed this thesis are explained, including the privileging of page over stage, and the choice of those nineteenth-century writers who have been examined.

The main body of the thesis is divided into two sections: Part One (Chapters One and Two) gives a broad taxonomy of ways in which nineteenth-century writers used Shakespeare as a means for addressing other issues, and Part Two (Chapter Three) uses a specific case study through which to examine these particular issues. It shows that attitudes to Shakespeare were shaped by an ongoing dialogue concerning the identity of the nation and its population. However, while there was much commonality regarding the agendas for which Shakespeare was used, the ways in which various different writers approached this was surprisingly diverse.

Chapter One, 'Nationalism,' looks at how Shakespeare could be used in order to serve a nationalistic agenda: this involved either allying Shakespeare with the nation itself (by utilising Shakespeare's nationality, writing in a rhetorically charged manner, or interpreting Shakespeare's works in a certain fashion), or equating the nineteenth century with the early modern period (and highlighting various commonalities or differences with those times). The concept of nationalism is contextualised by looking at various attitudes to the nation which were driven by the challenges of the expanding Empire.

Chapter Two, 'Moralism,' looks at the ways in which Shakespeare was used as a tool by those who sought to promote certain behavioural traits amongst their readers. The different ways in which writers made use of Shakespeare are situated within a discussion of nineteenth-century philosophical and moral positions. This chapter looks successively at what is termed 'Private Moralism' (a concern with abstract ideas, such as self-control and adherence to familial or religious ties), and 'Public Moralism' (that is, efforts to improve the outward or physical attributes of individuals, such as financial accumulation or class status).

Part Two of the thesis focuses on how Victorian writers used Shakespeare specifically in relation to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. To this end, Chapter Three, 'The *Sonnets*,' looks at how writings on the *Sonnets* pursued moral or nationalistic agendas. This chapter also seeks to draw together the strands of nationalism and moralism by showing that anxieties about the state of Britain fed into writing about the *Sonnets* at this time and that this involved a complex debate about the *Sonnets*, ancient Greece, and the nature of what would today be termed homosexuality. A significant contention of this chapter is that nineteenth-century attitudes towards the *Sonnets* need to be appreciated on their own terms rather than anachronistically via a modern understanding of homosexuality.

The Conclusion suggests that Shakespeare was used by nineteenth-century critics and biographers as a location within which to debate certain overarching concerns of the day. How these issues were approached, however, took different forms and Shakespeare was employed for different ends, which points to a general unease regarding the identity of the nation. As the formal institutionalising of the English Literary canon was taking place during the period covered by this thesis it seems reasonable to suggest that the use of Shakespeare was related to Shakespeare's position of dominance within the canon. Finally, suggestions are made as to how the ease with which Shakespeare could be used – as well as the unavoidable difficulties which are attendant with Shakespeare – might have affected this process of canonisation.

Acknowledgements

> — I'm sorry, he said. Shakespeare is the happy hunting ground
> of all minds that have lost their balance.
>
> - J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, (1922)[1]

I am grateful for this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the following people: my thanks go to the University of Nottingham who funded this PhD, and to the School of English which supported my application for that funding. Thanks also to Professor Josephine Guy and Dr Mark Robson who performed their duties as supervisors with patience and commitment. Various discussions with Dr Paul Edmondson, Dr Finn Fordham, Professor Russell Jackson, Dr Nick Shrimpton, and Professor Stanley Wells all helped to point me in the right direction and shape ideas that may otherwise have lead to nothing. I would like to thank Sylvain Baladon, Heike Döring, Kate Haworth, and Talei Rounds for various French, German, Latin, and Greek translations.

The staff at Birmingham Central Library, the British Library, Shakespeare Institute Library, and the University Libraries at Leicester, Leicester De Montfort, Loughborough, Nottingham, and Southampton all assisted with numerous enquires and requests and enabled me to find obscure material that might otherwise have escaped me. I thank Dr Rosy Aindow, Dr Mark Fairbanks, Dr Kathryn Jones, Jon Ford, Dr Tiffany Perala, Kristen Sipper, Dr Jill Sullivan, Dr Brian Vander Veen, Vicky Wilcher, and particularly Dr Ben Woolhead, all of whom either contributed useful advice or made the process of this thing we do more enjoyable.

It is fitting that my three greatest debts are to the three most important people in my life. Firstly to my Mum and Dad without whose constant love, support, and guidance I would not be where I am today. It *is* all your fault.

My biggest thanks go to Katherine who has made these last few years much easier than they would otherwise have been; her intelligent advice, unfailing encouragement, and generous affection mean much more to me than shabby words can ever express. For making me far happier than I probably have any right to be –
Thank You.

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[1] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1922, Oxford World's Classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 239.

Textual Note

All references to Shakespeare's works refer to the line numbers in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). All references to individual sonnets from *Shakespeare's Sonnets* refer to the original numbering of the 1609 quarto (1Q, 2Q, etc.), in order to avoid any confusion caused by the rearrangement of the sonnets by certain nineteenth-century editors. All references to the Bible refer to the *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

The various idiosyncratic spellings of Shakespeare's name have been retained in all references and quotations – not least to highlight the lack of uniformity in the period even with regard to the spelling of Shakespeare's name. All quotations retain their original emphasis, italicisation, capitalisation, and spelling.

Introduction

> CADE   Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the
> realm in erecting a grammar school… thou hast caused
> printing to be used and… thou hast built a paper-mill. It will
> be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that
> usually talk of a noun and a verb and such abominable
> words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.
>
> - W. Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*, 4.7 (*c*.1591)

In the early 1590s William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was probably in London embarking on his fledgling theatrical career. The documentary record is a relative blank between 1585 – when Shakespeare's youngest children were born – and 1592 when the *Groatsworth of Wit* was published by Robert Greene (*c*.1558-92).[1] In this pamphlet Greene castigates Shakespeare as an 'upstart' and a 'factotum' thus attesting to Shakespeare's precocious dominance of the late sixteenth-century stage. It seems likely therefore that in 1590 Shakespeare was consolidating his status in London and, if the chronology posited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor is accurate, penning the first of his solely-authored plays: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.[2] Two hundred and fifty years later however, this playwright would be one of the most recognised literary figures in the world. In 1840 a group of prominent literary enthusiasts founded the Shakespeare Society (1840-53); John Payne Collier (1789-1883), Thomas Amyot (1775-1850), Charles Knight (1791-1873), Alexander Dyce (1798-1869), and James Orchard Halliwell (later Halliwell-Phillipps) (1820-89) were among those who saw a need for collaborative scholarship, noting

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[1] Samuel Schoenbaum refers to this period as 'The Lost Years,' see Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare, A Documentary Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 77-90.

[2] See Eric Rasmussen, 'chronology', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

that all that has hitherto been done for the illustration of Shakespeare has been accomplished by individuals, and that no literary association has been yet formed for the purpose of collecting materials, or of circulating information, by which he may be thoroughly understood and fully appreciated.[3]

In the space of two and a half centuries Shakespeare had shifted from a playwright on the cusp of his career to a figure considered worthy of careful scholarly investigation. Shakespeare had also taken a role at the very centre of intellectual and cultural life in Britain. A full tracing of Shakespeare's mutation from a popular playwright into a cultural icon would be a complex undertaking and there is simply no way of doing it justice in a study of this size. However, this transformation occurred, at least in part, through the mediation and critical appreciation of his works by others. This thesis will show that Shakespeare was a prominent and important presence in the literary activity which took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the writings produced about Shakespeare at this time would not only serve to further cement the status of Shakespeare within the public consciousness and literary canon but also see the practice of literary scholarship itself develop and change. An investigation of the secondary literature produced about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century will highlight the sophistication of the writing of the period and also show the diverse uses for which Shakespeare could be employed.

The nineteenth century witnessed a number of important events in the history of English Literature. Firstly, there was a considerable increase in production of published works in Britain. John Feather has noted that in this period 'there grew the great edifice of the Victorian publishing industry when the trade reached unprecedented, and perhaps

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[3] 'Shakespeare Society Prospectus', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 14, no. 6 N.S. (December 1840).
   Alas, such a sense of community would be short-lived and the Shakespeare Society would break up acrimoniously in the early 1850s.

still unequalled, heights of prosperity.'[4] As with all such cultural revolutions, the causes and effects of this prosperity are numerous and complex, taking in political, economic and technological forces which have already been well documented elsewhere.[5] Brief mention must be made, however, of general trends which can be seen in the nineteenth century; put simply, population growth, the resultant shift in social organisation, and advances in production methods lead to an increase in literacy, printed matter, and the desire to read.[6] Drama, poetry and the novel all flourished and so too did attendant criticism, literary history, biography and editing, which all achieved greater prominence. This was not least because these disciplines all had a part to play in the academic study of literature which slowly began to be considered as a professional activity at this time.[7]

As literacy and literary-production increased, the volume and nature of literary criticism also underwent changes. William A. Knight noted in 1896 that 'the function of the modern critic is a singularly ill-defined one,' and this comment seems to hold true

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[4] John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, (London: Routledge, 1988), 130. See also Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain: 1914-1950*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 12-41.

[5] Alexis Weedon has noted the unprecedented growth in the nineteenth-century publishing industry and investigates the various social, economic, and political reasons behind this. See Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

[6] The population of England and Wales more than doubled in the first half of the nineteenth century, and then doubled again in the second half. In all the population expanded from slightly fewer than nine million in 1801, to over forty million in 1900 (T. W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 199. See also G. S. R. Kitson Clark, *An Expanding Society: Britain 1830-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967)). The 1870 Education Act saw school attendance increase by more than half a million pupils with a corresponding increase in levels of literacy and a demand for school textbooks, (W. H. G. Armytage, *Four Hundred Years of English Education*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) 145) and the percentage of those who could read rose from 59.2% in 1841 to 97% in 1900 (Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, 1957, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), and Philip Davis, *The Victorians*, vol. 8, 1830-1880, ed. Jonathan Bate, The Oxford English Literary History, 13 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 201-22., 171). Kelly J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. Robert L. Patten, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) provides an examination of contemporary attitudes to the increase in literacy and reading. See also E. G. West, 'Literacy and the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review,* 31, no. 3 1978) which includes striking graphical representations of the fall in illiteracy from 1820 to 1900.

[7] English Literature only became a formalised academic pursuit within universities late in the century; see D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of English Language and Literature from its Origins to the Making of the Oxford English School*, (London: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1965), and E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Muse Unchained: An Intimate Account of the Revolution in English Studies at Cambridge*, (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1958).

for the majority of writers in this period.[8] The writing of what would now be termed literary criticism shifted away from being the sole preserve of the wealthy upper-classes who could afford to write for pleasure, towards more professional individuals whose authority resided in their institutional position.[9] Thus the so-called 'sage' or 'man of letters' – who would be a critic, poet, author, historian, and political commentator rolled into one – effectively ceased to be the only writer of literary comment. Kelly J. Mays points out that there was a shift away from texts being authorities in themselves (in that the ability to be published afforded a writer respect), towards textual space becoming an arena within which could be exercised an authority that was derived elsewhere.[10] As Josephine Guy and Ian Small have noted:

> In the first half of the nineteenth century the authority of the sage had principally resided in his status as an individual, in the kind of person he was (sages were never women). But by the late 1880s confidence came to reside instead in the judgement of a collective body, the 'experts' – a community of scholars or academics or professional peers who were invariably housed in, or connected with, institutions, typically universities.[11]

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[8] William A. Knight, 'Criticism as Theft', *Nineteenth Century,* 39 (February 1896), 260. See also the debate which took place in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* magazine between Alfred J. Church (1829-1912) and Knight towards the end of 1889, where they discuss the competency or otherwise of literary critics while using a seemingly fluid definition of the term (William A. Knight, 'Criticism as a Trade', *Nineteenth Century,* 26 (September 1889), 423-30, and Alfred J. Church, 'Criticism as a Trade: A Reply', *Nineteenth Century,* 26 (November 1889), 833-9).

[9] For more on this see Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 205-24.

[10] Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', 168-9.

[11] Josephine Guy and Ian Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 31-2.
On the subject of the masculine dominance of sages see Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, ed. Thaïs E. Morgan, (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), both of which examine the idea of female sages and associated gender conflicts.

It can be seen therefore that the second half of the nineteenth century was a period when the whole concept of literary appreciation and the people who were performing such work was in flux. Closer consideration of the communities which were producing and consuming literature about Shakespeare will follow later in this Introduction, for now it is enough to note the considerable transformations which were occurring. Within these important changes to British literature and its assessment, Shakespeare was a prominent figure: the number of editions of Shakespeare's works being printed increased, as did the amount of accompanying critical writing.

The nineteenth century witnessed the culmination of a significant shift in the way that Shakespeare was considered. While Shakespeare's works were chiefly published – that is, made public – through performance during his own lifetime (with only his poetic compositions being officially printed), by the nineteenth century this attitude had reversed and more importance was placed on the works as textual artefacts than as theatrical productions.[12] To be sure, Shakespeare's plays were still being performed in the nineteenth century and enjoyed a rich life within the Victorian theatre, but for the first time the way that people interacted with Shakespeare became a primarily text-based experience. In 1864 *The Times* carried a piece which criticised the organising of the Stratford Tercentenary celebrations of Shakespeare, it noted that

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[12] The opinions of two influential writers, who span the period under consideration, can serve as examples here. Charles Knight notes that *Hamlet* is 'sometimes presented through the medium of the stage; more frequently in some one of the manifold editions of the acted play… The book is now the companion of our lonely walks.' (*The Works of William Shakspere; Containing his Plays and Poems, the Text of the editions by Charles Knight: with glossarial notes; and facts connected with his life and writings, abridged from 'William Shakspere, a biography' complete in one volume*, ed. Charles Knight, (London: Charles Knight and Co., 22 Ludgate Street, 1845), 638). William Hazlitt announced in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* that 'We do not like to see our author's plays acted, and least of all *Hamlet*. There is no play that suffers so much in being transferred to the stage.' (William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays & Lectures on the English Poets*, (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited., 1903), 70). This was, in part, to do with Romantic notions of the poetic genius of Shakespeare and the fact that engagement with a text was more of an individual pursuit than theatrical experience. See Jonathan Bate, *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, (London: Penguin, 1992).

> We testify our gratitude to Shakespeare by calling for edition after edition of his
>
> works, by making household words of his language, and by claiming for him the
>
> first place among the poets of all time. Yet zealous believers have been known to
>
> confess that they did not care to see Shakespeare's plays acted, and of those who
>
> go from time to time, out of pure love, to see them acted in London, not one in
>
> ten thousand would go out of his way to see them acted at Stratford.[13]

Of course this view is not necessarily representative of the entire population. That said, the idea that Shakespeare was shown gratitude by the – pointedly multitudinous and repetitive – publication of edition after edition and the inference that it was only through a sense of obligation that audiences attended the theatres at all (and even then, only in London) certainly points to a strong opposition between the cultures of print and performance. Indeed James Woodfield has noted that 'nowhere was the schism in the nineteenth century between the theatre and literature so evident as in the staging of Shakespeare.'[14]

As publishing figures show, the number of editions – both of the complete works and of individual plays or poems – being printed, increased dramatically after 1812 (see Appendix One). The 939 separate editions of 'Shakespeare' (poems, single plays and complete works) published in the nineteenth century are nearly four times as many as the 254 published in the preceding hundred years, evidence that Shakespeare's work was affected by the changes in literary production as a whole and was becoming a textual phenomenon at this time.[15] It is, of course, important to note that there would have been a cross-pollination between the Shakespeare of the stage and of the page in

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[13] *The Times*, October 1864, as quoted in Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 6.

[14] James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition: 1881-1914*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 132.

[15] It should be noted that John Russell Stephens has shown that it can be dangerous to judge the popularity of a work solely on the number of editions published as some nineteenth-century publishers were not above altering the title page of a work to create a new edition and the impression of popularity. See John Russell Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright: British Theatre 1800-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 122.

the nineteenth century but, as this is a limited study, there is only room for a brief discussion of this topic.[16] Peter Holland has examined how numerous editions of Shakespeare published in the nineteenth century included drawings or photographs of stage versions of the plays. One edition carried 'the same role played by a number of different actors, so that there are three Juliets (the Misses Anderson, Lingard and Eames), three Hamlets (Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Wilson Barrett and Henry Irving) and two Romeos (Forbes Robertson and Clyffe),' meaning that readers would be able to compare various productions and perhaps view an evolution in staging techniques.[17] Holland further comments on the influence that theatrical productions would have had on the pictorial additions to editions of Shakespeare's plays and it should also be noted that there would have been a cross-pollination in terms of contemporary approaches to certain scenes and any stage-directions that were included in published play texts. Similarly, the famous actor Henry Irving (1838-1905) was involved in numerous printed editions of the plays (1877-96), and the work of the New Shakspere Society (1873-94) fed into the way that Shakespeare was presented on stage.[18] Increased interest in Shakespeare on stage would doubtless also have led to interest in Shakespeare on the page, and visa versa. For example, The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford, which was the precursor to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company, was conceived and initiated in the 1870s, and the publication figures for the time show that there was an increase in the publication of Shakespeare in the final three

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[16] See for example, the way in which staging of *The Taming of the Shrew* was influenced by contemporary literary critical ideas and editions in Jan McDonald, '*The Taming of the Shrew* at the Haymarket Theatre, 1844 and 1847', in *Nineteenth Century British Theatre*, ed. Kenneth Richards and Peter Thompson, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971).

[17] Peter Holland, 'Performing Shakespeare in Print: Narrative in Nineteenth-century Illustrated Shakespeares', in *Victorian Shakespeare: Theatre, Drama and Performance*, vol. 1, ed. Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole, 2 vols., (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 51.

[18] See, for example *Cymbeline: A Comedy in Five Acts. As Arranged for the Stage by Henry Irving and Presented at the Lyceum Theatre on Tuesday 22nd September 1896*, (London: Chiswick Press, 1896); *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth: A Historical Play. As Arranged for the Stage by Henry Irving and Presented at the Lyceum Theatre, 5th January 1892*, (London: Nassau Steam Press, 1892).

decades of the century.[19] A full performance history of Shakespeare's plays in the nineteenth century does not exist – a companion graph to Appendix One of this tesis would no doubt make for an interesting comparative study – and an in depth comparison of the reception of a play both theatrically and textually may perhaps be work for future scholarship.

It is important to note that the 'Shakespeare' that many Victorians would have witnessed within the theatre was, very often, not Shakespeare even by the loose definition afforded in this thesis.[20] The majority of plays that were performed in the nineteenth century were actually re-writings of Shakespeare by later authors such as Nahum Tate's (*c.*1652–1715) *King Lear* (1681) – in which Cordelia does not die at the climax – or Colley Cibber's (1671–1757) *Richard III* (1700) – which was heavily cut and contained more stage violence. The complications that arise from the double remove between a play that Shakespeare might have authored and that performed on the Victorian stage is one reason why this thesis concerns itself with the textual rather than theatrical use of Shakespeare's works. In addition, while there have been a number of works focusing on the staging of legitimate and non-legitimate Shakespearean productions in the nineteenth century, and a handful of studies on the editing and presentation of the plays as texts, there has been little attention paid to the critical reception of Shakespeare's work away from the theatre.[21] Much has been written about

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[19] See Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company*.
　　See Appendix One.

[20] See p. 13 below.

[21] There have been a number of important and accessible recent studies of the theatrical Shakespeare in the nineteenth century: see *Shakespeare and the Victorian Stage*, ed. Richard Foulkes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Richard Foulkes, 'Shakespeare, the Stage and Society from Samuel Phelps to Herbert Beerbohm Tree' (PhD by Published Work, University of Leicester, 1996); Laurie E. Osborne, 'The Rhetoric of Evidence: The Narration and Display of Viola and Olivia in the Nineteenth Century', in *Textual and Theatrical Shakespeare: Questions of Evidence*, ed. Edward Pechter, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996); Richard W. Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Richard W. Schoch, *Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Richard Foulkes, *'Our Endless Joy - Our Matchless Pride' The Victorian Shakespeare*, (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2004).

the Victorian theatre and of Shakespeare's role within it.[22] Yet, as has been noted, the textual Shakespeare was perhaps the most widely regarded manifestation of the Shakespeare phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, this thesis will focus on the textual rather than theatrical incarnation of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century. As will become clear in the final chapter, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* had a rich and interesting history in the second half of the nineteenth century. The fact that one of the few non-theatrical works of Shakespeare's was such a prominent way in which people interacted with Shakespeare means that a focus on the written text rather than Shakespeare's performed pieces will prove illuminating of Victorian experience.

Of course, ever since Shakespeare's works began to be written they engendered accompanying literature but the vast increase in the production and popularity of printed texts in the nineteenth century meant that criticism, editing and biography flourished as never before.[23] The British Library catalogue for the period reveals that over 1,000

'Spectacle, Austerity and New Dimensions: The Staging of Shakespeare from Victorian to Modern' in Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, 132-49; Part Three 'Shakespearean Production in the Nineteenth Century' of *Nineteenth Century British Theatre*, ed. Kenneth Richards and Peter Thompson, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971), 155-95.

[22] See George Rowell, *Theatre in the Age of Irving*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981); George Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914: A Survey*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Lynton Hudson, *The English Stage: 1850-1950*, (Westport: Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976); Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright*; *Nineteenth Century British Theatre*, ed. Richards and Thompson; Alfred Darbyshire, *The Art of the Victorian Stage: Notes and Recollections*, (London: Benjamin Blom, 1907); Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre*, (London: A&C Black, 1989); Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*; George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Richard Southern, *The Victorian Theatre: A Pictorial Survey*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970); *British Theatre in the 1890s: Essays on Drama and the Stage*, ed. Richard Foulkes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); E. J. Burton, 'Naturalism and Picture-Frame, 1850-1900', in *The British Theatre: Its Repertory and Practice 1100-1900 AD*, ed. E. J. Burton, (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1960); Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Allan Stuart Jackson, *The Standard Theatre of Victorian England*, (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993).
See also a number of the contributions to *Scenes from Provincial Stages: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Barker*, ed. Richard Foulkes, (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1994), which detail nineteenth-century theatrical practices outside London.
Memoirs of the period are also illuminating in terms of how audiences perceived their experiences in the theatre. See George Rowell, *Queen Victoria Goes to the Theatre*, (London: Paul Elek, 1978); and Sir John Gielgud and John Miller, *Acting Shakespeare*, (London: Pan Books, 1997), which contains numerous recollections of Shakespearean productions in the 1890s and early 1900s.

[23] Robert Sawyer cites a piece from 1664 by the Duchess of Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673) as the first piece of Shakespearean criticism. Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare: George Eliot, A. C Swinburne, Robert Browning, and Charles Dickens*, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 13.
T. H. Howard-Hill has made the case for considering Ralph Crane (*c*.1555-1632) – a professional scrivener who prepared the manuscripts that served as printer's copy for several of the plays in the 1623 First Folio – as

critical books about Shakespeare or his works were written between 1800-1900.[24] Added to this, a search of the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* reveals that there were more than 350 articles published in the century which had the name of Shakespeare in their title and thus, it must be assumed, many times this figure which mentioned Shakespeare in some more minor capacity.[25] While not all of this work was carried out by the aforementioned Shakespeare Society, or its successor the New Shakspere Society, it is clear that the exhortation to try and better understand and appreciate Shakespeare through scholarly activity was being followed. As this thesis will go on to show, there existed within this sphere of writing about Shakespeare a number of complex agendas and motives which reveal as much about the communities and individuals who produced these texts as they do about Shakespeare.

Despite what can already be seen to have been a period of significant change, the development of, and approach towards, Shakespeare in the nineteenth century has been largely neglected or simplified by modern scholars. Indeed, too often the nineteenth century is seen as a period when the critical response to Shakespeare changed, but did so progressively and evenly.[26] In 2001, Michael Taylor noted that

Shakespeare's earliest editor, in that he is believed to have made corrections and emendations to the texts on which he worked. See T. H. Howard-Hill, 'Shakespeare's Earliest Editor, Ralph Crane', *Shakespeare Survey,* 44 1991), and Eric Rasmussen, 'Crane, Ralph', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

It is similarly possible to view the prefatory poems appended to the First Folio (1623) as early form of biography in that they draw reader's attentions to Shakespeare the man and, especially in the case of Jonson's poem, relate the man and the works.

[24] *British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*, vol. 220 'Shakespeare (William) - Shee', Photolithographic edn. (London: The Trustees of The British Museum, 1964).

[25] See *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, ed. Houghton, Walter E., 5 vols., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

[26] A typical example of this comes in Antony Price's comments in the Casebook *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Price notes that 'by 1662, they play had lost much of its original meaning, and has continued to lose it, since each age is trapped by its own semantics: the "rational" in the eighteenth century, the "Ideal" in the nineteenth… and that only in the twentieth are we far enough away from Shakespeare to have to make a conscious (but enjoyable) effort to recover as much as possible of that original meaning." (*A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Casebook*, ed. Antony Price, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1983). Similarly, despite claims to 'be indicative of the range and vitality of Shakespearean criticism over 400 years, from the earliest sixteenth-century responses to the new playwright up to the end of the twentieth century,' Emma Smith's *Shakespeare's Tragedies, Shakespeare's Histories*, and *Shakespeare's Comedies* in the Blackwell Guides to Criticism range, dispense with the period 1600-1900 in a section at the beginning of each work which takes up a fraction (on average 1/8) of the overall

twentieth-century Shakespeareans owe a great debt to the critics of the nineteenth century, but in so doing he perpetuates the idea that '[a]ll of these endeavours were buoyed by the Victorian belief in progress, science, and evolution,' while, in his *History of Shakespearian Criticism* (1932), Augustus Ralli is 'struck by the whole-hearted tribute to Shakespeare's morality and religion,' that he finds in the final years of the nineteenth century.[27] Similarly Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (1991) portrays the 1800s as a time of scientific fact, satisfying morality and academic rigour. These surveys of nineteenth-century criticism and attitudes are often necessarily cursory: Taylor's is a survey from 1600-1990 for example. Yet such broad appraisals obscure the myriad individual responses that can be assumed to be present, as critics often impose their own meanings on their subjects.[28]

The idea that Shakespeare's works are interpreted differently by different people in societies and ages throughout history is something that has only received real prominence in the last twenty-five years.[29] Terrence Hawkes, in *That Shakespeherian*

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space given to twentieth-century criticism. See *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, *Shakespeare's Histories*, and *Shakespeare's Comedies*, ed. Emma Smith, Blackwell Guides to Criticism, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004).

[27] Michael Taylor, *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.
Augustus Ralli, *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*, vol. 2, 2 vols., (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 137.

[28] See 'Victorian Values', in Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 162-230.

[29] There were individual works which sought to re-examine the critical heritage of Shakespeare by examining the different interpretations of successive generations: as early as 1875 there was Adolphus Ward (1837-1924) and his *History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne*, followed by Thomas H. H. Caine (1853-1931) who, in 1883, noted that the study of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century could be divided between 'three schools of criticism,' these being 'the æsthetic criticism' of Coleridge and Lamb in the early years of the century; the 'matter-of-fact enquires' and 'rational criticism' of the Shakspeare Society from 1840 onward; and the 'scientific criticism' such as 'metrical tests' of the New Shakspere Society after 1870 (see Adolphus William Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne*, 1875, vol. 1, 3 vols., (London: Macmillan and Co., 1899), and Thomas Henry Hall Caine, 'Two Aspects of Shakspere's Art', *Contemporary Review,* 43 (June 1883), 883-4). In 1939 Robert Witbeck Babcock described the mutation of Shakespeare's reputation in discrete periods which were essentially: 1660-1730, Shakespeare criticised for ignoring the ancients; 1730-1765, Shakespeare applauded as a conscious and original artist; and 1766-1799, Shakespeare lauded as the greatest playwright. See Robert Witbeck Babcock, *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry 1766-1799: A Study in English Criticism of the Late Eighteenth Century*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1931). The following year saw Augustus Ralli's two volume *History of Shakespeare Criticism*,

Rag (1986) and later in *Meaning by Shakespeare* (1992), first explored the idea that writing about Shakespeare's works is a way for critics to pursue specific ideological agendas and, indeed, that all those who interpret Shakespeare create their own versions of a particular play or poem.[30] In 1989 Jonathan Bate labelled this idea the 'afterlife' of Shakespeare's works and, noting the lack of attention that had been paid to the period between the Renaissance and the twentieth century, highlighted how the particular preoccupations of writers between 1730 and 1830 could reconstitute what Shakespeare meant.[31] Bate's work was wide-ranging in terms of the critics he discussed, although there was a strong focus on William Hazlitt (1778-1830), and he paved the way for subsequent scholars to approach the reception of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* by concentrating on the biases of previous critics.[32]

Along with Hawkes and Bate, a number of works have shown the different ways in which Shakespeare's plays and poems have been interpreted in terms of different

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followed by a comprehensive six-volume survey of past criticism towards the end of the century (Vickers, Brian, *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*, 6 vols., (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974-81)). Such works, however, made no insightful claims that Shakespeare reception was influenced by other concerns of the period in which it was written. This changed with the advent of the Cultural Materialist movement in the 1980s.

[30] See also both volumes of *Alternative Shakespeares*, where the collected essays explore in various ways the theoretical assumptions and problems associated with the fact that Shakespeare has no inherent meaning, but that meaning is conferred on Shakespeare by readers and critics. *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis, New Accents, (London: Routledge, 1992), and *Alternative Shakespeares Volume 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes, New Accents, (London: Routledge, 1996).

[31] Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1730-1830*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[32] Other works, such as *Shakespeare Reproduced: the Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, (London: Routledge, 1987), and *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer, Accents on Shakespeare, (London: Routledge, 1999), collect essays on the diversity of interpretation of Shakespeare. All of these consider, through numerous varied and wide-ranging contributions, topics as diverse as Shakespeare in colonial discourse, twentieth-century nationalism, popular culture, sexual politics, education, and broadcast media. The essays reference phenomena as diverse as late twentieth-century politics, higher education, Disney films, Carling Black Label beer, and the football league.

There have also been a number of interesting monographs and edited works which investigate particular nuances of Shakespearean usage, either through specific media, or the use of individual plays. See *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance*, ed. Marianne Novy, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), and Julie Sanders, *Novel Shakespeares: Twentieth-Century Women Novelists and Appropriation*, (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2001) which both examine the presence of Shakespeare in fiction written by women. See Chantal J. Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) examines the use of Shakespeare's *Tempest* in postcoloniality, postpatriarchy and postmodernism. All of these texts consider the appropriation of Shakespeare and thus should be understood as distinct from the present project which, while investigating the way in which Shakespeare is used for a purpose other than that which is ostensibly being presented, is not considered to be appropriation in the strict theoretical sense.

ideological concerns. Prime among these is *The Shakespeare Myth* (1988) edited by Graham Holderness which investigates the presence of Shakespeare within contemporary culture, and informs the present thesis by conceptualising the 'ideological framework' that is 'Shakespeare.'[33] Accordingly this thesis will proceed from this point to consider Shakespeare's plays, poems, and presence as an author, to function together as a single phenomenon which will be referred to as 'Shakespeare.' While the present project will take into account the way in which the plays and poems are used by nineteenth-century writers as a pretext for pursuing ideological agendas it will become apparent that much emphasis is placed on a construction of Shakespeare the man. It is a common epistemological procedure among these writers to argue that Shakespeare's works should be seen in a certain light due to the perceived nature of their (constructed) author, or *vice versa*, and thus criticism of the plays and poems becomes inextricably entwined with biographical concepts of Shakespeare as a man.

A further method of Shakespearean historiography, following Hawkes and Bate, is to trace the way in which Shakespeare is reinterpreted by successive generations. As already noted, Gary Taylor takes this approach and he states that:

> Unsurprisingly, different periods have interpreted Shakespeare in different ways. But how did one prevailing interpretation give way to another? When and why did people stop answering one question and start asking another? Shakespeare provides the best specimen in English, one of the best specimens in any language, for investigating the mechanisms of cultural renown.[34]

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[33] *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Holderness, xiii.

[34] Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 6.

Due to its wide remit, Taylor's work is unavoidably exploratory and he is forced to overlook some complexities present in the criticism of any given period for the sake of clarity and unity. However, as Taylor has opened the door for such queries, this thesis challenges the idea that there were single prevailing interpretations of Shakespeare during the nineteenth century, and that this period saw one single question being answered before critics moved on to ask the next single question. Indeed, another work – *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth* edited by Jean Marsden – published in the same year as Taylor's, informs this thesis in its acknowledgement that different Shakespeares can co-exist at one time. It should be noted, however, that the recognition of this in Marsden's edition arises from the fact that different contributors find various uses and appropriations of Shakespeare at work in overlapping time periods rather than an explicit acceptance that such diversity can function simultaneously. Jonathan Bate has acknowledged that the longevity and cultural hegemony of Shakespeare's works is due in part to the fact that they can be interpreted in many different ways – what he terms their 'aspectuality' – but much less attention has been paid to how this aspectuality might relate to 'Shakespeare' as a phenomenon.[35] This thesis will show that the concept of Shakespeare as a whole, and the broad cultural concerns which can be addressed through writing about Shakespeare, can fragment into something far more aspectual; that is, can be interpreted in sometimes mutually exclusive ways by different writers. It will be seen that the figure of Shakespeare the man can be constructed by different biographers and writers in order to present and promote different ideological agendas; thus it is not just the literary aspects of the Shakespeare phenomenon which display aspectuality.

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[35] Jonathan Bate, *The Genius Of Shakespeare*, (London: Picador - Macmillan, 1997), 327. Bate argues that one of the reasons for Shakespeare's longevity and continued cultural dominance is to do with what he terms 'aspectuality of truth.' By this he means the different, and often opposite, interpretations which can be applied to Shakespeare's plays which may both hold the same degree of validity.

The fact that there has been such a marked interest in the afterlife of Shakespeare in recent decades makes the lacuna of specific studies into nineteenth-century Shakespeare criticism surprising.[36] Brian Vickers' comprehensive *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*, for example, ends in its sixth and final volume at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[37] Vickers' work is still useful in combining a wide survey of criticism in one place, and through his willingness to acknowledge 'the existence, side by side, of critical systems which are supposed to have annihilated or displaced earlier ones, but which did not. No major change in the way we think about literature, or anything else, is effected quickly.'[38] There are studies which do examine Shakespeare's place in Victorian literature, although many do so from the point of view of Shakespeare's influence on, and usage by, fiction writers, primarily novelists and poets.[39] Finally, Claire Pettitt's 'Shakespeare at the Great Exhibition of 1851' stands as a rare exploration of the role Shakespeare played as a figure of cultural authority in non-literary aspects of Victorian life.[40]

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[36] There are a number of works which examine the editing of editions of Shakespeare at this time; for the exploration of different editions of Shakespeare's work see Russell Jackson, 'Victorian Editors of *As You Like It* and the Purposes of Editing', in *The Theory and Practice of Text-Editing. Essays in Honour of James T. Boulton*, ed. Ian Small and Marcus Walsh, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), which discusses how nineteenth-century editions of Shakespeare could present moral agendas. Also Ann Thompson, 'Teena Rochfort Smith, Frederick Furnivall, and the New Shakspere Society's Four-Text Edition of *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 49, no. 2 (Summer 1998) which, as an aside to the tragic story of Teena Rochfort Smith, offers a glimpse of nineteenth-century editing practices. Robert Lindsey's 2001 PhD thesis investigates the ways in which various editions of Shakespeare's History plays were edited, constructed, and consequently received by the nineteenth-century reading public. See Robert Lindsey, '"I ha't from the *Play-bookes*": Historical Authenticity and the Victorian Reading of Shakespeare's History Plays' (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2001).

[37] Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*, vol. 6 1774-1801, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

[38] Ibid., 16.

[39] The best recent collection of such work is *Victorian Shakespeare: Literature and Culture*, vol. 2, ed. Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole, 2 vols., (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and in particular Juliet John's 'Dickens and Hamlet,' Philip Davis' 'Implicit and Explicit Reason: George Eliot and Shakespeare,' and '"The Clue of Shakespearian Power over Me": Ruskin, Shakespeare, and Influence,' by Francis O'Gorman within that volume. Other works which explore the idea of Shakespeare's influence on nineteenth-century writers of fiction include: Valerie Gager, *Shakespeare and Dickens: The Dynamics of Influence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality*, (London: Methuen, 1987); and the chapter 'Three Novelists: Dickens, Eliot, Hardy,' in Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, Arden Critical Companions, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004).

[40] Clare Pettitt, 'Shakespeare at the Great Exhibition of 1851', in *Victorian Shakespeare: Literature and Culture*, vol. 2, ed. Adrian Poole, 2 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Of the few works which do touch on nineteenth-century Shakespearean criticism, the majority tend to consider such activity as a side-issue to other concerns: they are part of a wider survey, or are investigations of particular plays, individuals, or events. Adrian Poole's *Shakespeare and the Victorians* serves as an excellent overview of the period and covers theatre, literature, the visual arts, and touches briefly on the criticism of Edward Dowden (1843–1913) as an epilogue. In *The Modernist Shakespeare* Hugh Grady provides an overview of nineteenth-century critical approaches to Shakespeare. Sketching 'a picture of the status of Shakespeare in Victorian bourgeois society,' Grady acknowledges that nineteenth-century Shakespeare criticism 'is much less unitary and more complex than this simplified received account's description. Co-existing in the late nineteenth century were competing – often passionately so – critics and critical discourses.'[41] Grady's main concern, however, is the methodology with which critics approached Shakespeare (in terms of the amateur or professionalised status of the critics), and how this impacted on the eventual way in which Shakespeare was fashioned into a 'Modernist Shakespeare' between 1930 and 1970. Regarding the people who wrote Shakespeare criticism in the nineteenth century, Dewey Ganzel's *Fortune & Men's Eyes: The Career of John Payne Collier*, Damian McElrath's *Richard Simpson, 1820-1876: a Study in XIXth Century English Liberal Catholicism*, and William Benzie's *Dr F. J. Furnivall: A Victorian Scholar Adventurer* are insightful portrayals of the workings and environments of the Shakespeare Society and New Shakspere Society. All of these studies however, are primarily concerned with the biography of their main subjects.

Shakespeare and the Politics of Culture in Late Victorian England by Linda Rozmovitz is an examination of nineteenth-century responses to Shakespeare but is

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[41] Hugh Grady, *The Modernist Shakespeare*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 34, 36.

confined to considering *The Merchant of Venice*.[42] Robert Sawyer, in *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare*, focuses on the mid-Victorian period (1850-80), and examines Shakespeare's appropriation in the work of two novelists, a poet, and a critic.[43] A chapter on Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) does look at Shakespeare in nineteenth-century literary criticism and sees a double-voiced rhetoric being used by Swinburne to champion homosexuality through his writing about the Hal-Falstaff relationship in *1 Henry IV*. It is a rhetoric which, this thesis will argue in Chapter Three, is not present in the same straightforward way in nineteenth-century critical writing on *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Augustus Ralli's work, mentioned above, considers the critical response to Shakespeare's works during the period 1598-1925 in both England and Germany.[44] By dealing with critics in turn, Ralli summarises their opinion and contribution to the field. Similarly, *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism* by Arthur M. Eastman deals with the reception of Shakespeare from 1600-1950 but acknowledges that '[i]n sketching the history of the criticism… we deal of necessity with the principal figures – Jonson and Johnson, Dryden and Morgann, Goethe, A. W. Schlegel, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Pater, Bradley, G. Wilson Knight, and a few others.'[45] As Eastman deals with a broad survey it is perhaps inevitable that he sees Shakespearean criticism in terms of a development over time. Comparing the tradition of Shakespearean criticism to a journey through a gallery, Eastman comments that '[o]ur corridors will be those of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, and modern times, the corridors gaining in length as they approach the here and now.'[46]

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[42] Linda Rozmovits, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Culture in Late Victorian England*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[43] Sawyer focuses on George Eliot (1819–80), A. C. Swinburne, Robert Browning (1812–89), and Charles Dickens (1812–70).

[44] See Ralli, *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*, vols., 1 & 2.

[45] A. M. Eastman, *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1968), xix.

[46] Ibid., xxiii.

This image conveys Eastman's belief in a continuous thread of Shakespeare criticism and highlights the privileging of material as it approaches his own period.

A study of the Victorian critical reception of Shakespeare which stands out on its own is Aron Stavisky's *Shakespeare and the Victorians*; this is the only substantive, pre-twenty-first-century, exploration of Victorian Shakespeare criticism and investigates Edward Dowden, A. C. Swinburne and A. C. Bradley (1851–1935). Stavisky notes that '[n]o history of Victorian criticism of Shakespeare has yet been written, doubtless under the assumption that a cultural vacuum exists between Coleridge and the twentieth century,' and he aims to redress this lacuna by chronicling such criticism and assessing how it affected the scholarship of his own time.[47] However, rather than analysing what these Victorian writers were achieving in their own period, Stavisky views them as precursors to the work that was being done by his peers, noting that 'the importance of modern criticism rests in having united the psychological and imaginative insight of the romantics with the historical perspective of Malone and the Victorians.'[48]

The value of looking at Victorian approaches to the criticism of Shakespeare rests on the fact that the period witnessed such significant changes in the fields of publishing and scholarship; activity in these spheres can thus reveal much about the nineteenth century itself. In 2004 Richard Foulkes noted that if 'the exploration of the response to Shakespeare in a particular year, decade or whatever may illuminate that year or decade as much as the plays actually written then… we expand our knowledge of the Victorians through their reinvention(s) of Shakespeare.'[49] While Foulkes' study is solely concerned with the theatrical Shakespeare, his willingness to appreciate the possibility of a plurality of approaches, and his acknowledgement that an examination

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[47] Aron Y. Stavisky, *Shakespeare and the Victorians: Roots of Modern Criticism*, (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), vii.

[48] Ibid., 122.

[49] Foulkes, *'Our Endless Joy - Our Matchless Pride' The Victorian Shakespeare*, 2.

of them may illuminate our understanding of those doing the 'reinventing,' provides a

basis from which the present thesis will proceed. By examining nineteenth-century

writing on Shakespeare this thesis will show that certain arguments and agendas were

being presented and promoted through the medium of Shakespeare. It will be seen that

many writers made use of discourse on Shakespeare as an arena within which to

rehearse arguments which are actually deeply concerned with other ideas. More

specifically, the work of numerous scholars has identified certain recurring issues about

identity which feature in nineteenth-century intellectual discourse, such as the moral

attitude of the populace, and the status of the nation both in terms of its own identity

and its role on the global stage.[50] It is not the claim of this thesis that the authors were

necessarily the sole agents in initiating or originating the specific agendas being

promoted – indeed it would be extremely difficult to make any such claims about

authorial intention.[51] Rather, it is suggested that the repetition of certain rhetorical

devices, and clear focuses of attention, points to various topics being areas of concern

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[50] For nationalism being a concern in the nineteenth century see R. A. Foakes, 'Coleridge, Napoleon, and Nationalism', in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991); *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo, (London: Duke University Press, 1995); Paul Rich, 'The Quest for Englishness', in *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. Gordon Marsden, (London: Longman, 1998); Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Sam Smiles, 'Albion's Legacy - Myth, History and "the Matter of Britain"', in *Cultural Identities and the Aesthetics of Britishness*, ed. Dana Arnold, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
For the prevalence of anxieties concerning moralism in this period see *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (London: University of California Press, 1987); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: the Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Collini, *Public Moralists*, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society: from Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*, Choice in Welfare, (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1995); Adrian Jarvis, *Samuel Smiles and the Construction of Victorian Values*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997); and Lauren M. E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[51] There are exceptions; Terence Hawkes uses alterations that were made to papers delivered by Sir Walter Raleigh (1861–1922) pre- and post 4 July 1918 (which marked celebrations for America joining the First World War) to suggest that Raleigh was pursuing a specifically anti-German agenda. See Terence Hawkes, *That Shakespeherian Rag: Essays on a Critical Process*, (London: Methuen, 1986), Chapter 3 'Swisser Swatter: Making a Man of English Letters,' 51-72.

for the intellectual elite of the period.[52] The ideas and arguments that are being examined – labelled as moralism and nationalism – have been acknowledged as important concerns in the nineteenth century and this is supported by their pervading presence within a discourse that would ostensibly appear to be about Shakespeare. What is revealed is that these issues are made up of many different and complicated facets, and they are better understood as dialogues which reflect anxiety and uncertainty rather than hegemonic standards. By using Shakespeare as the locus through which to approach moralism and nationalism, this thesis will highlight the aspectuality of Shakespeare as well as the diversity of opinion and complexity of approach within what are often understood as unitary and coherent movements.

It has already been shown that nineteenth-century critical writing about Shakespeare has been largely neglected or oversimplified and this is made even more surprising when one considers the recent re-evaluation of nineteenth century approaches to literature as a whole. With regard to the later nineteenth century, recent research has tended to approach histories of literary criticism, and the rise of English studies, with a view to challenging simplified history. Chris Baldick, for example, in *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, refutes what he terms the 'tidy' method of literary history by noting the various degrees of self-consciousness that are evident in different critics and at different times.[53] The exact causes for the shift in the social organisation of knowledge have been subject to numerous accounts, not all of which agree, but it is important to note – as was mentioned on pp. 3-5 above – that changes occurred in the second half of the nineteenth-century which add to the overall picture of

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[52] For more on the idea of literature and its active role in helping to change the attitudes of readers see Andrew Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction: The Cultural Context and Ideological Content of the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1989).

[53] That said, Baldick proceeds to be 'necessarily selective and partial, concentrating on major figures and developments, and seeking to follow a particular "line" in the development of criticism,' Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 16.

an unstable, nuanced society and a complex intellectual environment.[54] Rather than take as its focus one particular person or specific group of critics, this thesis will instead concentrate on the idea that there was an ongoing dialogue between certain individuals in the nineteenth century. So while individuals will be referenced to highlight different arguments and opinions, it is important to realise that there was a community of scholarship within which the discourse of Shakespearean criticism was taking place.

The Shakespeare Society, mentioned earlier, may serve as an appropriate example here.[55] Dewey Ganzel has described this organisation as being 'the first co-operative venture in a study which had long been characterised by jealous men working alone.'[56] However, despite this apparent move toward co-operation, these men were still undoubtedly jealous and suspicious of each other. Between the years of 1853 and 1857 Collier, Knight, Dyce, Halliwell and Samuel Weller Singer (1783-1858) were responsible for seven editions of the complete works and, despite the common bond of

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[54] See *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Daunton, (Oxford: The British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2005), John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument*, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953), J. W. Saunders, *The Profession of English Letters*, (London: Routledge, 1964), W. J. Reader, *Professional Men: the Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth Century England*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, and Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and Collini, *Public Moralists*. Among histories of English literary criticism which take a social or Marxist stance are Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness*, New Accents, (London: Routledge, 1989), and *Re-Reading English*, ed. Peter Widdowson, New Accents, (London: Methuen, 1982). See also Terry Eagleton's literary history which portrays the rise of English studies and, in particular its location within academia, as a utilitarian process, in which Literature is used to pacify the political protestations of an oppressed working-class. (Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), especially Chapter 1). However, works like Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, Josephine Guy, 'Specialisation and Social Utility: Disciplining English Studies', in *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Daunton, (Oxford: The British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2005), Guy and Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies*, and David Amigoni, *Victorian Biography: Intellectuals and the Ordering of Discourse*, (London: Harvester Weatsheaf, 1993) view the growth of literary criticism as resulting from intellectual factors (such as shifting ideas about professionalism, and changing aesthetic ideas) and serve to problematise the histories mapped out by scholars like Eagleton. This idea is explored in more depth by Carol Atherton, 'Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002' (PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2003).

[55] See Harrison Ross Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship in Great Britain and the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), 98-203.

[56] Dewey Ganzel, *Fortune & Men's Eyes: The Career of John Payne Collier*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 71.

their uncommon pursuits, there existed between them a bitter rivalry.[57] The Collier
scandal highlights the infighting and acrimony that existed in these circles in the middle
of the nineteenth century and also serves as an example of the intellectual shift which
preceded the move towards more professional scholarly research and institutionally-
conferred authority. In 1849 Collier had purchased a copy of the 1632 Second Folio and
discovered that it had thousands of handwritten emendations in the margin. Collier
believed that the handwriting was contemporaneous with Shakespeare – indeed he
believed that the folio had belonged to a member of Shakespeare's company – and, as
such, the emendations bore an authority that mere conjecture could never have. Collier
used the 'corrections' as a basis for a new edition of Shakespeare's works; *Notes and
Emendations* was published in 1853. It sold very well and it also predictably drew the
anger of Collier's contemporaries; Singer, for example, labelled it 'Pseudo-
Shakespeare.'[58] Eventually the other prominent members of the Shakespeare Society
brought out their own editions (many of them silently including corrections from the
Perkins Folio), and a cycle of publishing, criticism and retaliation began that would last
for many years to come, and lead to the disintegration of the Society.

In May 1859, the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum requested
the loan of Collier's folio in order to attempt to authenticate the marginal notes and, by
the 2nd of July, a letter to *The Times* declared that it was a modern forgery. The Museum
announced that under the textual emendations were visible pencil marks 'in a clear
modern hand, while over this the ink corrector writes in the antique and smaller

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[57] Ganzel and Benzie note the infighting and acrimony that characterised the dealings of the majority of nineteenth-century men of letters.

[58] John Payne Collier, *The Works of William Shakespeare. The Text formed from an entirely new collation of the old editions: with the various readings, notes, a life of the poet, and history of the early English Stage, by J. P. Collier (Notes and emendations to the text of Shakespeare's plays, from early manuscript corrections in a copy of the folio, 1632, in the possession of J. P. Collier… [sic] Forming a supplemental volume)*, 9 vols., (London: Whittaker & Co., 1844).
Weller Singer Samuel, *The Text of Shakespeare Vindicated from the Interpolations and Corruptions Advocated by John Paybe Collier, Esq. in His Notes and Emendations*, (1853), xiii-xiv, as quoted in Ganzel, *Fortune & Men's Eyes: The Career of John Payne Collier*, 163.

character.'[59] This implied that a forger had written various notes throughout the Folio and then written over them in seventeenth-century handwriting. The Museum did not explicitly accuse Collier of being the forger but the implication was clear. Gary Taylor argues that the undermining of Collier lead partly to the undermining of the whole rank of amateur editors who had been the experts on Shakespeare for the greater part of the nineteenth century and it was following this period that the idea of being a professional scholar began to be defined by affiliation to an institution.[60] Certainly, the furore surrounding the Collier case raised important issues regarding the way in which works were edited, the trust placed in the people who did such work, and the question of authenticity. What the Collier affair also shows is that, although they shared a purpose, the cooperation between those who were writing about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century was cooperation in terms of sharing research and partaking in a debate rather than commonalty of purpose or result.

Phillipa Levine has noted the community aspect of scholarly research at this time; her investigation into historical dialogues suggests a certain homogeneity in thought and approach.[61] As far as critical writing on Shakespeare is concerned, this thesis will show that there was a definite dialogue between numerous different writers and that this took the form of a debate about both methods and conclusions which in turn lead to a diversity of approach towards, and complexity of findings about, Shakespeare. Those producing and consuiming the mateial examined by this thesis were a community, yet to think of this community as consisting of homogenous individuals would be to oversimplify the climate of the time; a far more nuanced understanding is

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[59] From N. E. S. A. Hamilton's letter to *The Times* 2 July 1859 as quoted in Ganzel, *Fortune & Men's Eyes: The Career of John Payne Collier*, 236.

[60] Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 187.

[61] See Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886*, 7.

required. As R. K. Webb pointedly notes, '[o]ne flat generalisation can be made: the reading public was never homogenous.'[62] What is revealed is that the people who were part of the ongoing debate about Shakespeare were individuals who were separated by the type of writing they were producing, where they were producing it, and their socio-economic backgrounds. However, it will also be seen that there was a commonality of intellectual ability (literacy and education) and purpose with regard to Shakespeare.

The first thing that is noticeable in relation to the debate about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century is the disparate nature of its location and producers. Within this debate, different formats, such as encyclopaedias or biographies, which might not specifically be considered as literary criticism, would all play a role. Thus it is perhaps more helpful to think of these writings under the umbrella heading of 'literary pursuits,' rather than the more restrictive term 'literary criticism,' in that they include criticism, biographies, lectures, encyclopaedia entries, sermons, and editions of poetry. This coining of a new label should not, however, be understood as simply born out of convenience, for the areas it covers are all interdependently related. The three spheres of editing, criticism and biography are inextricably linked and many editors will often find themselves straying into the role of critic, or at least having to make value judgements concerning the text with which they are working. This was certainly the case in the nineteenth century where editorial decisions regarding Shakespeare's plays can be seen to have been influenced by critical and biographical ideas. Russell Jackson has suggested that certain Victorian editors based their work on moral principles, which were linked to the perception of Shakespeare as a man who progressed through his life by hard-work and moral scrupulousness.[63] In this way the Victorian biographies of

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[62] R. K. Webb, 'The Victorian Reading Public', in *A Guide to English Literature*, vol. 6 'From Dickens to Hardy', ed. Boris Ford, (London: Cassell, 1963), 205.

[63] See Jackson, 'Victorian Editors of *As You Like It* and the Purposes of Editing'.

Shakespeare influenced the Victorian editors of – and therefore editions of – his works. Indeed, an edition of the plays was rarely published without some form of biographical study, and many traded on this feature; Charles Knight's 1845 edition of the illustrated works, for example, conspicuously proclaimed that it included 'Facts connected with the life and writings of William Shakspere abridged from "William Shakspere, a biography," by the author.'[64]

The professionalisation and specialisation that was taking place in the nineteenth century meant that the different areas of criticism, editing and biography all evolved in outlook and increased in output.[65] Indeed, perhaps one of the reasons why many literary histories present such broad and general narratives of criticism in the nineteenth century is that there was such an enormous wealth of critical writing being produced, and critical writing and writing about criticism far overshadowed any fictional work.[66] Russell Jackson places Victorian editors of Shakespeare plays 'at the beginning of a "popular" tradition of editing practices,' and Margreta de Grazia points out that the editing of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century grew out of a tradition of authenticity that began in the eighteenth century.[67] Furthermore, Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts have described Henrietta Bowdler (1754-1830) as the first woman to edit Shakespeare, and the production of *Tales From Shakespeare* (1807) by Mary Lamb (1764-1847),

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[64] *The Works of William Shakspere*, ed. Knight.

[65] For more on this see Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism: Authority, Knowledge, and Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), and Amigoni, *Victorian Biography: Intellectuals and the Ordering of Discourse*.

[66] In 1896, William Knight describes criticism as 'multitudinous' and as having overtaken in quantity the production of new books published. Knight, 'Criticism as Theft', 258.
Similarly, Ian Small describes the late nineteenth-century 'as a time peculiarly devoted to the writing of criticism and to writing about criticism.' See Small, *Conditions for Criticism: Authority, Knowledge, and Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century*, 3.
John Gross notes that the reasons for this development can not be put down to mere indolence for, while 'undoubtedly it was easier to review a book than to write one… whether it was easier to review hundreds of books, which is what actually happened, was quite another question.' Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800*, 75.

[67] Jackson, 'Victorian Editors of *As You Like It* and the Purposes of Editing', 142.
Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim. The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5.

sister of the famous Victorian critic Charles Lamb (1775-1834), can be considered as an editorial procedure in its own right.[68] As Julia Briggs has stated, '[t]here was no way in which the Lambs could have rewritten Shakespeare's play scripts without narrowing the range of possible meanings and re-interpreting character and plot according to the outlook of their own time rather than according to Shakespeare's.'[69] Attitudes towards literary pursuits were changing and, by focusing on how these pursuits were practised in relation to a single literary phenomenon, this thesis will highlight the sophistication present in the period as well as supporting current explorations of Victorian critical practices and retrieving the largely neglected nineteenth-century engagement with Shakespeare.

The overall approach to Shakespeare, combining critical, editorial and biographical process was used to construct a particular Shakespeare and promote certain agendas through presenting this Shakespeare to the reading public. Thus the use of 'literary pursuits' in this thesis seeks to emphasise the ongoing dialogue among different writers where the concept of Shakespeare was being contested, redefined, and used to rehearse and promote various agendas. This dialogue concerning Shakespeare in the nineteenth century was lent further diversity because it combined different aspects of what we might today call literary scholarship, and because it was also taking place in a variety of different locations. Considered within this thesis are essays, anthologies, periodical articles (from publications with varying frequency such as weekly, fortnightly, monthly and quarterly), monographs, supplementary texts (introductions to works, biographical ephemera, and so on), collected works, reference works and public speeches. While it is important to note that the focus or location of a particular piece of

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[68] *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900. An Anthology of Criticism*, ed. Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 47.
See Stanley Wells, 'Tales From Shakespeare', in *British Academy Shakespeare Lectures 1980-89*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[69] Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *Tales From Shakespeare*, ed. Julia Briggs (London: Everyman, 1807).

writing may have affected its tone or reception, on the whole there is a recognisable coherence and an overlap in viewpoint among the literary pursuits that will be examined.[70]

Further diversity was brought to the community of Shakespeare writers and their ongoing dialogue by the variety of individuals who made up that group. It has already been seen that the nature, producers and location of literary criticism shifted during the nineteenth century and, accordingly, the writing examined by this thesis appeared in a wide variety of media and was written by individuals with varied backgrounds (from professors, journalists, Men of Letters, and priests, to the Governor of Bermuda). Alfred Ainger (1837-1904), for example, who lectured and published articles about Shakespeare, was a particularly prominent figure in Victorian cultural life; he was a close associate of a number of major literary figures such as Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92) and Charles Dickens, contributed to many important literary undertakings, including the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *English Men of Letters* series, and was Canon of Bristol as well as being personal Chaplain to Queen Victoria (1819-1901) from 1895 to 1901.[71] Yet it was not only prominent figures in Victorian life who were part of the dialogue; Andrew Blake, for example investigates the different spheres of society who were producing fiction in the nineteenth century and finds that the middle-classes were extremely active at this time.[72] In terms of class distinction, the demarcation between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie was not as

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[70] See, for example, Laurel Brake's analysis of Walter Pater's (1839–94) essays that went on to become *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* and how their initial place of publication affected their tone and content. Laurel Brake, 'The "wicked *Westminster*," the *Fortnightly*, and Walter Pater's *Renaissance*', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 289-305.

[71] See Edith Sichel and Nilanjana Banerji, *Ainger, Alfred (1837–1904)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30352, 26 July 2006).

[72] See Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*.

simple as it might seem.[73] Participation in both politics and intellectual activity was increasing due to the successive legislation in the second half of the nineteenth century which extended the franchise and increased education.[74] Thus the individuals who would have accessed this literature could be seen as being diverse in that there would have been middle-class *nouveau riche* as well landed gentry. In the same way that this thesis has highlighted the diversity of those who were producing these works, so the readers of Shakespearean literary pursuits would have encompassed many sections of society. This is in keeping with what has been seen about the uncertain and shifting nature of society and its organisation of knowledge and the professionalisation of literary pursuits. Indeed, even among those writers who are part of the apparatus of a university, many of the scholars whose criticism will be looked at in this thesis were not part of an English Department – they were professors of other subjects within the humanities. It is clear that there was an increasing desire for literary criticism to appear more professional as the century wore on however, a good example being the changes that Gerald Massey (1828-1907) – who will figure prominently in Chapter Three – made for the 1888 reprint of his 1866 *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*; there are many more footnotes and citations included in what is essentially the same text and this serves to give the work a more scholarly appearance. This increasing

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[73] See K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Indeed, Hoppen notes how it is often difficult even to distinguish who belonged to which class, particularly among those with professions (Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 46).
See also later in this thesis when the exact definitions of middle-class and upper-class are confused (pp. 164-5 below).

[74] The 1832 Reform Act extended the franchise to those who did not own landed property thus increasing the voting public from 478,000 to 813,000 (although this was still only about four men in every one-hundred). In 1867 a second Reform Act extended the franchise to most urban working men and the third Reform Act in 1884 ensured suffrage for most adult males. The 1872 Ballot Act ensured that elections became less corrupt due to the introduction of the secret ballot.
The 1870 Education Act, while making schooling neither free nor compulsory, did see the Government begin to be involved in the nation's education. The 1876 Education Act meant that many more children were required to attend school, and a third Education Act in 1881 made school attendance compulsory until the age of ten years. The 1891 Fee Grant Act effectively made elementary education free of charge.
As well as the dramatic fall in newspapers due to the 1855 abolition of stamp duties on newspapers and the 1861 repeal of paper duties.

professionalisation would also have lead to disagreement along ideological grounds between those who were the old guard of artistic criticism (the so-called Sages and Men of Letters) and the new, professional, writers of literary pursuits.

It might seem therefore that there is no real sense of community present within the field of Shakespearean literary pursuits, but there are two important factors which ensured the commonality of those partaking in this dialogue: a shared intellectual ability; and a common interest in Shakespeare (or a mutual curiosity about the encyclopaedias or anthologies in which Shakespeare was not the sole focus). A full consideration of literacy in the nineteenth century would engender a study in itself and will not be extensively covered here.[75] Indeed an actual quantitative analysis of literacy levels in the nineteenth century is difficult to come by and even more difficulty is found in determining what people chose to read and how it affected their opinions.[76] However, as has already been noted (see p. 3 above), the ability to read increased dramatically during the period under discussion. Despite this, not all literature would have been accessible to the whole of the population. It becomes clear that the producers of literature in the nineteenth-century were often the same people who consumed that literature. Both Andrew Blake and Kelly J. Mays explore the relationship between nineteenth-century readers and writers, and note the sense of community among the two groups.[77] Andrew Blake also makes the point about how those who wrote in the nineteenth-century were often that same writing's main readers; he cites the example of George Eliot and Charles Darwin (1809-82) reading each other's work while also

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[75] For explorations of literacy, and its consequences, in the period see W. B. Stephens, *Education, Literacy and Society, 1830-70: the Geography of Diversity in Provincial England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*; and David F. Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy*, (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[76] R. K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848: Literacy and Social Tension*, (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971); and Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 49.

[77] See Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*,Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals'.

reading, and contributing to, the wider periodical press.[78] Blake goes on to note that '[a] large number of these [periodicals] were intended for the middle and upper classes: books were also, usually, addressed to this audience. This is one of the few definitions of readership which can be offered.'[79] The producers of these works then, although they have shown to be diverse in terms of occupation and social class, would have been part of a minority of the literate public. While primarily concerned with fiction rather than non-fiction, Darko Suvin, in 'The Social Addressees of Victorian Fiction: A Preliminary Enquiry,' attempts to quantify the proportion of the population who would have been able to engage with new fiction published in book form.[80] Those who had an income of more than one hundred pounds a year would have constituted, according to Suvin, 'from one twelfth to one eighth of the population of Britain as a whole in the second half of the nineteenth century, and expanded in absolute numbers from one to two million income earners and their families.'[81] Alvar Ellegård looks at the readership of the periodical press which would have included both fiction and non-fiction articles and reaches a similar conclusion to Suvin: that the majority of the periodicals were primarily aimed at particular religious or political sections of the upper and middle classes.[82] Thus it seems reasonable to assume that the readership of the literary pursuits being investigated in this thesis was similar or at least comparable to the readership of new fiction and the periodical press at this time – indeed a number of the articles that will be considered in later chapters appeared in the periodical press, as did reviews of other works such as the *Dictionary of National Biography*. It would appear that the main

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[78] See Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, 60-61.

[79] Ibid., 63.

[80] See Darko Suvin, 'The Social Addressees of Victorian Fiction: A Preliminary Enquiry', *Literature and History,* vol. 8:1 (Spring 1982), 27.

[81] Ibid. 27.

[82] See Alvar Ellegård, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitets Årsskrift, 1957).

producers and consumers of this material were the middle and upper classes. Richard Altick and others have shown the social background of the producers of literature in nineteenth-century Britain to be overwhelmingly middle or upper class, while Blake also notes the sheer number of those who wrote printed literature and how it 'was an activity shared among a very wide cross-section of the upper and middle classes.'[83]

Social class is important here and the fact that the majority of those writing and reading this material were part of the educated classes means that it was a discernable minority who would have engaged with many of the texts in this thesis. Manual workers and their dependants constituted more than three-quarters of the British population for almost the entire period under consideration.[84] The point to note here is that the ability to read and write literary pursuits would place the producers of the literature considered within this thesis in a minority or, for the purposes of this project, an 'educated elite.' It has been shown that the members of the particular community who were dialoguing about Shakespeare were not homogenous in terms of class (they would have included the upper-classes as well as the bourgeoisie), occupation or worldview. However, the individuals that will be focused upon in the following chapters are united by the fact that they were educated enough to partake in the dialogue and thus form part of this community of readers and writers. An almost universal trait amongst these writers is to include untranslated foreign quotations (most frequently French or Greek, but also Latin and German) which suggest that the intended audience was an educated one. Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859), for example, in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, quotes in Latin, Greek, and French, and mentions Boileau, Tasso, and Ariosto without explaining who they are. Despite Samuel Schoenbaum's comment that

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[83] See Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, 63-4 and 63 n. 2.
    Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, 64.

[84] Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886*, 56-90.

the *Britannica* was for a general readership, it would appear that the assumed audience

of the encyclopaedia was a well-educated one.[85]

The second unifying aspect of the community that produced these literary

pursuits was that they shared a common interest in Shakespeare. These literary pursuits

would be read by people who either wished to be informed about Shakespeare or who

wanted to read about, and engage in, critical debates about Shakespeare; thus they were

specifically consulted to provide information and seen as sources of authority. This

common interest suggests that this community held a certain level of knowledge or

education; even though some of these writings are intended as works of reference, they

seem to assume that their readership already has significant knowledge of the events

they discuss. Thomas Baynes (1823–87), in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia

Britannica*, mentions 'the story of the Bidford challenge exploit,' and 'the well-known

doggerel lines' about Sir Thomas Lucy (*c.*1532-1600).[86] These refer to apocryphal

incidents in Shakespeare's life and the fact that Baynes does not elaborate further

indicates that he is assuming a certain amount of knowledge from his readers. Most of

this material would only be read by a certain section of Victorian society; poverty and

illiteracy would have placed much of this writing beyond many and, of those who could

read, not all would choose to engage with critical texts about Shakespeare.[87] R. K.

Webb notes that public circulating libraries (and the fees they charged would have

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[85] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 231. Schoenbaum describes encyclopaedias of the period as 'readily accessible' and 'read by non-specialists.'

[86] Thomas Spencer Baynes, 'Shakespeare', in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, vol. 21 (Rot-Sia), 9th edn., ed. Thomas S. Baynes, (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1886), 753. Baynes was a former journalist who had been elected as Professor of Logic, Metaphysics, and English literature at St. Andrews University in 1864.

[87] It is worth noting here that, although general figures show that literacy increased in this period, the definition of literacy itself can be contested. There are those for whom the literate comprise those who can sign their own name (R. S. Schofield, 'The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England', in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 324), and those who regard literacy as requiring an individual to be able to read and write (Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, (51), Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: Further Explored*, 1965, (London: Routledge, 2000), 229). There is further discussion of this in Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England*, xiii-xxiii. For the purposes of engaging with Shakespeare's printed works it was, of course, necessary to be able to read to a relatively high standard.

excluded less wealthy readers) found that the majority of their readers were overwhelmingly interested in fiction over non-fiction.[88] The professionalisation, and shift in social organisation, of knowledge has already been mentioned (see pp. 3-4 above) and this increasing specialisation of expertise is a concomitant phenomenon. R. K. Webb in 'The Victorian Reading Public' notes that

> By mid-century there was a remarkable multiplication of specialist journals. And all this had its effect on reading habits. The specialist found that time available for reading declined, while what reading he did had increasingly to be devoted to his speciality. This is true of the statesman, the engineer, the physician, the scholar, and the businessman.[89]

While the main purpose of this study is to highlight the complexity of writing about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century and add to an under-researched field of scholarship, some possible explanations for why Shakespeare was the cultural phenomenon that was being used will be explored. Although it would be impossible to recreate precisely the horizon of expectation that any nineteenth-century reader would have brought to their engagement with these works, this thesis assumes that there is a commonality to these readers in that they were part of an educated reading elite, with values and knowledge in common which could be taken for granted by the authors who addressed them.

The idea that many of these literary pursuits involve an intellectual community writing for the rest of that community is reinforced by the fact that writers frequently engage with, or borrow, each other's findings. For example: Frederick Gard Fleay

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[88] Webb, 'The Victorian Reading Public', 207-8.

[89] Ibid., 209.

(1831–1909) argues with De Quincey in *The Land of Shakespeare*; Baynes cites

Dowden, A. C. Swinburne, and Fleay in his *Britannica* article; and Sidney Lee (1859–

1926) uses John Hales' (1584–1656) research about Shakespeare travelling to London

in the *DNB*.[90] Also the *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* by James Orchard Halliwell-

Phillipps was only published privately by Halliwell-Phillipps himself in order to give to

other Shakespeare scholars and receive feedback. This sense of a specialised community

can be seen in the activities of the periodicals of the time:

> When… the Dictionary of National Biography was undertaken, the assistance of
> the *Athenæum* was sought and given. The lists of the names whom it was proposed
> to include were published regularly in the journal, and readers were asked to
> suggest additions, correct errors, etc.[91]

However, while it would be wrong to assume that these works were merely exercises in

literary mutual appreciation, the fact that these debates were occurring suggests that the

ideas they expressed held a certain currency, even if only amongst the educated

community who were reading and writing these works. Moreover, it was certainly the

aim of many of these writers to shape the opinions of their time; Walter E. Houghton

draws attention to quotes by two prominent nineteenth-century periodical editors:

> With earnest solemnity John Morley spoke of the contributors to the *Fortnightly* as
> being entrusted with nothing less than the 'momentous task of forming national
> opinion.' With the *Edinburgh* in mind, Bagehot reiterated the sense of mission:

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[90] F. G. Fleay, *The Land of Shakespeare*, (London: J. S. Virtue & Co. Limited, 1890)

[91] 'The Athenæum Centenary,' *Nation and Athenæum*, Jan. 14, 1928, 559 quoted in Leslie A. Marchand, *The Athenæum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 60.

'The modern man must be told what to think – shortly, no doubt, but he *must* be

told it.'[92]

Furthermore, these writers certainly believed that their dialogue was representative of

the general population; Baynes writes that newspaper articles form an expression of

national feeling, of 'popular expression,' while De Quincey believes that critical

writings diffuse ideas throughout the country.[93] William A. Knight takes this even

further and, in 'Criticism as a Trade' written in 1889, he notes that '[t]he service which

periodical literature renders to society is so great that there is little fear of it ever being

forgotten.'[94] Clearly such claims are hard to substantiate, and, given nineteenth-century

standards of literacy, unlikely to have been relevant to all spheres of society; they will

not therefore be the focus of the present work. Rather, this thesis seeks to document the

nineteenth-century intellectual debate about Shakespeare in its own right, without

attempting to assess its influence on society as a whole. All of the writers under

consideration partook in an ongoing dialogue and, while their social influence can never

be satisfactorily measured, their importance in this debate can be gauged. Franklin E.

Court has noted that it is not just the major figures of literary history (or, the prescribed

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[92] Walter E. Houghton, 'Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', in *The Victorian Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 7.
See also Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance*, Simon Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage: 1586-1914*, vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Ch. 5, and Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, 'Introduction', in *The Victorian Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), xiv-xv for more on how the press influenced nineteenth-century thought.
The idea of the nineteenth-century moralising writer or 'sage' has been looked at in some detail by, among others, John Holloway in *The Victorian Sage* and George P. Landow in *Elegant Jeremiahs* (George P. Landow, *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer*, (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1989)), as well as John Gross *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, and T. W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*. This study differs slightly in that, as previously noted, the producers of the literature examined here were not solely sages in the strictest sense of the word but were writers from a diverse set of backgrounds. Similarly, this is an analysis of the literature produced rather than the individuals or cultural conditions behind that production and, accordingly, the concept of literary pursuits has been employed.

[93] Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 759-60.
T. De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, vol. 20, 8th edn., (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1860), 74.

[94] Knight, 'Criticism as a Trade', 423.

major figures), who shape the past, but also the figures who are relatively unknown. In this way, Court challenges some of the assumptions which have characterised literary histories for so long.[95]

Having detailed the producers and consumers of the literary pursuits that are the focus of consideration, it is important finally to emphasise that the present project is not a study of reader-response. As has been noted, any attempt to quantify reader response is deeply problematic because circulation figures do not necessarily show the number of readers (there would be borrowing and second-hand purchasing) and reading does not always equate to influence: G. W. M. Reynolds (1814–79) outsold Charles Dickens in the nineteenth century but was never cited as being more popular or influential in readers' surveys.[96] Autobiographies perhaps give us the best insight into the mind of a Victorian reader and so to their response to literature, yet even these are open to bias and caprice on the part of the writer. Methodologically, it would be a very ambitious task to interrogate the readerships of these works – one that must be left for future research using sales figures, reviews and contemporary autobiographical evidence. Further difficulties are posed by the difference, already noted, in the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of those partaking in the dialogue surrounding Shakespeare meaning that there is also a disparity in what is known about each writer, and a number of texts examined here have anonymous authors. The aims of this thesis are therefore more modest: highlighting an under-researched area of nineteenth-century writing and showing that Victorian literary pursuits concerning Shakespeare are more complex and sophisticated than has hitherto been realised.

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[95] Josephine Guy and Ian Small have noted that traditional literary histories are 'those histories which treat their subject-matter and their methodology as unproblematic and which use an empiricist historiography,' (Guy and Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies*, 99).

[96] Jonathan. Rose, 'How Historians Study Reader Response: or, what did Jo think of *Bleak House*?' in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 205.

In a study of this size it is necessary to be selective and, for a number of reasons, the period with which this thesis concerns itself is the second half of the nineteenth century. As will be seen, the period 1850-1900 was when the publishing of Shakespeare's works and related criticism increased as they never had before. Moreover, Chapter One will show that the edifices which sought to preserve and promote British nationalism also began to exert their influence in the 1850s, with the attendant anxieties about nationalism continuing to be prominent for the remaining decades of the nineteenth century. Samuel Smiles (1812–1904), whose work will be examined in Chapter Two, published his *Self-Help: with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* in 1859 and this work seems to have exerted an influence for the rest of the century.[97] This thesis will suggest that the Smilesean idea of self help was confused and confusing and, as such, representative of the moralising works of this period. Finally, Chapter Three will describe how interest in both *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, the sonnet form in general, and an intellectual turn towards ancient Greek culture, witnessed a marked revival after the publication of Robert Cartwright's edition of the *Sonnets* in 1859.

The publication dates of Shakespeare's works throughout the nineteenth century are a useful tool for examining his popularity throughout the period (see Appendix One).[98] *The Complete Works* are consistently being published throughout the century – with 266 editions appearing – but the popularity of *Henry V*, for example, increases dramatically in the later half of the century with twenty-one of the twenty-five nineteenth-century editions of this play being published after 1850. There is also a

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[97] Adrian Jarvis notes that there were 'over 200 printings [of *Self-Help*] in English and several dozen in other languages' in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Jarvis, *Samuel Smiles*, 42). For a full account of the publishing history of *Self-Help* see Tim Travers, *Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic*, (London: Garland, 1987), Appendix F.

[98] The source for all publication data is *British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*, 220, Photolithographic Edition to 1955 edn. (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1964), and graphs produced by the author of this thesis (see Appendix One).

corresponding leap in the publication of all of Shakespeare's complete works in the later half of the century with 693 (or seventy-four percent) of the 939 being published after 1850. While there were fewer than 4,000 works by Shakespeare published in the eighteenth century there were well over 10,000 in the nineteenth century and over eighty percent of these were in the second half of the century. Another particularly striking publishing trend is the fact that no editions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* were published in the first half of the nineteenth century followed by thirty-seven editions before 1900. Such a marked upturn in editions of (and, it must be assumed, interest in) the *Sonnets* suggests that they had a particular resonance in the later nineteenth century, and it is for this reason that the *Sonnets* form the basis for the case study of nineteenth-century criticism in Chapter Three. The period between 1850 and 1900 saw changes in the fields of literature, nationalism and moralism; this thesis will show that nineteenth-century Shakespearean literary pursuits – which have been largely neglected – is a window through which the diverse attitudes towards these interwoven strands of thought can be highlighted and observed.

In terms of nationalism it was the period around and following the middle of the century that saw Shakespeare begin to be co-opted as a focal point for nationalist feeling. In 1847 Shakespeare's birthplace was purchased 'for the nation' by the Shakespeare Committee, and there began to be demands for a national theatre centred on Shakespeare.[99] In 1848 Effingham William Wilson published *A House for Shakespeare: A Proposition for the Consideration of the Nation* which explicitly proposed a National Theatre. Ideas of nationhood and nationalism are complex and contested, not least since the influential work of scholars such as Benedict Anderson

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[99] See Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, 94-5.

conceptualised nationalism as a fluid construct rather than a concrete model.[100] Numerous, often barely perceptible, events could influence and effect nationalist sentiments – T. O. Lloyd notes how something such as the defeat of the English cricket team by a squad representing the entire Australian continent in 1882 'probably helped Australians to see themselves as a nation well before political union in 1900.'[101] Thus it would be impossible fully to note how all of the events that occurred in the nineteenth century affected ideas of nationalism, or even how one single event altered the consciousness of the diverse members of a nation. Accordingly this thesis does not claim that writing about Shakespeare created a particular sense of nationalism but instead notes that there were evident nationalist concerns at work in the writing on Shakespeare at this time. Similarly it would engender a much bigger undertaking than this project fully to appreciate the changes that were taking place in terms of nationalism in the nineteenth century. What can be seen is that there were events occurring – both nationally and globally – which can reasonably be assumed to have been driven by, and fed into, anxieties about the state of the nation. These events include the upsurge in national bodies which sought to catalogue and preserve the nation (for example various national galleries, the National Trust and the *Oxford English Dictionary*), or the fluctuations in the British Empire abroad (numerous uprisings and conflicts in India and elsewhere, British interests in the Suez Canal, as well as various changes in the British governance of Africa, Canada, New Zealand and the West Indies).[102]

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[100] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edn. (London: Verso, 1991), and Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1994).

[101] T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire: 1558-1995*, Second edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207.

[102] See for example, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*, ed. P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, (London: Longman, Pearson Education Limited, 1993), and Andrew S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c1880-1932*, (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

Therefore Chapter One will provide a brief overview of various events and undertakings which would have fed into the overall climate of concern in terms of nationalism and will then go on to look more specifically at the various literary pursuits which actively seek to promote a certain view of the nation. It will be seen that there is no specific unitary view of Britain (or England – a distinction that will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter One) but that there is instead an interesting aspectuality in how Shakespeare could be constructed to support seemingly contradictory agendas. Thus, those writers who sought to endorse Britain as an ancient and idyllic nation with a unique and innate character could employ Shakespeare with just as much conviction as those who attempted to advance the view of a Britain that could compete with, and was superior to, the rest of the globe. Similarly Britain could be portrayed as still possessing the same qualities that made it unique in its ancient past or as having moved-on (either progressed or regressed) and evolved into a quite different nation. While all of these approaches can plausibly be seen to originate from the same anxiety about the identity of the British nation it is clear that there were different attitudes and approaches to both the construct of Shakespeare and the concept of nationalism. What exactly people understood by Britain or its empire are complex and contested, and this thesis does not attempt to draw specific conclusions about nationalist sentiment; rather it treats each writer on his or her own terms and notes the interesting contradictions and differences between them. This nuanced approach hopes to avoid the establishment of fixed categories which, this thesis argues, has been the dominant approach by most investigations of Shakespeare (from the nineteenth century until recently). What will be shown is that there was a definite preponderance on ideas and imagery of the nation which strongly suggest that the writers of these works were concerned with, and anxious about, that nation.

Accordingly, Chapter Two will contain a brief look at how social and intellectual life changed in the nineteenth century followed by an examination of the different moral positions promoted by various uses of Shakespeare. Thus it will be seen that, while the wealth of Shakespearean literary pursuits in which various moral and nationalistic agendas can be found confirms the prominence of these issues, the diversity present within this promotion highlights just how complex those issues were. Chapters One and Two will be taken up with the exploration of how these literary pursuits made use of Shakespeare to rehearse and advance the major cultural concerns of nationalism and moralism, as well as how the aspectuality of Shakespeare results in complex and conflicting interpretations of the uses to which Shakespeare can be put. Chapter Three will be concerned with a case study of the *Sonnets* and will show that the same broad cultural concerns of nationalism and moralism are present within this small section of Shakespeare's *oeuvre*. Looking at the *Sonnets* not only shows the pervasiveness of the use of Shakespeare to promote various agendas, but also draws the threads of the rest of this thesis together to show that nationalism and moralism were unquestionably major anxieties of the period and yet were far from definite, concrete, concepts for those who wrote about them through the medium of Shakespeare.

The present thesis is the first study to focus on the variety of late nineteenth-century criticism, and to highlight both the diversity of ways in which Shakespeare could be used, and the conflicting and disparate ends which these uses served. Further, this study does not presuppose that nineteenth-century writing about Shakespeare is simply part of a tradition which increases in sophistication as it nears the present time, but considers Victorian thought as complex and interesting in its own right. Many of the writers in this study have not previously been examined in depth, and nineteenth-century writing about Shakespeare has certainly not been considered in the context of

diversity of uses. Thus the material contained here can contribute to a field that is rarely considered except as a side issue to other arguments.

Part One **Contexts**

Chapter One **Nationalism**

CRANMER   Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
       His honour and the greatness of his name
       Shall be, and make new nations. He shall flourish,
       And like a mountain cedar reach his branches
       To all the plains about him. Our children's children
       Shall see this, and bless heaven.

KING HENRY   Thou speakest wonders.

       - W. Shakespeare and J. Fletcher, *All Is True (Henry VIII)*, 5.4

Wherever the English language is spoken, wherever Englishmen may meet
for all time, the name of William Shakespeare will be thought of…

     - T. Cond, *William Shakespeare: His Life and Genius. Appreciations*, (1897)[1]

a) Shakespeare and Nationalism

On Sunday 22 April 1894, the Rev. Robert Stuart de Courcy Laffan (1853-1927) delivered a sermon in the Collegiate Church of Stratford-upon-Avon entitled 'Shakespeare, the Prophet.' As part of the Shakespeare Festival for that year Laffan lamented that the nation was not doing enough to celebrate 'Shakespeare's day,' and was keen to point out the national importance of such celebrations.[2] Shakespeare, as the title of the sermon suggests, was being portrayed as a quasi-messianic figure and Laffan told his congregation that Shakespeare 'is supremely the prophet, the forth-teller of human nature, and of human life.'[3] In 1885 Laffan had been appointed headmaster of Shakespeare's alma mater, the King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford-upon-

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[1] Thomas Cond, *William Shakespeare: His Life and Genius. Appreciations*, (Private Publication - Presented at the C.L.A. Annual Celebration, April 23rd, 1897), 14.

[2] Rev. Robert Stuart de Courcy Laffan, 'Shakespeare, the Prophet', in *Shakespeare Sermons, Preached in the Collegiate Church of Stratford-on-Avon*, ed. Rev. George Arbuthnot, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 35.

[3] Ibid., 27.

Avon, and was giving this sermon the day before Shakespeare's 'birthday' so a desire to promote Shakespeare is understandable.[4] It becomes clear however, that it is not just Shakespeare who was being elevated in Laffan's speech. Indeed he states that,

> In working thus [towards the promotion of Shakespeare's birthday] we shall be working, not for Stratford alone, but for England, and for that Greater England which stretches wherever men of English blood are stirred by the great master-words of English speech.[5]

The idea of an England that outstrips the boundaries of the country itself provides a striking image through which Laffan could focus his listeners' minds. This also serves to suggest that the English nation is superior to, and expanding into, the rest of the globe. More attention will be paid to the idea of expansionist nationalism later in this chapter.

The widely accepted date of Shakespeare's birth is also, of course, the feast day of St. George, the patron saint of England, and attendant ideas of England and Englishness were evidently on Laffan's mind. The portrayal of Shakespeare as a biblical figure takes on a new aspect in this context and Laffan comments that '[t]he prophet of Israel was, in almost every case, the centre and rallying point of national feeling, of Jewish patriotism. That, too, Shakespeare ought to be to us; that, this Stratford celebration ought to be, year by year, helping to make him more and more.'[6] In doing so, Laffan tells his congregation:

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[4] In later life Laffan would be elected to the International Olympic Committee, found the British Olympic Association, and end his days as the Governor of Bermuda.

[5] Laffan, 'Shakespeare, the Prophet', 35.

[6] Ibid., 33.

we shall be working in Shakespeare's spirit to keep alive that flame of

patriotic love of England which glows through all his works, and which must

be tempered, not quenched by whatever of love and reverence we have learnt

to bear to other races and to other lands.[7]

It is clear that a particular construction of Shakespeare was being created here and that there was more than just the veneration of a Renaissance playwright and poet at stake. Shakespeare was being linked to the nation of England, and England was being promoted through an association with Shakespeare. In this 1894 sermon, both Shakespeare and England come together to reinforce and support each other.

It has long been accepted that the late nineteenth century witnessed a shift in English nationalism, and John Lucas has commented that 'many of the elements which constitute what is recognisably the culture of English nationhood came into existence at this time [from the 1850s onwards], or were progressively promoted, as were the structures by means of which the promotion of such culture could be made possible.'[8] Chief among the influences upon British attitudes towards national identity would have been the expansion and retraction of the British Empire. Following the cessation of hostilities with France after the final defeat of Napoleon (1769-1821) in 1815, the British began to steadily expand their existing colonies which, until that point had consisted mainly of ports, islands and coastal regions.[9] Thus the Empire expanded significantly, although this had all but ceased by the 1850s when colonists began to run out of new areas to invade and the British Government had withdrawn from a number of its colonies, no longer collecting tariffs from many of them. The general feeling in

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[7] Ibid., 35.

[8] John Lucas, *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), 184.
For nationalism being a concern in the nineteenth century see p. 19 n. 49 above.

[9] See Lloyd, *The British Empire*, 138-70.

London was that – with the exception of India – the colonies were more trouble than they were worth, both financially and militarily, and frontiers remained stable for the next twenty years or so. India was governed in a much more direct way than any of Britain's other territories and this was partly as a response to the bloody uprising of 1857-9. However, for numerous complex reasons (not least the desire for expansion by individual British colonists and a concern about matching the expansion of other nations such as France and Germany), British expansion began again in the 1870s and continued until the end of the century.[10] Indeed British expansion in Africa took place mainly in the 1880s. The British got drawn into a number of messy wars against the Afghans and Zulus in the 1870s, and smaller conflicts throughout the globe at this time meant that the Empire was a constant presence in British politics. Even the resolutely anti-expansionist second government (1880-5) of William Ewart Gladstone (1809–98) could not escape and T. O. Lloyd notes that Britain 'found itself involved in so many entanglements all over the world that it must have seemed as if Imperial activity had become the normal if inconvenient background to political existence.'[11]

In 1886 the Liberal party split because Gladstone was trying to introduce a Bill for Irish Home Rule. A number of prominent Whigs left Gladstone's party and joined those who moved over to the Conservative side. The bill was defeated, but the collapse of the government ensured that issues surrounding Britain's relationship with other nations – and the perception of Britain as a nation – were very much at the forefront of public debate. One of those who left Gladstone's party was J. R. Seeley (1834–95) a prominent intellectual of the late nineteenth century. Seeley had been Professor of Latin at University College, London, and in 1869 became Charles Kingsley's (1819–75) successor as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge (an appointment which

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[10] See Ibid., 197-252.

[11] Ibid., 203.

had, incidentally, been recommended by Prime Minister Gladstone). Seeley's specialism was early nineteenth-century Prussia and he was primarily known as a biographer and theological writer. However, between 1881 and 1882 Seeley delivered a series of lectures to Cambridge undergraduates about historiography and the growth of the British Empire. When these lectures were published in 1883 as *The Expansion of England* they had an immediate and considerable impact. John Gross notes that the text enjoyed success among the elite of the time (with it being discussed by such figues as Lord Tennyson, Prime Minister Gladstone, and Queen Victoria) and also among the wider public, selling 80,000 copies in the first two years of publication.[12] Gross continues

> When Seeley died in 1895, it did not seem wholly extravagant for the historian H. A. L. Fisher, writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, to ask whether any previous historical work could be said to have left as profound a mark on "the general political thinking of a nation," while in his obituary notice for the *Saturday Review* Joseph Jacobs felt justified in claiming that "surely since Sieyès no pamphlet has ever had such immediate and wide-reaching influence."[13]

The Expansion of England was essentially an investigation into the contemporary method of English historiography and an analysis of the nation's future role in terms of the Empire. The work was subtle in its approach and was interpreted differently by different readers; there were those like W. T. Stead (1849–1912) and Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) who saw a manifesto for legitimised expansion of the Empire, while others like Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall (1835-1911) noted Seeley's cautious

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[12] John Gross, 'Introduction', in J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, ed. John Gross, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), xi, xii.

[13] Ibid., xi-xxvii, xii.

attitude to British expansion in India and the Raj – at one point Seeley states that 'our Western civilisation is perhaps not absolutely the glorious thing we like to imagine it.'[14] Indeed, if anything, it is the middle ground that Seeley suggests; the only way that England can hope to keep pace with the emerging superpowers of Russia and the United States is to organise a federation of states rather than the exploitative rule of colonies. Yet, despite, or perhaps because of, this non-prescriptive approach, Seeley's volume at the very least allowed a public debate about the status of the nation and highlighted the importance of foreign policy on the way in which the nation would develop. It was amid this climate that nationalism was being discussed in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Empire had expanded and retracted and expanded again, there had been a bloody mutiny in India in 1857 and the Boer War in 1899, yet half the world's shipping was British-owned in 1880.[15] In these complex and uncertain times, England sought to redefine itself and its role on the global stage.[16] Although there were (as the rest of this chapter will illustrate) many subtle differences of opinion about what the nation was and where it was going, there was a general commonality in the championing of Britain and its people. Nationalism was at the forefront of public thinking. To this end, the late nineteenth century saw a number of projects which sought to promote and preserve the idea of the British nation; the Great Exhibition of 1851 placed Britain at the centre of a

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[14] J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 1883, John Gross ed., (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971). Gross, 'Introduction', passim. for the different reactions to *Expansion*.

[15] Lloyd, *The British Empire*, 225.

[16] The period 1850-1900 was one of anxiety for many in Britain as the nation faced a number of threats to its supremacy, both military and economic. Militarily, the 1850s in particular produced a number of war scares ('the French invasion scare of 1852, the Crimean War of 1854-56, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and the renewed fright over French invasion in 1859-60' (Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 45)), and Britain was involved in other conflicts throughout the century. This included the presence of British troops in Afghanistan (1878-81), and the century culminated with Britain's disastrous involvement in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). Economically, changes in the global economy and their effect on British financial stability, was a cause for concern to many (see Keith Robbins, *The Eclipse of A Great Power: Modern Britain 1870-1992*, 2nd edn. (London: Longman Group Limited, 1994), 49-57). Conversely, P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins have argued that Britain remained a strong economic force up until the First World War. They do however argue that the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a rapid growth in economic services and that this greatly affected perceptions of the nation. Thus their thesis still recognises the period under consideration in this chapter as a time which witnessed a shift in nationalism (see *British Imperialism*, ed. Cain and Hopkins).

celebration of all that was great about the modern world, while the 'National Gallery of British Art' was founded in 1897 specifically to house the art of the nation.[17] Similarly Greenwich Mean Time was introduced as the standard for time-keeping in 1884, ensuring that Victorian Britain was central to the lives of anyone worldwide who wished to use a clock.

Major facets of this assertion of nationalism were realised through a number of historicising projects. J. W. Burrow's *A Liberal Descent* has documented an increase in historiography at this time, and described how a romanticised reconstruction of the past was used by many Victorians to fuel arguments about social order and provide conceptions of a national identity.[18] Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* describes nationalism as an ideology which unites members of an otherwise disparate group through a shared sense of self and an exclusion of other such groups.[19] Within the present thesis 'nationalism' is taken to denote any set of beliefs which can be seen to either promote a nation, unify the people of a nation, or assert that nation's superiority over other nations. Thus projects such as the regularising of Received Pronunciation in the 1870s, and the commencement of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1879 (with the first part published in 1884), can be understood as promoting nationalism because they

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[17] England and Britain are, of course, very different entities despite the frequent confusion and conflation of the two. See Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness*, ed. Michael Crowder and Juliet Gardiner, The Past and The Present, (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998); Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, 1-17; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 30-1; Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 198-9; and Christopher G. A. Bryant, *The Nations of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 182-8. This confusion will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

[18] J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
The sense of nationalism referred to in this thesis should be understood as distinct from the political movement of the late 1800s led by Edward Bellamy (1850-97), an American who attempted to gather support for his Nationalism (a sort of communism) in a series of articles in the British periodical press. See Edward Bellamy, 'What "Nationalism" Means', *Contemporary Review,* vol. 58 (July 1890), and W. Flemming Phillips, 'Edward Bellamy: Prophet of Nationalism', *Westminster Review,* Vol. 150 (November 1898). Bellamy's book *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* went through over twenty-four British editions between 1880 and 1900.

[19] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. See also Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin, 1991).

provided the language with more fixity than it had previously known, and thus attempted to unify the nation through its language. The *OED* in particular, by locating the etymology and history of the words it contained, conferred an historical legitimacy upon the language and this served to assert the superiority of both language and nation.[20] As well as ensuring the stability of a national language for future generations, the British people could find comfort in the fact that their language had already stood the test of time. Similarly, the establishment of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in 1895 – which sought to 'act as a guardian for the nation in the acquisition and protection of threatened coastline, countryside and buildings' – celebrated Britain by endowing British history with a sense of value.[21] The *Dictionary of National Biography* (initiated in 1882 with the first part published in 1885) and the National Portrait Gallery (opened in 1896), would both ostensibly celebrate the achievements of Britain through commemorating the illustrious past members of the nation.[22]

Although, as will be seen, these numerous attempts to utilise ideas of the past in order to promote the nation, actually encompassed various nuanced approaches to nationalism, some modern scholarship still contests whether this obvious urgency

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[20] The *OED* project was first initiated in 1857, although the Oxford University Press and James Murray (1837–1915) (the first editor) did not become involved until 1879. The final volume was published in 1928 meaning that the project spanned almost the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century.
See also *Re-Reading English, ed. Widdowson,* and Doyle, *English and Englishness*, for how this nationalism was manifested in the rise of English studies within the university structure.

[21] From http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/nationaltrust/ Feb 21 2005. There is some debate as to the exact date of the genesis of the National Trust as its inaugural meeting was held in 1894 but it was not formally constituted under the Companies Act until 1895. See Merlin Waterson, *The National Trust: The First Hundred Years*, (London: National Trust, 1997), 10.

[22] Sidney Lee, who succeeded Leslie Stephen (1832–1904) as editor of the *DNB* in 1891, noted that the enterprise would serve 'the national and beneficial purpose' of allowing future generations access to 'the character of their ancestors' collective achievement.' Sidney Lee, 'The Dictionary of National Biography: A Statistical Account', in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 1 'Abbadie - Beadon', ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 21 vols., (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), lxxviii. Writing in 1918, Lee argued that 'Sound biography of virtuous and valiant men will inevitably stimulate virtue and valour in its readers.' Sidney Lee, 'The Perspective of Biography', *The English Association Pamphlet No. 41,* (September 1918), 12.
Philip Henry Stanhope (1805–1875), founder of the National Portrait Gallery, stated that its collection should consist of portraits 'of those persons who are most honourably commemorated in British history as warriors or as statesmen, or in arts, in literature or in science.' *History of the National Portrait Gallery*, 2005, (National Portrait Gallery, Last Update Available: http://www.npg.org.uk/live/history.asp, 21 February 2005).

actually betrays an underlying anxiety and uncertainty about what was being promoted.

Thus, in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, Linda Colley claims that there was a

broad sense of Britishness which was firmly in place by the beginning of Victoria's

reign, feeling that these historicising projects imply that there was a coherent

understanding as to what exactly the nation was and how it should be portrayed.

Conversely, Steve Attridge claims that ideas of race, patriotism and nationalism became

confused in late Victorian culture and that 'British patriotism at the turn of the century

is protean, and the varied uses of the term in contemporary sources embrace heritage,

race, "blood and soil" identifications and local and national custom.'[23] There are

historians who look more deeply into the complexities of nationalist thought. Recent

works by writers such as Homi Bhabha or David Spurr have examined the ways in

which nationalist (in these cases specifically colonial) rhetoric can function subtly and

even insidiously in art or literary fiction.[24] What has been afforded much less

consideration is the way that this same rhetoric functions in non-fictional works – that

is, in the literary pursuits with which the present thesis is concerned. These literary

pursuits – the encyclopaedias, biographies and critical works – generally aspire to a

certain level of 'truth' or impartiality (of historical fact or artistic judgement), and the

presence in them of strongly biased rhetoric reveals how pervasive such nationalist

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[23] See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (London: Vintage, 1996) *passim.* which argues for a definite sense of British identity forged through the complex interaction of war, religious intolerance, and the nation's economic growth. Similarly, Lucas, *England and Englishness*, although acknowledging dissenting voices among poets, suggests that national identity was a dominant concern, but that there were competing schools of thought about how best to represent that identity; one a romantic, monarchist, pastoral vision, and the other democratic, capitalist, and industrial.
Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, 7.
For other arguments as to the confused nature of late nineteenth-century ideas of nationalism see Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (London: Routledge, 1995), and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[24] See Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, (London: Routledge, 1990), and David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, (London: Duke University Press, 1993).

concerns were in the nineteenth century.[25] A closer examination of the way in which nationalism is considered, in a single strand of nineteenth-century literary pursuits, should thus reveal the nuances which can sometimes be overlooked in the nineteenth-century assertion of Britain's presence and dominance as a nation.

A recurrent presence throughout all of the nationalist projects in the second half of the nineteenth century is Shakespeare.[26] The first painting acquired by the National Portrait Gallery was a *c.*1610 portrait of Shakespeare attributed to John Taylor, more commonly referred to as the Chandos Portrait – the only probable likeness of Shakespeare to have been painted during his lifetime – while Clare Pettitt has noted how Shakespeare was a 'dominant image' at the Great Exhibition, a circumstance which reflected contemporary ideas about copyright, and the production of art.[27] The longest entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* was 'Shakespeare, William (1564-1616),' and by some margin; it was thirty percent longer than the next longest entry (on the Duke of Wellington (1769–1852)), and was forty-nine pages long while the average essay was less than one page.[28] Indeed, Shakespeare's allocated space was five pages longer than that of all of the other major Renaissance dramatists (Beaumont, Fletcher, Jonson, Kyd, Marlowe, Massinger, and Webster) put together.[29] The *Oxford English Dictionary* also relied heavily on Shakespeare; he was the most frequently quoted

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[25] For a discussion of the merits of Sidney Lee's *Dictionary of National Biography* 'Shakespeare' compared to Thomas DeQuincey's *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article of 1842, see Peter Holland, 'Shakespeare and the *DNB*', in *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson: New Directions in Biography*, ed. Takashi Kozuka and J. R. Mulryne, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[26] That these attempts to promote a sense of nation were not anomalous is evident from their number and it should further be noted that many of the historicising projects mentioned were not capricious events but the culmination of a powerful and long-lasting movement. For example, there was some lapse between the establishment of the National Portrait Gallery project in 1856 and the grand opening in 1896, while the *DNB* covered twenty years from inception to final publication.

[27] Pettitt, 'Shakespeare at the Great Exhibition of 1851', 73.

[28] The 29,120 articles in the *DNB* cover 29,108 pages; thus the mean average article is just under one page in length. Lee, 'The Dictionary of National Biography: A Statistical Account', lxxi.

[29] Francis Beaumont (*c.*1585-1616) had two pages devoted to him; John Fletcher (1579-1625) eight pages; Ben Jonson (1572-1637) ten pages; Thomas Kyd (1558-94) three pages; Christopher Marlowe had ten pages (*c.*1564-1593); Philip Massinger (1583-1640) six pages; and John Webster (*c.*1580-1638?) five pages. This total of forty-four pages was still five less than Shakespeare.

author in the *Dictionary*, dominating by a considerable margin (the 33,000 quotations from the collected works are approximately 10,000 more than those taken from all versions of the Bible).[30] Similarly, Shakespeare's plays themselves were often used to press home to people the value of the nation and Philip Edwards has shown that Shakespeare's history plays helped, in the late nineteenth century, to develop a sense of national self-awareness in both England and Ireland.[31] As well as Shakespeare's presence within specific nationalist projects, it will be shown that there is an interestingly strong nationalist bias in literary pursuits about both the man and his works throughout the nineteenth century.

As will shortly be seen, there were contested ideas about the status and role of the nation in the later nineteenth century, but there was also what appears to be an interesting lack of agreement as to which nation is being discussed. Ideas of nationalism – complex in themselves – are, in the United Kingdom, further complicated by the duality of the English nation and the British nation.[32] Some of the writers examined here use the term 'England' and some use 'Britain,' and it is often not clear exactly what

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[30] Donna Lee Berg, *A Guide to the Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 171.

[31] Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation: a Study in English and Irish Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
See also Lindsey, "'I ha't from the *Play-bookes*"', for how the history plays conveyed a sense of national history to the British people in the nineteenth century.

[32] As noted (see p. 50, n. 17) there are differences between the entities of Britain and England despite their frequent conflation and confusion. This is complicated by the fact that this thesis deals with two areas within which concepts of nationality are being contested and formed: there is the fact that Shakespeare (whose early life under Queen Elizabeth (1533–1603) took place in an England which could be seen to have become Britain in 1603 upon the accession of King James VI & I (1566–1625), although union of the two states did not occur until 1707) has been seen as instrumental in formulating early modern ideas of nationhood: see David J. Baker, *Between Nations: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marvell, and the Question of Britain*, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1997); Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation: a Study in English and Irish Drama*; Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: a Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, (London: Routledge, 1997); Willy Maley, '"This Sceptred Isle": Shakespeare and the British Problem', in *Shakespeare and National Culture*, ed. John J. Joughin, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Willy Maley, *Nation, State and Empire in English Renaissance Literature: Shakespeare to Milton*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and *Literature and Nationalism, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991)*. Similarly, the nineteenth century saw the concept of Britain being tested due to a decline in imperialistic expansion, and confusion over national identity: see *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature, ed. Arac and Ritvo*; Robbins, *The Eclipse of A Great Power*; Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); and Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 2 n. 3.

they mean; Thomas De Quincey, for example, uses both terms interchangeably, and George Saintsbury (1845-1933) uses 'England' when he clearly means what should be termed 'Britain.' When discussing Jonson and John Dryden (1631–1700), Saintsbury notes: '[t]he fact of these two typical Englishmen being of half or whole Scotch descent will not surprise any one who does not still ignore the proper limits of England.'[33] Saintsbury's project was a history of English literature rather than British literature, but obviously, for him (and he seems to assume, for his readers also) the 'proper limits of England' could more accurately be termed Britain. Similarly Nicholas Waterhouse in *The England of Shakspeare* is able to consider the 'Scotch Highlands' and 'Ireland' as being part of England, and R.C. Christie (1830–1901), writing in the *Quarterly Review* in 1887, frequently slips between talking about Great Britain and Ireland, and talking about England.[34] As will be seen later in this thesis there were competing ways of conceptualising the nation – these ranged from insular parochialism to imperial expansionism – and it might be thought that the nomenclature of England and Britain reflected such concerns. This was not the case however; the expansionist rhetoric of writers such as Theodore Child (1846-92) or George Saintsbury, for example, uses the term England despite its more parochial connotation.

What can be surmised from this apparent 'confusion' about the distinction between England and Britain is that there was a subtle Anglicisation of the British nation. Essentially, when a writer confined their discussion to England and meant England they were privileging England over Britain, whereas when a writer said England but evidently meant Britain they were sublimating Wales, Scotland, and

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[33] George Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature*, vol. 2, History of English Literature, 4 vols., (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 174.

[34] Nicholas Waterhouse, *The England of Shakspeare and the Greenwood of Shakspeare: Two Papers Read Before the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, (Liverpool: T. Brakell, 1865), 26.
R. C. Christie, 'Dictionary of National Biography', *Quarterly Review,* 164 (April 1887), 353. See also 'Guizot on the French and English Drama', *Dublin University Magazine,* 40 (August 1852), and Coventry Patmore, 'The Modern British Drama', *North British Review,* 29 (August 1858), which use the terms 'English' and 'British' interchangeably.

Ireland into England; either way there is a pro-English agenda being served. Thus what appears to be a symptom of diverse attitudes towards nationalism is actually indicative of a common aim, approached in different ways. This shift in nomenclature is well documented and supports Cannon Schmitt's assertion, in *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality*, that there was an increasing focus on Englishness rather than Britishness after 1837.[35] This shift is perhaps most explicitly reflected by the entries for both terms in the *Encyclopaedia Britannicas* which were produced in the late nineteenth century. The *Britannica* itself was published in Edinburgh and so might be expected to pursue a more British than English agenda, yet a shift can be seen away from Britain and towards an idea of England. In volume five of the eighth edition, published in 1854, three hundred pages are devoted to 'Britain, or Great Britain,' while in volume four of the ninth edition, published in 1876, there is no entry for Britain, just a mere three pages on 'Britannia' which covers the history of Britain until after the Roman occupation, and then directs its readers to 'England' which was dealt with in one hundred and sixty-seven pages in volume eight, three years later.[36] A recognition of this Anglo-centric nationalism does not necessarily imply, however, that the intellectual elite were an entirely pro-English cadre, or that these critics themselves were exclusively English.[37]

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[35] Schmitt, *Alien Nation*, 16. See also Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 30-1, and Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2-7.

[36] The shift from the term 'British' to the term 'English' in the *Britannica* may perhaps be explained by editorial changes that were occurring at this time; the editor of the eighth edition (1852-60) was Thomas Stewart Traill (1781-1862) who was born in Kirkwall on the Orkney Islands while the editors of the ninth edition (1875-89) were Thomas Spencer Baynes (1823-87) who was born in Somerset, who was succeeded by William Robertson Smith (1846-94), who was born in Aberdeenshire. Baynes, in fact, was the first English-born editor of the *Britannica*, although he had close connections with Scotland as he was a professor at St Andrews University.

[37] Edward Dowden, for example, was an Irishman while Theodore Child was an American, and some important literary journals were produced outside of England; Edinburgh and Dublin in particular produced important literary scholarship in the form of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the *Dublin University Magazine* and the *Dublin Review* respectively. This is not to say, however, that these literary pursuits do not reflect the attitudes which were prevalent in Britain at the time; like all of the writers or texts included in this thesis, their presence here is due to their ubiquity, popularity or influence. Thus Dowden's writings on Shakespeare are widely cited by other critics of the time, while he was responsible for hundreds of editions of various works between 1864 and the turn of the century. Theodore Child also, although born in America, can be

While it has been necessary to highlight the inconsistency of nomenclature – and the related pro-English agenda – used by these writers, this thesis is not a discussion of the use of the terms British and English in the nineteenth century. Fundamentally this project is an exploration of the ways in which Shakespeare was used to advance ideas of nationalism, and as such is more concerned with the way in which Shakespeare is constructed rather than the particular nation that he is being used to promote. The nomenclature of Britain or England will be used when discussing individual writers, according to their own usage, so that a sense of their own particular meaning can be given. The vast majority of these literary pursuits privilege the term 'England,' but this thesis, when not discussing a particular work, will use the more inclusive 'Britain' unless referring to a time before 1603 when there was no concept of a unified state.

An inconsistent nomenclature of nationalism (referencing the British or English nation) points towards the different approaches which could be taken in forming a national identity and this chapter will go on to suggest that, far from there being a standard view of the nation, there were many different ways in which it could be constructed. Added to this, is the fact that Shakespeare could be used in a variety of ways to advance apparently incongruous attitudes of nationalism (in the idiom of this thesis) – that is, to advance or unite the nation or its people. Uses of Shakespeare could employ history or geography to show that ancestry or location is what makes an individual belong to a nation, or use patriotism in order to promote that nation and denigrate others. Yet there were inconsistencies in how this was done and different

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taken as having affected the debate about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century because he wrote a number of articles for various well-circulated journals. Similarly, while periodicals like *Blackwood's* and the *Edinburgh Review* could perhaps be considered to originate in a nation called Scotland, Walter Houghton has noted that both had an extensive influence on intellectual debates in Britain as a whole. Houghton notes that '*Blackwood's* performed a lasting service to English letters' (Walter E. Houghton, 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1824-1900', in The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900, vol. 1, ed. Walter E. Houghton, 5 vols., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 8), and that the *Edinburgh* exerted a 'powerful influence upon nineteenth-century opinion' (Walter E. Houghton, 'The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1900', in *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, vol. 1, ed. Walter E. Houghton, 5 vols., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 421).

writers chose to construct different backgrounds and attitudes for the Shakespeare they wanted to present.

b) Shakespeare and the Nation

As the writers of these literary pursuits appear to have held the opinion that Shakespeare was a great historical and literary figure – although few opportunities were lost to remind readers – it became possible to promote Britain simply by linking the nation with Shakespeare. This is stated most explicitly by Edward Rose in an 1876 article for the *Nineteenth Century*: 'the English poet [Shakespeare] is a microcosm of the English nation, its character, its literature, even, one might say, its history.'[38] Rose also notes that '[n]o man has been more variously estimated than William Shakespeare,' and it soon becomes apparent that the conflation of England with Shakespeare serves to promote the nation by association.[39]

One way in which this conflating of Shakespeare and the nation could be achieved was by underlining the fact that Shakespeare was British: so readers are either reminded of Shakespeare's ancestral ties to the nation; the events of Shakespeare's life are firmly located within the geography of Britain; or Shakespeare is portrayed as a patriotic individual. The first two methods here – ancestry and geography – are common ways of creating a sense of national identity, and the idea that such a highly regarded individual as Shakespeare was loyal to his own nation would obviously induce others to try and emulate this.[40] The use of biography – much of it romanticised and apocryphal –

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[38] Edward Rose, 'Shakespeare and History', *Nineteenth Century,* 13 (May 1876), 547.

[39] Ibid. 546.

[40] Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, 7.
   This concept of ancestry and geography, also known as 'Blut und Boden' ('Blood and Soil'), was an expression used notoriously in the early days of German anti-Semitism and as a definition of nationality during the Nazi Party's persecution of the Jews in the 1930s and 40s. This shows that such ideas of what could define an

allowed writers to indulge in lengthy discussions of Shakespeare's ancient ancestors or stories concerning Shakespeare's life in a mythologized Elizabethan England. Not that biographical studies of Shakespeare were always considered necessary when pursuing a nationalist agenda. George Saintsbury, in his *Elizabethan Literature* – which was the second in a four-volume 'History of English Literature' produced in the 1880s and reprinted up until 1970 – argued that information regarding a writer's biography, or the social and cultural *milieu* surrounding the production of a text, is unimportant: '[t]hese things, interesting perhaps and sometimes valuable in their own way, are but ancillary, if even that, to the history of literature in the proper and strict sense; and it is the history of literature in the proper and strict sense with which I have to deal.'[41]

To this end, Saintsbury deals with the biography of Shakespeare in less than one page. Indeed, the differences in how nineteenth-century writers could approach Shakespeare can be illustrated by placing Saintsbury's work alongside the biography presented by Sidney Lee in the *DNB*. In describing Shakespeare leaving Stratford, Lee states:

> To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, doubtless trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe. Tradition points to that as Shakespeare's favourite route, rather than to the road by Banbury and Aylesbury. Aubrey asserts that at Grendon, near Oxford, 'he happened to take the humour of the constable in "Midsummer Night's Dream"' – by which he meant, we may suppose, 'Much Ado about Nothing' – but there were watchmen of the Dogberry type all over England, and probably at Stratford itself. The Crown Inn (formerly 3 Cornmarket Street) near Carfax, at Oxford, was long pointed out as one of his

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individual's nationality were in circulation in the years following the late nineteenth century. See Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators: A Reappraisal*, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 18-26. Obviously, no affiliation whatsoever is intended between this racism and the nationalism or intellectual position of the writers mentioned here or of this thesis as a whole.

[41] Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature*, viii.

resting-places. To only one resident in London is Shakespeare likely to have been known previously…[42]

Lee's biography is creating a very definite Shakespeare, using the barest facts to build a myth – although his use of strong, unambiguous language ('doubtless,' 'asserts,' 'was long pointed out'), apparent historical evidence ('Tradition,' 'Aubrey asserts'), and bombardment of information manages to make his Shakespeare something of a concrete historical figure. He is also bestowed with a certain type of personality – it is 'natural' that he would gravitate towards the capital and he 'trudges' there. Not only is Shakespeare located very much within the geography of England but it is a land peopled by his characters, and so the nation and the playwright are closely intertwined. Despite being ostensibly a piece about Shakespeare and the biographical facts of his life, Lee is actually achieving something more subtle here in that he is connecting the people of England by their common association with Shakespeare. Further, as Shakespeare is such an important figure, the people of the nation are elevated by that same common association. This unification and promotion is exactly the type of nationalist discourse that this thesis aims to highlight within literary pursuits about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century. By linking the great playwright so closely with the nation Lee is unifying and promoting (through their shared pride in the very English Shakespeare) the nation.

Saintsbury, on the other hand, feels it sufficient to note that,

He is said to have left Stratford for London in 1585, or thereabouts, and to have connected himself at once with the theatre, first in humble and then in more important positions. But all this is mist and myth.[43]

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[42] Sidney Lee, 'Shakespeare, William (1564-1616)', in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XVII 'Robinson-Sheares', ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 1292.

Saintsbury's work is part of a history of *English* literature, and is nationalist in that he frequently points out the superiority of England; Elizabethan literature is 'the greatest period of the greatest literature of the world.'[44] He also asserts English literature's dominance of what he considers the five great periods of literature (the Greek, the English and French, the Italian, and the English again), stating that '[i]t is the super-eminent glory of English that it counts twice in the reckoning.'[45] Just like Lee, therefore, he is using Shakespeare to advance a nationalist agenda. Yet the differences between these two works show that there was no single way in which Shakespeare could be used. Indeed, Lee and Saintsbury have, in effect, created two different Shakespeares through their treatment of this one incident. Lee's is a concrete figure – regardless of the accuracy of Lee's 'facts' – while, conversely, Saintsbury uses indefinites ('He is said to have…,' 'thereabouts') which ensure that the idea of Shakespeare's biography being 'mist and myth' is reinforced. Unlike Lee's Shakespeare, Saintsbury's is a shadowy figure who exists more through the plays than in the documentary record. Despite the differences between these constructions, however, a common promotion of the nation is achieved.

What can also be seen here is that there are two very different nations being promoted, which enable the respective writers to advance different agendas in their contributions to the nationalist debates of the day. While Lee and Saintsbury both use the same nomenclature to denote the nation they are talking about, it is clear that Lee is concentrating very much on the attributes of that England – it is a country of people and places – while Saintsbury is more concerned with the way that other nations relate to,

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[43] Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature*, 158.

[44] Ibid., vii.

[45] Ibid., 458.

and perceive, England. Saintsbury talks about the world (and the dominance of Shakespeare and England in that world) while Lee sticks to showing England. These different approaches relate to different ways of thinking about nationalism that will be seen to run through many of the literary pursuits discussed in this chapter. As has been noted elsewhere, the main schools of thought which dominated nationalism in the nineteenth-century and beyond were the Little Englander and the Expansionist approaches.[46] Essentially, Little Englanders held a parochial view of nationalism; that is, that the nation was great in and of itself. Britain was unique in the world and was all that mattered.[47] Expansionists believed that Britain was great because it dominated on the world stage; it was the Empire that elevated Britain. This can be seen in the way that Lee praises England for its own particular attributes while, conversely, Saintsbury stresses the superiority of English literature as 'the greatest literature of the world,' and pits England against Greece, France and Italy.[48] Therefore, while Saintsbury and Lee both attempt to unify and promote the nation (and are thus being nationalistic according

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[46] See Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 1, and passim.

See also *Raphael Samuel, Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. 1, (London: Routledge, 1989); Gregory Bresiger, 'Laissez Faire and Little Englanderism: The Rise, Fall, Rise, and Fall of the Manchester School', *Journal of Libertarian Studies,* 1.3, no. 1 1997); and A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939*, 1957, (London: Pimlico, 1993).

[47] The Little Englander viewpoint should not, however, be confused with xenophobia. Indeed, a political movement which went by the name of the Manchester School was also known as the Little Englanders, or the Peace Men. The movement had its roots in the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL) which was headquartered in Newall's Buildings in Manchester. Essentially, Manchesterism was an informal conglomeration of leading politicians and thinkers who advocated laissez faire economics, free trade, a reduction in government expenditures and anti-imperialism as a way of avoiding what they saw as costly and pointless military conflicts. Lead by middle-class radicals Richard Cobden (1804–65), a Manchester manufacturer of calicos, and John Bright (1811–89), a Rochdale mill owner, the Manchester School was an important force in British Victorian politics. As Gregory Bresiger states 'William Gladstone, who would serve as prime minister four times… had begun his political career as a Tory Protectionist, became a Peelite, and was sympathetic to many of the ideas of the Manchester School, especially during the mid- and late-Victorian periods. However, in his second ministry (beginning in 1880), Gladstone presided over a military intervention in Egypt, a move which led to Bright's resignation from the cabinet. But before his death in 1898, Gladstone returned to many Manchester principles' (Bresiger, 'Laissez Faire and Little Englanderism', 58). The Manchester School's anti-expansionism was due to their desire for better relationships with other nations and thus peace. Thus Manchesterism was the opposite of xenophobia, and John Vincent has described it as 'a passionate internationalism opposed to all orthodox patriotism' (John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party: 1857–68*, (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 33.). These particular Little Englanders were also instrumental in ending duties on newspapers and the completed the successful negotiation of a free-trade treaty with France in 1860. See also Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, 40–66.

[48] Ibid., vii.

to the criteria set up earlier in this chapter), they are doing it in very different ways; constructing different Shakespeares to promote differently constructed nations.

Biography could also be used to show that Shakespeare himself was a patriotic individual and writers were often able to make use of 'facts' from Shakespeare's life in order to bolster their arguments. For example, Samuel Neil (1825–1901) in *Shakespere: A Critical Biography* states, as fact, that,

> Whatever engaged the youthhood of Shakespere after leaving school – law, trade, or pedagogism – it is pretty clear that he must have made good use of his eyes in noticing the tints in the sky, the flowered earth, the love-inspiring beauty of the river-threaded meadows, and the changeful variances of the seasons. Nor is it at all improbable that he sauntered, in slouched hat, into the taverns along the road, and lounged about travelled highways, or sped over the downs with dog at heel, and at night took a shot at a deer. These were the common amusements of his day.[49]

Thus Neil's 'critical' biography portrays a Shakespeare with a very definite persona with whom his readers can emotionally engage – he even has a dog. As well as having a certain type of personality, Neil's construction of Shakespeare is also undeniably part of the British way of life; he partook in the common amusements of the day. Further to this, the passage acts as an encomium for the nation; with its sylvan, beautiful scenery and tranquil, sociable way of life. This type of depiction is clearly parochial in its outlook as the picture that Neil paints is very much of Britain as a singularly idyllic place; its 'love-inspiring beauty' elevating it above other nations through its uniqueness. In this way, as well as using Shakespeare as a locus for discussing nationalism, Neil is able to add to nationalist dialogue by espousing the virtues of Little England.

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[49] Samuel Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, (London: Houlston and Wright, 1863), 19-20.

Shakespeare's life was not the only source of material for these writers, the plays or poems could be read as being nationalist and thus betraying Shakespeare's own patriotism. Gerald Massey, for example, suggests that,

> There are times when he [Shakespeare] quite overruns the speech of a character with the fullness of his own English feeling. In one or two instances this is very striking; for example, in that speech of old Gaunt's in *Richard II*., at the name of England the writer is off and cannot stop. His own young blood leaps along the shrunken veins of grave and aged gaunt; Shakespeare's own heart throbs through the whole speech…[50]

There are then, a number of different techniques for using Shakespeare to further a nationalist agenda and these approaches will be considered in more detail as this chapter progresses.

i) Ancestry

It seems reasonable that the longer a family have resided in a country the more undisputedly *of* that country they become. Certainly, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sidney Lee feels it is important to establish Shakespeare's genealogy and no other entry spends as long in tracing the ancestry of its subject. Francis Bacon (1561–1626), for example, is twelve years old within eight lines of his biography, and the Duke of Wellington has joined the army by the third paragraph of his, so it is interesting that there are three pages detailing the history of the name of Shakespeare, and mini-biographies of his ancestors – as far back as five generations – before William is born.

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[50] Gerald Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted: His Private Friends Identified, together with a Recorded Likeness of Himself*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1866), 547.

Despite informing his readers that Shakespeare's ancestry cannot be traced beyond his grandfather, Lee is able to ensure that the playwright has a venerable pedigree. Lee states that Shakespeare 'came of a family whose surname was borne through the middle ages by residents in very many parts of England.'[51] This not only means that Shakespeare's ancestors are shown to stretch back into England's hazy past – thus making him a very English individual whom no other country can have a claim to – but the idea that his name is held by residents of many parts of England casts Shakespeare as an English Everyman; he represents England and its inhabitants. The tracing of Shakespeare's genealogy was a frequent pursuit for a number of scholars at this time. In 1885 A.W. Cornelius Hallen produced an exhaustive family tree of his own family, which included several generations of Shakespeares, and relevant branches were swiftly published as the *Pedigree of the Family of Shakspeare* by Evan G. Humphries of Stratford.[52] This work claimed to have traced Shakespeare lineage back to five generations before his birth.

Genealogy also held a prominent place in the essays on Shakespeare in the two editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which were produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. As in the *DNB*, Shakespeare held a dominant place in the *Britannica*; his biography was twenty pages long in the eighth edition (1860) and thirty-four pages long in the ninth edition (1886). In contrast, Wellington only covered sixteen and six, Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) covered seven and seven, and Jonson covered three and five pages respectively. Thomas De Quincey, who wrote for the eighth edition, used a similar method to Lee of antiquating Shakespeare, but pointed to the

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[51] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1286.

[52] See Arthur Washington Cornelius Hallen, *An account of the family of Hallen or Holland - de Mirabelle dit Van Halen of Malines - from A.D. 1280 to A.D. 1885, with pedigrees of families of Hatton of Newent, Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, and Weight of Clingre. [Illustrated.]*, (Edinburgh: Neill & Company, 1885), and Arthur Washington Cornelius Hallen, *Pedigree of the Family of Shakspeare*, (Stratford-on-Avon: Evan G. Humphries, 1885).

pedigree of William's mother's family rather than his father. Thus she 'bore the beautiful name of Mary Arden a name derived from the ancient forest district,' and he informs his readers that the name came from 'some remote ancestor who had emigrated from the forest of Ardennes, in the Netherlands, and *now* for ever memorable to English ears for its proximity to Waterloo.'[53] The use of 'ancient' and 'remote ancestor' assert Shakespeare's long lineage and the non-Shakespeare-related reference to Waterloo is presumably only included because that area was synonymous with the 1815 battle between British and French forces which resulted in a victory for Britain and her Allies. Having sought to demonstrate the antiquity of the name of Arden by bringing the Dutch forest of Ardennes into his discussion, De Quincey's reference to Waterloo also serves to draw attention away from any continental etymology of Mary Arden's (*d*.1608) name, and reassert British dominance.

An examination of De Quincey's essay shows it to be strongly nationalistic in terms of unification and promotion of the nation; he notes that Shakespeare's 'fame has never ceased to be viewed as a national trophy of honour,' and that a reverence for Shakespeare is part of the 'national feeling.'[54] Later De Quincey contends that the women with whom Shakespeare would have associated in his youth would have been beautiful because, in this idyllic time, women were not allowed to perform manual labour, '[a]nd this is more especially true in a nation of unaffected sexual gallantry, such as the English and the Gothic races in general.'[55] Given the nationalist tone of his essay it is unsurprising that here De Quincey manages to incorporate a compliment to the English nation's behaviour, but the footnote that accompanies this statement is extraordinary in the lengths to which it goes in order to denigrate the French. He notes

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[53] De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 76, 76 n.

[54] Ibid., 74, 72 n.

[55] Ibid., 79.

that '[i]n France, the verbal homage to woman is so excessive as to betray its real purpose, viz. that it is a mask for secret contempt. In England, little is said; but, in the mean time, we allow our sovereign ruler to be a woman; which in France is impossible.'[56] Ignoring what misogyny there may be in the fact that De Quincey suggests he is *allowing* Victoria to be on the throne, he then goes on to recount a story about a French man who had '[a] woman yoked side by side with an ass to the plough or the harrow… the driver distributing his lashes impartially between the woman and her brute yoke-fellow. So much for the wordy pomps of French gallantry.'[57] That the purpose of this anecdote is to excite national pride and the degradation of the French is clear and De Quincey notes that 'in Great Britain women are never suffered to mow;' indeed, 'any man, caught in such a situation, and in such an abuse of his power… would be killed on the spot.'[58] The hyperbole in all of this weakens its authority but the lack of relevance to De Quincey's supposed subject strongly suggests that there was a nationalistic agenda being pursued. Later in this chapter the specific juxtaposition of the British nation with France will be looked at in more detail; here it is sufficient to note that De Quincey is using the comparison to unite and promote his own nation.

T.S. Baynes' essay on Shakespeare replaced De Quincey's for the ninth edition of the *Britannica*, which Baynes also edited. Unlike Lee or De Quincey, Baynes does not begin with Shakespeare's genealogy and it is nearly a third of the way through the article before Shakespeare is born. Instead the essay begins with a history of England

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[56] Ibid., 79.

[57] It is worth noting that the constitutional rules of succession differed between Britain and France. In France, succession was governed by Salic law, which excluded females from succeeding to the throne. In Britain, however, succession is governed by the rule of primogeniture whereby male heirs take precedence over females, but a female can become the sovereign if there are no male heirs (see Vernon Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 42-3). Therefore, De Quincey was being factually accurate. Nevertheless, his tone clearly has the effect of reducing Victoria's authority in that it suggests that her gender has been overlooked in order to allow her the throne, rather than that Britain affords the same rights to males and females.
De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 79.

[58] De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 79.

which includes a discussion of the Roman origins of Warwick, the physical attributes of the English countryside and ancient national poetry. Baynes devotes over a page to the War of the Roses making the article on Shakespeare more akin to a treatise on English history.[59] However, Baynes does eventually attempt to link Shakespeare with ancient England and ensure that he has a long genealogy. 'The name [Shakespeare] itself is of course thoroughly English,' Baynes states, and is 'an illustration of the way in which Surnames were fabricated when first introduced into England in the 13th Century.'[60] This places Shakespeare at the beginning of modern England almost as though he were there when the nation was formed. In detailing the locality of Shakespeare's birth, Baynes also spends time discussing the history of the Stratford area and people: including the Romans and the Angles and Saxons; the 'Anglo-Normans;' Stratford's inhabitants in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and 'King John.'[61] He also includes some ninth-century history when 'King Alfred sent for scholars and churchmen [from the area of Stratford] to unite with him' because they were considered to be the best representatives of learning in the country.[62] Although this is not strictly using Shakespeare's direct ancestors in order to link him with England, it does reinforce the idea of Stratford's people, and so Shakespeare among them, being long established and important figures in England's history, also placing them as admirable people – they have been accepted by powerful figures as the nation's intelligentsia – meaning that Shakespeare too is someone to be revered.

Eventually, like Lee and De Quincey, Baynes turns to Shakespeare's family history and the article spends some space detailing Shakespeare's great-grandparents and even his Uncle Henry. Mary Arden's ancestors are also brought into the narrative:

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[59] Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 740-1.

[60] Ibid., 744.

[61] Ibid., 739, 743.

[62] Ibid., 739.

'[s]he was thus descended from an old country family, the oldest in Warwickshire, and had inherited the traditions of gentle birth and good breeding. Her ancestors are traced back, not only to Norman, but to Anglo-Saxon times.'[63] Baynes does more than antiquate Shakespeare's lineage however; he goes on to make Shakespeare's ancestors the quintessence of what makes an English person. So Shakespeare's mother had 'descendants, who retained the name, multiplied the shire, and were united from time to time with the best Norman blood of the Kingdom. The family of Arden thus represented the union, under somewhat rare conditions of original distinction and equality, of the two great race elements that have gone to the making of the modern Englishman.'[64] This can be seen to be fulfilling a number of nationalistic aims: firstly, it shows that Shakespeare's blood-line stretched back into antiquity making him both indisputably English and also entwining his past with that of England in order to link them inextricably. Secondly, having Mary Arden's ancestors 'multiply the shire' means that the blood line of Shakespeare becomes diffused throughout many other residents of the country and serves to link the inhabitants of England both with Shakespeare and each other. This means, in an article which obviously regards such issues as genealogy as important, that Shakespeare, the 'greatest dramatist that modern Europe has produced,' is potentially part of anyone's family tree, so representing the whole nation, uniting them, and elevating their status in, if not the world, certainly Europe.[65] The final point to notice in Baynes' rather fanciful description of the heritage of Mary Arden is the uniting of Anglo-Saxon and Norman blood; this portrays Shakespeare as a receptacle for the two races which Baynes feels make up the 'modern Englishman.' Indeed, it is almost as though Shakespeare engendered the nation himself by the mingling of the two

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[63] Ibid., 747.

[64] Ibid., 747.

[65] Ibid., 737.

blood-lines, this is again a way of uniting the whole nation through their common ancestry – Shakespeare. It is not just Shakespeare the individual who can unite the nation, however, Baynes makes repeated reference to Shakespeare's work as the 'national drama' and the 'native drama, which ensures that the works themselves can function as an ongoing source of national unity and pride.'[66]

Clearly, while these essays are ostensibly about Shakespeare, there is a strong desire within them to disseminate nationalist feeling. Lee, De Quincey, and Baynes all use the idea of ancestry in order to irrevocably link Shakespeare to Britain and thus promote nationalism. The fact that Shakespeare is repeatedly praised ensures the conflation of Britain and Shakespeare; and this not only unites its people, but promotes them too. That such a common method of furthering a nationalist agenda was functioning within the sphere of Shakespearean literary pursuits points to its prevalence as a consideration of what constituted nationalism. The differences in how this concept of ancestry could be approached, however, result in quite different representations of Shakespeare. It was possible to trace the ancestry of Shakespeare from either his father's surname or his mother's family, or even just through the fact that Shakespeares had lived in certain parts of Britain for a long period of time.

ii) Geography

Much of the literature produced about Shakespeare in the second half of the nineteenth century sought to locate Shakespeare firmly within the geography of Britain. It was a period of great advancement in the field of geography; the Royal Geographical Society was founded in 1830 and Sir Roderick Impey Murchison's (1792-1871) second

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[66] Ibid., 759.

term as President of the society (1851-71) saw its activities and profile increase rapidly. As with most intellectual activities, geography changed considerably in the period as it moved from an amateurish pursuit to a more professional and modern enterprise. 1859 saw the deaths of the distinguished geographer Carl Ritter (1779-1859) and the polymath Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) who is generally acknowledged to be the last of the non-professional world-renowned experts in the field of geography and by 1874 the discipline was being taught and practised in universities.[67] Although there had been university lectures in geography for centuries prior to the nineteenth century they were usually delivered by geologists or historians rather than geographers. Captain James Machonochie held a chair geography at University College, London from 1833-36 although permanent university teaching only really came about in the 1860s after the Royal Geographical Society began to push the educational agenda. There was general opposition to the formalising of geography as an academic discipline and it was only when the Royal Geographical Society undertook to finance the establishment of lectureships that Oxford and Cambridge acceded. Halford J. Mackinder (1861-1947) was appointed reader in geography at Oxford in 1887 and the School of Geography was opened at Oxford in 1899. This increased scholarly activity lead to numerous advances in the way that geography was conceptualised and practised. It is thus no surprise that a number of these literary pursuits focus on the physical landscape of Britain when using Shakespeare to forward a nationalist dialogue.

This geographical approach also highlights how the differing ideologies seen earlier, like Little Englander and Expansionist viewpoints, could utilise common tools. So it is that a number of articles such as 'From Stratford to London,' and 'At Stratford-on-Avon: An Historical Association,' both by J. W. Hales, or 'Shakspeare's Country'

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[67] For more see Geoffrey J. Martin and Preston E. James, *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*, 1972, 3rd edn. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1993), and Arild Holt-Jensen, *Geography - History and Concepts: A Student's Guide*, trans. Brian Fullerton 3rd edn. (London: Sage Publications, 1999).

by Rose G. Kingsley were published.[68] Similarly, books like *The England of Shakespeare* in the Cassell's Popular Library series, and the lavish, limited edition *The Land of Shakespeare* by F. G. Fleay were produced.[69] Frederick Fleay was one of the founding members of the New Shakspere Society in 1874 and is best known for the metrical analysis he applied to Shakespeare's plays.[70] Often mocked as 'the industrious flea' Fleay is characterised as the quintessence of the ultra-scientific and prosaic Victorian interpreter of Shakespeare.[71] *The Land of Shakespeare* however, does not easily fit into this picture of a Gradgrindian Fleay. Obviously intended as an aesthetic object rather than a purely practical work, the royal-folio sized volume was a limited edition of 100 copies and consisted of a series of small vignettes accompanied by large etchings of scenes around Stratford. Fleay's preface set the tone: 'if the Elizabethan Drama is the heart of English Poesy, Shakespeare's plays are the heart of the Elizabethan Drama. In unison with them the throbbings of our common humanity have pulsated for centuries in a harmony unparalleled in the case of any other poet.'[72] Fleay's talk of 'common humanity' and 'harmony' are unifying, albeit in a somewhat romantic and abstract way, and the fact that English literature is the heart which generates the pulsing and throbbing of the commonality of humankind ensures that England and the English are placed firmly at the centre of what is important in the world. The elaborate etchings (by John Macpherson), combined with Fleay's unifying prose, seem intended to stir nationalistic feelings in his readers and statements like '[a]s Shakespeare is the

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[68] J. W. Hales, 'From Stratford to London', *Cornhill Magazine,* 35 (January 1874); J. W. Hales, 'At Stratford-on-Avon: An Historical Association', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* 97 O.S. 17 N.S. (April 1878); Rose G. Kingsley, 'Shakspere's Country', *English Illustrated Magazine,* (January 1885).

[69] Edwin Goadby, *The England of Shakespeare*, Cassell's Popular Library, (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1881). See also 'Stratford-upon-Avon', *Harper's Magazine,* 1881), and Waterhouse, *The England of Shakspeare and the Greenwood of Shakspeare.*

[70] See F. G. Fleay, 'Who Wrote *Henry VI?*' *Macmillan's Magazine,* 33 (November 1875), and F. G. Fleay, 'The Text of "*Romeo and Juliet*"', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 36 (July 1877).

[71] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 350.
Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 164-7.

[72] Fleay, *The Land of Shakespeare*, vii.

heart of English verse, so Warwickshire is the heart of English soil,' betray a clear nationalist agenda.[73] *The Land of Shakespeare* is typical of the Little England attitude in that England is all that Fleay mentions and other nations may as well not exist. Stratford and its surrounding geography is portrayed as a microcosm of all that is great about the nation and this parochial stance focuses everything down to the particular rather than taking a wider global view. While such overt and elaborate nationalism is obvious, there were also more subtle ways for such an agenda to be promoted via the conflation of Shakespeare with British geography.

Edwin Goadby's *The England of Shakespeare* (1881) was intended to be a guide-book to Elizabethan England, and immersed its readers within the geography of that time and place. Goadby explains what different parts of England were like in the sixteenth century:

> The pear-tree was grown in Gloucester, and also the grape-vine. Drayton refers to the 'chalky Chiltern Hills;' to Taunton's 'fruitful dean;' to the 'fertile fields of Hereford;' to Northampton's 'fattening pastures;' to Nottingham's 'flowery meads;' to the fens, fair women, hounds, and large-horned hairy cattle of Lancashire; to the 'mighty ships' of Newcastle; to Yorkshire, as 'an epitome' of everything in the island; to the 'rich meads' of Cambridge; and to 'hemp-bearing Holland's fen' (Lincolnshire). Harrison says the Dee was famous for its trout; the Yorkshire Ouse for a 'verve sweet, fat, and delicate' salmon; and the Thames for its fish of all kinds. The Trent was the Paradise of anglers.[74]

As Goadby's book was ostensibly about Shakespeare, the listing of areas of England would automatically be connected to the dramatist, and thus Shakespeare becomes

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[73] Ibid., vii.

[74] Goadby, *The England of Shakespeare*, 26.

linked to the geography of England. As with Shakespeare's ancestry being used to link him with England, Shakespeare here becomes conflated with the idea of England in order to promote the nation, and this highlights a different way in which Shakespeare could be used to arouse nationalist feeling. As was the case with Fleay's text, Goadby is accentuating the uniqueness of England and is thus contributing to the Little England element of contemporary nationalist debate.

Although it is understandable that Goadby is presenting this overview of places in England in a book that sets out to acquaint its readers with the country during Shakespeare's life, the volume is supposed to be *Shakespeare's* England and yet many of these places bear no direct relevance to Shakespeare. There is no evidence in the documentary record that Shakespeare visited, or had any interest in, Newcastle or Yorkshire for example, yet they are presented here as integral parts of the country in which Shakespeare lived. This parochialism ensures that England is elevated and placed firmly in the centre of readers' minds. The exact reason for Goadby including these descriptions cannot be recovered, but their effects are interesting: firstly the repetition achieved by presenting these places as a list serves to reinforce the Englishness of the story of Shakespeare's life; there is no escaping that this is a very English history. Again, despite the fact that Goadby's work was published at a time when British Imperial expansion was taking place with a renewed vigour, this is very much a text permeated with Little England sensibilities. Secondly, by placing all of these locations within the context of a history of Shakespeare's England, Goadby is unifying and glorifying the nation. The England which produced Shakespeare is made up of all of these constituent areas – each with their own individual traits – and thus the streams and fields which produce such great fish and cattle (and women) are also, as a whole, responsible for the making of such a great poet. The creation of Shakespeare is

something of which the whole nation can be proud. Indeed, Shakespeare is a 'great man' and the 'greatest national bard;' this promotion of Shakespeare, and linking of him with the people from all over Britain, shows them to be 'a people capable of great things…,' full of 'the valour which wraps itself in the British flag and dies in its defence.'[75] Goadby's *The England of Shakespeare*, part of Cassell's Popular Library, sold for just one shilling and went through at least four editions between 1880 and 1889, but the use of British geography in relation to Shakespeare was not just restricted to publications which, despite their obvious targeting of a wide audience, could be seen as catering to a specific market. The stated aims of works like Fleay's and Goadby's was to present the country in which Shakespeare lived, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that they deal with the geography of that country even if it is in an overtly nationalistic manner. Yet this type of geographic nationalism is also evident in more general works of reference.

Returning to Lee's biography of Shakespeare in the *DNB*, for example, it can be seen that he spends much time, and is very precise, in detailing the locations of all of the events in Shakespeare's life. A closer analysis of the extract quoted on pp. 59-60 above, highlights the way in which geography is utilised in Shakespeare's biography:

> To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe. Tradition points to that as Shakespeare's favourite route, rather than to the road by Banbury and Aylesbury… The Crown Inn (formerly 3 Cornmarket Street) near Carfax, at Oxford, was long pointed out as one of his resting places.[76]

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[75] Ibid., 11 and *passim*., also 186, 132.

[76] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1292.

Like Goadby, Lee lists towns and cities around England as a means of locating Shakespeare within a firmly English tradition – indeed, emphasis is even placed on the names of the towns through which Shakespeare did *not* pass.

The idea that Shakespeare travelled by this route is taken from an 1884 essay by John W. Hales; Lee does cite the reference, but it is interesting that he is selective about what he chooses to take from Hales. In 'From Stratford to London,' an article in the *Cornhill Magazine* from 1877 which was later reprinted in Hales' collected works *Notes and Essays on Shakespeare* in 1884 (with a second edition in 1892), Hales postulates the route that Shakespeare would have travelled, suggesting that it may provide an insight into the playwright and the people he may have met along the way. Hales' writing foreshadows Lee's in the way he makes frequent mention of places in England: on one page alone he introduces Clapton Bridge, Alderminster, Newbold, Tredington, and Lower Eatington.[77] There is the promotion of nationalism here too in the thought of Shakespeare passing down the length of England between Stratford and London, travelling through the various towns and villages along the way, perhaps touching the lives of those he encountered. However, while Lee states categorically that Shakespeare travelled 'on foot,' Hales equally firmly claims that Shakespeare would have travelled by horse – due, partly, to what he sees as the suggested lameness of the poet in sonnet 37Q, and also the fact that Elizabethans apparently disliked walking; 'we might just ask in passing whether pedestrianizing is not quite a modern English taste? A German who wondered why no one walks in England was told "we are too rich, too lazy, and too proud."'[78] The selectivity displayed by Lee here in what he chooses to adopt from Hales betrays an agenda which is primarily interested in placing Shakespeare among the

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[77] Hales, 'From Stratford to London', 82.

[78] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1292.
    Hales, 'From Stratford to London', 6.

locations of the Elizabethan countryside, even if this means that accuracy of research is compromised. Lee's biography also includes such arguably incidental details as the fact that Shakespeare's ancestors came from Snitterfield, that Mary Arden's father owned a farm at Wilmcote, and that one advocate of the deer-stealing legend was a vicar at Saperton in Gloucestershire.[79] Citing the vicar obviously highlights the historical precedent of the story that Lee wants to promote, but locating the vicar's parish infuses the biography with the names of provincial areas of England – the geography lending a particularly English air to the essay. And the names accumulate rapidly: Penrith, Kirkland, Doncaster, Rowington, Fulbroke, Worcester, and numerous others – many of them not even places with which Lee claims Shakespeare had any connection – all find their way into the narrative. A number of nineteenth-century writers use this repetition, or inclusion of place-names which are incidental at best, in order to permeate their literary pursuits with a nationalist sentiment. Rose Kingsley in 'Shakespeare's Country,' for example, employs this strategy as do De Quincey and Baynes in the *Britannica*.[80] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps' *Illustrations of the Life of Shakespeare* takes this technique to extreme levels. Halliwell-Phillipps was one of the most prolific Shakespeare scholars of the late nineteenth century and he begins his *Illustrations* by informing his readers that,

> In the hope of discovering the footsteps of Shakespeare during his provincial tours
>
> in England, I have personally examined the records of the following cities and

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[79] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1286, 1287, 1291.

[80] See Kingsley, 'Shakspeare's Country', and Rose G. Kingsley, 'Shakspeare's Country (pt. II)', *English Illustrated Magazine,* (February 1885).
Baynes, for example, notes that 'Stirred by the natural desire of visiting at leisure the more celebrated places of his native district, he [Shakespeare] would pass from Stratford to Henley and Hamptin, to Wroxall Priory and Kenilworth Castle, to Stoneleigh Abbey and Leamington Priors, to Warwick Keep and Guy's Cliffe.' Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 738. Baynes also repeats places local to Stratford such as 'Wood Park, Shrub Lands, Ockley Wood, Furze Hill, Oakham, Ashbourne, Alcott Wood, Berecote Wood, and Radland Gorse.' Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 739.

towns, – Warwick, Bewdley, Dover, Banbury, Shrewsbury, Maidstone,

Faversham, Southampton, Newport, Bridport, Weymouth, Lewes, Coventry,

Bristol, Kingston-on-Thames, Lyme Regis, Dorchester, Canterbury, Sandwich,

Queenborough, Ludlow, Stratford-on-Avon, Leominster, Folkestone, Winchelsea,

New Romney, Barnstaple, Rye, York, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Leicester, Hythe, and

Cambridge…[81]

This chronicling of his extensive and admirable research may be seen as an attempt to shed light on Shakespeare's biography, or simply impress his readers. Halliwell-Phillipps goes on, '[i]n no single instance have I at present found in any municipal record a notice of the poet himself,' although there is, apparently, some unspecified information concerning his acting company.[82] It is unclear then, what the purpose of this list is except to record Halliwell-Phillipps' unfruitful endeavours. The seemingly unnecessary nature of the inventory, combined with its apparently arbitrary order (it is not compiled alphabetically, in terms of geography, or in order of any relevance to Shakespeare's life), would suggest that it is simply the repetition and accumulation of the English place-names which is Halliwell-Phillipps' intention.

   In his 1881 book *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, Halliwell-Phillipps takes this yet further. In showing that the surname Shakespeare was a common one in England throughout history, he writes:

   From an early date Shakespeares abounded most in Warwickshire. In the fifteenth

   century they were to be found in that county at Coventry, Wroxhall, Balsall,

   Knowle, Meriden and Rowington; in the sixteenth century, at Berkswell,

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[81] The British Library Catalogue lists over 280 works by Halliwell-Phillipps between 1850 and 1891.
   James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, (Brighton: Printed for the Author's Friends, 1881), xiv-xv.

[82] Ibid., xv.

Snitterfield, Lapworth, Haseley, Ascote, Rowington, Packwood, Salford, Tanworth, Barston, Warwick, Tachbrook, Haselor, Rugby, Budbrook, Wroxhall, Norton-Lindsey, Wolverton, Hampton-in-Arden, Knowle, Hampton Lucy and Alcester; and in the seventeenth century, at Weston, Haseley, Henley-in-Arden, Kenilworth, Wroxhall, Nuneaton, Tardebigg, Charlecote, Kingswood, Knowle, Flenkenho, Coventry, Rowington, Hatton, Ansley, Solihull, Lapworth, Budbrook, Arley, Packington, Tanworth, Warwick, Longbridge, Kington, Fillongley, Little Packington, Meriden, Long Itchington, Claverdon and Tachbrook.[83]

Again, the mantra-like listing (and repetition) of the place names makes the history of Shakespeare and his family unavoidably English, and also has the effect of showing that England had been populated for many centuries (and populated by 'Shakespeares' no less – the name of 'the idol not merely of a nation but of the educated world').[84] It becomes evident that Halliwell-Phillipps was mindful of ideas of historical tradition in a nation and the unity of its people when he describes Shakespeare's tombstone as one 'of the priceless relics of ancient England and her gifted sons.'[85] This conveys both antiquity and greatness upon the people of England and thus superiority over other nations. The commonality between Lee and Halliwell-Phillipps is that both use the parochial focus on Little England to advance their nationalist agendas. The fact that the geography of Britain was being used in this way is interesting because those who championed Imperialist expansion were driven largely by the desire to increase the amount of physical landscape that Britain possessed, yet these writers were using Shakespeare to put forward the view that Little England was idyllic thus, in many ways, rendering expansion unnecessary – nothing could improve on Britain.

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[83] Ibid., 95.

[84] Ibid., v.

[85] Ibid., 90.

Many of the works which promote a sense of nationalism serve to link Shakespeare with the nation of Britain, but it should also be noted that many of them fulfil the secondary function of linking Shakespeare with the very people who would be reading those texts. The fact that Shakespeare was shown to have a British heritage; to be a man who enjoyed the physical geography of Britain, and the suggestion that he lived in, or had contact with, many of the localities throughout the nation, would presumably have struck a chord with some of the readers of these works. Anyone whose genealogy was British, or who could relate to the Shakespeare who went for country walks, enjoyed viewing the British countryside, took part in the rural activities described by Samuel Neil, or who had even travelled to one of the numerous geographical locations mentioned, could find something in common with Shakespeare. As with linking Shakespeare to Britain through his ancestry, the infusion of these literary pursuits with the geography of the nation serves to bind the literary figure and Britain together. What becomes apparent then, is that there were definite broad preoccupations with which the writers of these literary pursuits were concerned. An identity is being sought for Britain, beginning with the nomenclature used to describe it and including the physical geography, and people, which make the nation. There are evidently general trends which characterise nineteenth-century representations of the nation and of Shakespeare's role in promoting this. So writers invoke ideas of pastoral ideals and ancient bloodlines in order to construct a very particular nation. However, there is also interesting diversity in terms of how individual writers chose to display and promote those trends. It has been seen that there could be different Shakespeares constructed and that there was also the possibility of approaching the nation from an Imperialist Expansionist viewpoint or that of an insular Little Englander.

iii) Patriotism

While the linking of Shakespeare and Britain served to unify and promote the nation, the definition of Britain against another nation could serve to highlight oppositions or differences which would also increase nationalistic feeling. For the purposes of this thesis, such nationalism will be termed 'patriotism' and much of the literature produced about Shakespeare sets up very definite oppositions between Britain and other nations. So it is that in 'Voltaire and Shakespeare,' and 'Shakespeare and Napoleon III,' the English appreciation of Shakespeare is contrasted with that of the French; in 'Shakspeare's Critics: English and Foreign' with the French and Germans; and by John Duns in the *North British Review* with the Irish.[86] Henry Irving too contrasts English and French methods of acting Shakespeare in volume four of his 'An Actor's Notes' series in the *Nineteenth Century*.[87] As is evident even from these examples, the French were a popular choice as the opposition in the literary pursuits of this time.

The relationship between France and Britain had always been a volatile one and most of the previous century had seen the two nations at war. A number of recent works have examined the ways in which the cultures of each country influenced the other prior to, and during, this period.[88] It is here that the Expansionist sensibilities of certain writers can most clearly be seen. Much of the antagonism between nations at this time

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[86] Theodore Child, 'Voltaire and Shakespeare', *Cornhill Magazine,* 43 (February 1881), Theodore Child, 'Shakespeare & Napoleon III', *Gentleman's Magazine,* (March 1885), G. H. Lewes, 'Shakspeare's Critics: English and Foreign', *Edinburgh Review,* 90 (July 1849), John Duns, 'New Exegesis of Shakspeare', *North British Review,* 31 (November 1859).

[87] Henry Irving, 'An Actor's Notes on Shakspeare: no. 4. M. Coquelin on Actors and Acting', *Nineteenth Century,* 21 (June 1887). Although the motive behind this article is a personal disagreement between Irving and Coquelin, Irving adheres to the idea that the English and French races have different characteristics.

[88] Georgios Varouxakis notes that France was 'the foreign country *par excellence*,' (Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*, 2). See also, *The French Revolution and British Culture*, ed. Ceri Crossley and Ian Small, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), and Helen Phelps Bailey, *Hamlet In France: From Voltaire To Laforgue*, (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1964) has written on the impact of, and gradual obsession with, *Hamlet* among French intellectuals. See also Colley, *Britons*, 1-3, 368.

needs to be understood with Imperial expansion in mind; many of the major European nations such as Spain, Holland and Portugal had sought colonisation of Asia, Africa and South America; and Prussia and France were still dominant forces on the world stage. As with the different ways of approaching the promotion of Britain, there were a number of ways in which the French could be denigrated: either the French could be portrayed as having no understanding of great literature such as Shakespeare, meaning that the British had superior taste; it could be claimed that France had not produced a writer to rival Shakespeare, meaning that the French had to accept Shakespeare, and thus Britain, as superior; or Shakespeare himself, the great writer and thinker, could be shown to have been anti-French. One of the clearest examples of an anti-French sentiment being attributed to Shakespeare comes from John W. Hales' 'King Lear' which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in January 1875. Hales was a prolific contributor to a number of prominent nineteenth-century magazines including the *Academy*, the *Contemporary Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, *Fraser's Magazine, Longman's Magazine*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and the *Quarterly Review*, and was also Professor of English at Bedford College for Women from 1867 until 1890. In discussing the section of *Lear* where Cordelia is brought, dead, onto the stage, Hales explains to his readers why such an event had to occur:

> In the first place, it must be noted that Cordelia lands in England at the head of a
> French army, and the national sentiment, strong always – boisterously strong in the
> Elizabethan age – demanded that the enterprise should therefore fail.[89]

This claim that the ending of *Lear* fulfilled a pan-national Franco-phobic desire is an interesting one given the period in which Hales was writing.

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[89] J. W. Hales, 'King Lear', *Fortnightly Review,* 23 O.S., 17 N.S. (January 1875), 100-2.

Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear*, in which Cordelia does not perish, was the most widely produced version of the play for the entire eighteenth and the majority of the nineteenth centuries.[90] Thus if, as Hales is claiming, Cordelia's death satisfies a nationalistic desire, then the most popular version of *Lear* in his own time was decidedly unpatriotic, which questions the concept of nationalism being used by Hales, and also the patriotism of the people of England. Moreover, the death of Cordelia, albeit from suicide, was present in the sources upon which the play was based, meaning that such a conclusion cannot justly be attributed to any nationalist agenda on the part of Shakespeare.[91] That nationalist promotion is Hales' main aim is made clear by the fact that he uses this example despite the complexities that it raises rather than because of the evidence it provides. In portraying Shakespeare as a fierce nationalist, Hales is clearly suggesting that this national sentiment is a positive attribute; Shakespeare was a patriot and it was understandable that 'he could not let foreign troops overrun the dear free soil of this island,' which Hales calls the 'national reason' for Cordelia's death.[92]

While Hales sought to promote the English by noting their desire to repel any foreign invader as well as a particular aversion to the French, other writers sought to vituperate France more overtly. In 'Voltaire and Shakespeare,' the art critic, travel writer, and noted journalist, Theodore Child, discusses the nature of Voltaire's dislike for Shakespeare, suggesting that this was born out of jealousy for the playwright's

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[90] 'For 150 years, in the theatre, Tate's version, with some modifications, was the only *King Lear* to be had.' See *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, (London: Routledge, 2000), 66.

[91] The story of King Leir in Holinshed's *Chronicles* concludes with Leir and Cordeilla's successful invasion of Britain with their Gallic army, and Leir's restoration to the throne. See W. G. Boswell-Stone, *Shakespeare's Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), 1-6. Cordeilla does die but it should be noted that, in *King Leir*, her death takes place some time after the main events of the play and is suicide. As Kenneth Muir suggests, Shakespeare's alterations to his source material were more likely to have been dramatic than ideological. Kenneth Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1977), 196-208.

[92] Hales, 'King Lear', 100.

popularity.[93] 'Shakespeare and Napoleon III' is a retelling of the events in Paris in 1864 (the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth), when French artisans tried to organise a banquet in Shakespeare's honour, at which Victor Hugo (1802-85), who was in exile following Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1851, was to have presented a speech. At the last moment, however, the French government prohibited the banquet, and another one which had been organised by English expatriate residents in Paris, leading to claims that they had banned the honouring of Shakespeare in France. Child claims that it was 'useless' to expect the French 'to appreciate the bold and sublime conceptions of Shakespeare.'[94] Despite the titles and what are ostensibly the subjects of Child's pieces, it is really the French nation as a whole that he is condemning in these articles rather than just Napoleon III (1808-73) or Voltaire (1694-1778). For Child, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare *is* England, that he is the 'national poet' and, in aligning Shakespeare against two French targets, Child makes these figures function as implicit metonymies for their respective nations.[95] Thus Shakespeare – and so England – is shown as superior to Napoleon III who can be taken to symbolise the French military and aristocracy, while Child is at great pains to point out that Voltaire is the unrivalled talent of French art, thus making Shakespeare superior to French literature.

In placing Shakespeare and Napoleon/Voltaire – and therefore their respective nations – in opposition, it is inevitable that combative imagery would be employed and one of the most common rhetorical tropes to be used in the discussion of Shakespeare

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[93] Theodore Child wrote a number of articles in the 1880s concerning the reception of Shakespeare by the French; he also wrote books in the later nineteenth century on topics as wide ranging as art, travel, aesthetics, fine dining, architecture, and women's fashion. Between 1878 and 1887 he wrote scores of articles for, amongst others, the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *Temple Bar Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as well as *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* in New York, and the *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston. These were among the most popular periodicals in the nineteenth century – the *Cornhill* for example, had a circulation of 80,000 – and so Child's articles were reaching a wide audience. (*British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, ed. Alvin Sullivan, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984)*, xvi).

[94] Child, 'Voltaire and Shakespeare', 214.

[95] Ibid. 231.

and nationalism is that of describing Shakespeare's reception in military terms. Often Shakespeare is described as invading and conquering other countries as they begin to appreciate his works. Obviously, if Shakespeare is used to represent England, this forceful dominance of other nations increases the status of the conqueror and so increases nationalist pride and unity. Unlike the parochial Little Englander subtexts that have been seen in the work of Lee, Halliwell-Phillipps and others this is a much more bellicose, expansionist form of nationalism. Whereas other writers narrowed their focus to Stratford and England to show the importance and uniqueness of the nation, when Shakespeare was used in an expansionist capacity it was still to promote the nation, but through his ability to subjugate other nations. The appreciation of Shakespeare is seen by Child as a 'battle' to be won, and in talking about Voltaire's distaste for the playwright, Child notes that Shakespeare 'did not lack defenders, and the battle went on with more or less violence until Voltaire's death.'[96] Not only does this portray the reception of Shakespeare as a war between England and France, but the mention of Voltaire's death and the linking of it with the end of the battle suggests that Shakespeare, despite dying some 150 years before Voltaire, was still around to vanquish the Frenchman and so win the war. Regardless of Child's martial imagery, England and France were not at war, and he does concede the good relationship between the two countries: noting some 'Anglomania' in France and 'Gallomania' in England, and mentions the qualities that each country brings to this association. Even in this seemingly equal partnership, however, the relationship is not evenly matched. For example, the English give the French 'swords' and 'coaches' (which can be seen as metonyms for military might and transport; the building blocks of civilisation) while the

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[96] Ibid., 229.
    Child's general description of events corresponds with the view taken by Bailey in Bailey, *Hamlet In France*, 12.

French export showy and superfluous ornamentation ('frills and furbelows').[97] Similarly, Child notes that '[i]n exchange for cooks and *perruquiers* we sent them philosophers;' it seems quite clear that the English were getting a poor deal here (chefs and wig-makers for great thinkers is no fair trade), and this not only attempts to demonstrate that the French are taking advantage of the English, but also portrays the English as having much more to offer intellectually than the French, again promoting England as a nation.

As Child is trying to assert both Shakespeare's dominance of the French, and also their ignorance in not liking him, he is faced with a contradiction in his argument because, obviously, the French cannot have been conquered by Shakespeare if, in fact, they did not read his works. Thus Child is forced to use a rhetorical sleight of hand in order to achieve both ends. Essentially, Child takes a single figure or small minority (in these instances Voltaire and Napoleon III's government) who do not appreciate Shakespeare and are ignorant, while showing that the majority of French people *do* in fact admire Shakespeare, thus proving his superiority over French literature. So Child can note how '[i]n 1864, the year of the Shakespeare tercentenary, French literature had made Shakespeare its own, as far perhaps as the genius of the language and of the race permitted,' while also showing how the government ban on the Shakespeare banquet is a stain on the character of the whole nation.[98] Similarly, he can speak with some disgust of how Voltaire calls Shakespeare a 'dungheap' while noting that the French people as a whole embrace Shakespeare, which is testament to 'the progress of the literary taste of the nation.'[99] There appears to be some deliberate slippage in Child's writing here, and he is able to criticise the entire nation for the supposed faults of the minority.

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[97] Child, 'Voltaire and Shakespeare' 224.

[98] Child, 'Shakespeare & Napoleon III', 279.

[99] Child, 'Voltaire and Shakespeare', 226, 219.

The paradox embodied by Child's writing – of other nations being won over by Shakespeare while at the same time not being able to appreciate him as fully as the English – is present in many of these literary pursuits. The complexities arise in the fact that there are two possible ways to promote nationalism through Shakespeare's supposed superiority to foreign literary figures; either Shakespeare is so great that the rest of the world accept him as being the best dramatist (which promotes Britain and unites British people behind the figure-head of Shakespeare), or Shakespeare can only really be appreciated by British people (which unites the nation through the common bond of understanding Shakespeare, and promotes Britain because its people are obviously superior to those who fail to appreciate Shakespeare). Again, these two different ways of using Shakespeare as an arena within which to discuss nationalism and to formulate the debate between isolationist Little Englandism and Imperialist Expansionism show the diversity and subtleties which exist within the use of Shakespeare by those who engaged in these literary pursuits. A number of writers take exception to claims that other countries have a better appreciation of Shakespeare than the British. Cecilia E. Meetkerke, writing for the *Temple Bar* in 1876 noted that there was a 'prevalent modern delusion that but for German insight the great English poet would never have been fully revealed to his countrymen.'[100] Meetkerke twice emphasises Shakespeare's Englishness in this one sentence alone, and later complains about 'foreign actors [who] occupy the English stage, and lend the strange music of their own tongue to the verses of our native bard.'[101] This is interesting as Shakespeare is not only repeatedly claimed as English, but any non-English individual is precluded from taking part in a production of Shakespeare, meaning that Shakespeare was, and still is, the preserve of the English. Moreover, the reason why foreigners are unable to

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[100] Cecilia E. Meetkerke, 'The Real Othello', *Temple Bar Magazine,* 48 (December 1876), 511.

[101] Ibid., 506.

perform Shakespeare is due to the 'music' of their native 'tongue;' suggesting that it is their accent rather than their language which is the obstacle and that, even if they learnt the English language, they would still be unable to perform Shakespeare's verses. Thus, by virtue of their inherent characteristics, Shakespeare can never be seized by another nation; both in understanding, and performance, Shakespeare is, was, and always would be English.

Similarly, George Saintsbury in his *Elizabethan Literature*, announces that he will engage with none of the 'controversies and errors' surrounding Shakespeare, except one:

> The strange and constantly disproved, but constantly repeated assertion that England long misunderstood or neglected Shakespere, and that foreign, chiefly German, aid was required to make her discover him. A very short way is possible with this absurdity.[102]

Saintsbury appears to have very little time for either the French or the Germans, noting that 'France and Germany were much (indeed infinitely) less influential [than Spain and Italy],' on English literature, which he considers to be 'the greatest literature of the world.'[103] Theodore Martin (1816-1909) in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1863, also declares that German people can never really understand Shakespeare;

> simply because he is English and they are Germans, they never can thoroughly fathom him in all his breadth and depth. That they are the greatest critics of Shakspeare is one of the many stupid cants about the great master which are

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[102] Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature*, 159.

[103] Ibid., 448, vii.

propagated without thought from mouth to mouth upon the strength of the names of

Goethe, Schlegel, Horn, Gervinus, and others.[104]

The fact that Martin feels the need to argue that German criticism is 'misty twaddle' or

'dry prosing' suggests that there was a strong value placed on the German handling of

Shakespeare against which he needed to react.[105] R. Pascal, in *Shakespeare in Germany:*

1740-1815 notes how German criticism of Shakespeare was varied and contradictory

until *c.*1815 when Shakespeare's supremacy became almost universally accepted among

the leaders of German thought.[106] In order to assert England's dominance, Martin states

that there is no way that a foreigner could possibly understand Shakespeare better than

his own countrymen:

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[104] Theodore Martin, 'Plays, Players, and Critics', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* 68 (December 1863), 769.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) wrote two significant works on Shakespeare: the first was *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-6), translated as *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels* (1824) by Thomas Carlyle, and again by R. Dillon Boylan in 1855. Carlyle's version remained the more popular, being reissued in 1874, as a shilling edition in 1888, and was reprinted with an introduction by Edward Dowden in 1890. The second work was the essay 'Shakespeare und kein Ende' (1815) but this was not translated prior to the twentieth century. For the somewhat episodic and occasionally erroneous influence of Goethe's writings on the English see William Rose, 'Goethe's Reputation in England During his Lifetime', in *Essays on Goethe*, ed. William Rose, (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1949), 142-85.

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) wrote a number of critical pieces concerning Shakespeare as well as translating sixteen of Shakespeare's plays into German (1797). His *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, originally delivered as lectures (1808), were expanded and published (1809-11) and translated into English by John Black (1783-1855) as *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1815). This was revised by A. J. W. Morrison (1806-1865) in 1846, and reprinted in 1861, 1871, 1879, 1883, 1886, 1892, and 1894.

Franz Christoph Horn (1781-1837) published *Shakspeare's Schauspiele Erläutert* in five volumes (1823-31) but it was not translated into English.

Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805-71) wrote his four-volume *Shakespeare* (1849-50) and supervised its translation into English by Fanny Elizabeth Bunnétt (1832-75) as *Shakespeare Commentaries* (1863). This was then reprinted in 1875, 1877, 1883 and 1892.

For more on German adaptations and performances of Shakespeare's plays see Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage*.

[105] Martin, 'Plays, Players, and Critics', 769.

W. H. Bruford notes the increasing prestige of German criticism in England during the nineteenth century (W. H. Bruford, 'Goethe's Reputation in England Since 1832', in *Essays on Goethe*, ed. William Rose, (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1949), 188-206). Bruford states that 'Though by the second half of the nineteenth century Goethe was recognized in England as one of the supreme poets and thinkers of the world, a classic whom every cultivated man should know, it is probable that there were never very many who actually read him. He had not become, and is never likely to become, anything like so popular in England as Shakespeare is in Germany. This is due in part to the different nature of his work, but also to the absence of translations comparable in quality with the Schlegel-Tieck versions of Shakespeare.' Bruford, 'Goethe's Reputation in England Since 1832', 196. Indeed, there were over one hundred articles written about Goethe in British periodicals between 1816 and 1900. There were eighteen articles about Schlegel, three on Gervinus, and none on Horn. See *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, vol. 4, ed. Walter E. Houghton, 5 vols., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

[106] R. Pascal, *Shakespeare in Germany: 1740-1815*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 2.

> To comment fitly upon him, a man must have English blood in his veins, must
> have grown up in an English home, have lived the broad, free, energetic life of a
> well-trained Englishman; and above all, must have learned in English maids and
> matrons to appreciate and to love the qualities which make "Shakspeare's women"
> stand alone and apart…[107]

Yet there are a number of writers who note the fact that other nations have been dominated by English literature, and thus that they *do* appreciate Shakespeare. G. H. Lewes (1817-78), for example, notes that Britain's Shakespeare is the dominant subject of literary pursuits throughout Europe; '[t]he history of European Taste is written in the history of Shakespearian criticism.'[108] Similarly, Thomas De Quincey states that 'in Germany as well as England, and *now even in France*, the gathering of wits to the vast equipage of Shakspeare is advancing in an accelerated ratio.'[109] An anonymous reviewer in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1852 discusses recent translations of two works by François Guizot (1787-1874), one on Pierre Corneille (1606-84), and the other on Shakespeare. While the premise of the article is to review the two works – showing that French critics *were* engaging with Shakespeare – it soon becomes a discussion of the relative merits of the two dramatists. The reviewer spends most of the discussion about Guizot on the fact that the Frenchman was apparently too scared to compare Shakespeare and Corneille directly for fear of 'exciting international jealousies,' and that this is why the two dramatists were dealt with in separate volumes.[110]

The *Dublin* reviewer evidently does not feel so hampered and '[i]t is possible for us to bring Corneille and Shakspeare face to face;' unsurprisingly, Shakespeare is felt to

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[107] Martin, 'Plays, Players, and Critics', 769.

[108] Lewes, 'Shakspeare's Critics', 39.

[109] De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 86.

[110] 'Guizot on the French and English Drama', 197.

be superior.[111] Indeed, Shakespeare is not only considered to be better than Corneille, but also every other French dramatist; '[t]ake the whole French school – where, in Corneille, Racine, Fontelle, or Voltaire, are we to look for those mighty workings of the heart which deform the countenance of an Othello, paralyse the venerable features of a Lear, and have converted the lineaments of a dead Cordelia into those of an angel?'[112] That Shakespeare and Corneille represent the entire canon of their respective nation's literature is evident from the fact that the article is called 'Guizot on the French and English Drama.' Yet clearly the *Dublin* reviewer considers Shakespeare and Corneille to be representative, not just of the literature of their nations, but of everything about their nations. In noting that Guizot has avoided comparing the two dramatists, the reviewer states that 'he has seemed to avoid in every other instance also a direct comparison between what is French and what is English.'[113] By the end of the article, it becomes the case that Shakespeare – and thus England – is better than every other nation in Europe, because 'Shakspeare stands by himself. It is too late to attempt to gainsay this great truth. The verdict of the world has been pronounced; and England, Germany, France herself, in a thousand acts and admissions, as well as Spain and Italy, have, by this time, recorded their solemn judgement in the matter.'[114] This acknowledgement that other nations could, and did, appreciate Shakespeare, serves to promote both Shakespeare and England. Unlike some of the writers already discussed, however, the elevation of England is more subtle than the use of martial images or the denigration of other nations and this highlights the differences present in nationalistic uses of Shakespeare.

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[111] Ibid., 197.

[112] Ibid. 197.

[113] Ibid. 197.

[114] Ibid. 198.

Within nineteenth-century concepts of nationalism there were a number of different ways in which writers could use Shakespeare. Indeed, there are a range of attitudes towards other countries within literary pursuits which seek to promote Shakespeare and the nation, and not all works required the complete vituperation of other nations. Edwin Goadby's *The England of Shakespeare* is, at times, reminiscent of Theodore Child's writing – *The England of Shakespeare* was written in the same year as 'Voltaire and Shakespeare' – such as when he states that '[l]ead and tin were the staple products of Cornwall, as they had been for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. The roofs of the castles and churches of France were all made of English metal.'[115] This furnishing of French buildings of state and religion with, presumably superior, English materials acts as a metonym for English superiority over the French in the same way that Child's use of different trade items portrayed the respective qualities of the English and French. Similarly the English are ubiquitous throughout the world:

> The pale faces of Englishmen were seen on the canals of Venice and in the streets of Constantinople, in the towns of Hindustan and the isles of the Pacific, in the woods of Brazil and the swamps of Africa. Their abounding vigour and vitality was the theme of the world.[116]

Unlike Child's articles, however, Goadby's nationalistic hyperbole makes allowance for the fact that England is not superior to the rest of the world in every respect. So he states that '[t]he London of the period was not so gay as Paris, nor so bustling and prosperous as Antwerp, nor so full of splendour and intellectual life as Venice. Yet to the Englishman of the day it was an everlasting wonder.'[117] This places London (and the

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[115] Goadby, *The England of Shakespeare*, 40.

[116] Ibid., 69-70.

[117] Ibid., 130-1.

evidently easily-pleased 'Englishman') as inferior to France, Belgium, and Italy, and so, despite the obvious nationalism pervading the work, it is not as overtly partisan as some of the literary pursuits already examined. Similarly, there can be no doubting the romanticised nationalism in passages which describe how English pirates operated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; yet it is not just the English who are praised. Goadby notes how

> The old Viking Temper did not restrict its range to European seas… The seadogs of Devon, the ear-ringed mariners of Wapping, and titled adventurers from all parts, were romantically attracted by every fresh hint of the wealth of the Indies or the glories of the New World. They went forth in their small vessels as brave as lions.[118]

However, it is explained that it was more to do with the behaviour of the time rather than the nation, for while English pirates 'lay in waiting for ships that were never heard of again… The Spaniards served English ships in the same way.'[119] Goadby is not alone in behaving impartially when considering other nations in relation to Shakespeare.

G. H. Lewes' 'Shakspeare's Critics: English and Foreign,' while containing instances of praise and disparagement for both English and foreign critics, is mostly concerned with highlighting the differences between the two nations. So 'we may take it as a fact, that the French are more sedulous in their attention to the elegancies and graces of life, and that the English are more practical and earnest.'[120] Also, 'the French have a more lively fancy, the English a richer imagination.'[121] Despite praising both the

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[118] Ibid., 47-8.

[119] Ibid., 47.

[120] Lewes, 'Shakspeare's Critics' 52.

[121] Ibid. 52-3.

French and the English, Lewes ultimately makes the two nations seem very different: 'no two nations differ more widely in their artistic taste than the French and the English.'[122] However, Lewes also notes the importance of critics from other countries, and defends French writers who had been ridiculed for adapting Shakespearean plays, by noting that it was not a peculiarly French activity: '[w]e English laugh at Dumas… but we should remember that Cibber had done the same with Richard III; and that our own Garrick… had practised still bolder experiments.'[123] This is not to say that Lewes is not pursuing a nationalist agenda; he frequently talks about 'we English,' and 'our philosophers and poets,' which creates a sense of nationalism through unity and inclusiveness. Indeed, the fact that he is juxtaposing 'English' criticism with the all-encompassing 'foreign' critics is telling, although by 'foreign' he seems to mean almost exclusively French and German. What this shows is that, in order to pursue a nationalistic agenda, Lewes did not have to be aggressively vituperative of other nations. This is all very different then, to the work of Child, Meetkerke, Saintsbury, Martin, or others who would accept no acknowledgement of a non-British understanding of Shakespeare and thus shows the variety of ways in which Shakespeare could be used to promote a nationalist agenda. It can be seen that there were many writers who used Shakespeare to actually talk about nationalism and that within this discourse there were various different agendas at work and various different ways in which a writer could add to the overall nationalist dialogue of the nation. Isolationist Little Englandism and aggressive Imperialist Expansionism, for example, were two different agendas that could be pursued yet they often employed the same or similar

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[122] Ibid., 54.

[123] Ibid., 76.
    Alexandre Dumas 'Père' (1802-70) reworked a number of Shakespeare's plays for the French stage, most notably *Romeo & Juliet* (as *Une fille du régent* 1846) and *Hamlet* (1846-7). His versions, despite their popularity, were criticised for their special effects and physicality which some felt undermined the poetic subtlety of his source material. See Alice Clarke, 'Dumas, Alexandre', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

methods. The presence of so much nationalist sentiment within Shakespearean literary pursuits confirms that nationalism was a common concern in the nineteenth century, while the diversity within individual approaches to nationalism suggests unease and confusion regarding how best to pursue this agenda. This chapter will now turn to the different ways in which the nation of Britain itself was conceived in order to further trace the ways in which a nationalist Shakespeare could be constructed.

c) Shakespeare and the Nineteenth Century

The literary pursuits surveyed so far have all promoted a sense of nationalism by linking Shakespeare with the nation of Britain. A sense of anxiety about, and desperation to promote, the nation is suggested by the number of different ways in which Shakespeare is used although, at first glance, there appears to be a relatively stable attitude towards the concept of the nation itself. Essentially, the nation is conceived of as a rural paradise populated by admirable people who are antiquated and thus venerable. Moreover, Britain is repeatedly asserted to be superior to other nations, although the disparity in how this is approached – there being those who looked at the nation in isolation and those who favoured a more multinational and thus expansionist view – again suggests either uncertain timidity or desperate vehemence. What becomes apparent, however, is that there is more than one Britain which is being allied to Shakespeare. The relationship between Shakespeare's Elizabethan England and these writers' Victorian Britain has two possible ways of being portrayed; either that Elizabethan England represents a proud past (which Victorian Britain has either progressed or regressed from), or Elizabethan England and Victorian Britain are almost identical thus meaning that the nineteenth century is a time of stability and continuity.

Essentially these differing approaches can be understood as 'Partisan Interpretations' of history – or 'Whig' and 'Tory' interpretations – which were common historical approaches from the First Age of Party (*c*1680-1715) to the early twentieth century.[124] The more prevalent Whig history was described by Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931) as a form of historiography which viewed the past from a presentist perspective: that is, it regarded the past as a precursor to modern times and saw this relationship as the sole reason for studying history. Usually there was a sense of progression or advancement in this idea of history which used nostalgic views of the past to feed into what Butterfield calls 'the ratification if not the glorification of the present.'[125] Tory histories, seemingly less common and certainly less commented-on, share much of the methodology and characteristics of their partisan rivals' approach, although Mark Knights notes that '[w]hereas Whigs lauded "revolution principles," Tories attacked them. The Tory interpretation prized order over revolution and continuity over change.'[126]

That such concepts as 'Partisan Interpretations' of history held currency in the nineteenth century can be seen from the way that William John Courthope (1842–1917) discussed what he saw as partisan attitudes to literature in a series of journal articles in 1884-5.[127] In *The Liberal Movement in English Literature* Courthope noted that contemporary literary criticism was divided as if along antagonistic party lines and that

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[124] For more on Partisan History and Tory Interpretations see Mark Knights, 'The Tory Interpretation of History in the Rage of Parties', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 68, no. 1 & 2 (March 2005). For more on Whig Interpretations of history see Henry Knight Miller, 'The 'Whig Interpretation' of Literary History', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1972); Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 1973 edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Limited, 1931); P. B. M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930*, trans. H. S. Lake and Tihe van Wijk (London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978); and Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past.*

[125] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 9.

[126] Knights, 'The Tory Interpretation of History in the Rage of Parties', 358.

[127] Between July 1884 and August 1885 *The National Review* published Courthope's 'The Liberal Movement in English Literature' Pts. I-VI, these were later collected and published as William John Courthope, *The Liberal Movement in English Literature*, (London: John Murray, 1885).

it would be better to seek unity between different factions rather than continue a cycle of contradiction. Although Courthope's thesis betrays that there was certainly some concern about the polarisation of intellectual standpoints – something which will be seen in the present thesis – it is particularly relevant here due to his characterisation of the opposing factions as being akin to political parties and the way he classifies each. Courthope states that:

> I have not used the words "Liberalism" and "Conservatism" in any invidious or party sense. By "Liberalism" I mean the disposition which leads men to seek above all things the enlargement of individual liberty: by "Conservatism" that which makes them desire primarily to preserve the continuity of national development… Pushed to their logical extremes, each has a danger peculiar to itself. Excessive Conservatism may doubtless develop into the stagnation of Ancestor Worship. On the other hand, the extravagant pursuit of Liberty ends in an individualism which strikes at the root of social and national growth.[128]

By viewing Conservatism as 'adhering to tradition and authority' and Liberalism as 'striving after change and novelty,' Courthope is confirming that there was a contemporary tendency to disagree intellectually about the role that the nation played in relation to the past.[129] He goes on; 'Conservatism, in whatever sphere, consists in preserving and expanding the stream of traditional national life which has come down to us from our fathers.'[130] Although Courthope uses different nomenclature to the present thesis it can certainly be seen that his ideas of polarised intellectual approaches can be easily mapped onto the ideas discussed in this chapter. In this project, and following

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[128] Ibid., ix-x.

[129] Ibid., 20.

[130] Ibid., 39.

Butterfield and Knights, the differing methods of interpreting Elizabethan England in order to promote nationalism to a Victorian British readership will be categorised as 'Whig Interpretations' and 'Tory Interpretations.'[131] The viewing of Elizabethan England as a precursor to Victorian Britain (while passing either a positive or negative judgement on that movement) is a Whig outlook, while praising of the similarities between the Elizabethan era and the Victorian age fulfil the Tory desire for continuity. It is important to note that Whig and Tory interpretations in this context denote rhetorical techniques which serve to relate the past to the present in a certain way rather than strict historiographical philosophies on the part of individual critics. It should also be understood that the political allegiance of a particular writer, or place of publication, does not necessarily dictate their interpretation of history; thus articles appearing in, for example, the Whig *Edinburgh Review* or the Tory *Quarterly Review*, could conceivably follow divergent historiographical methodologies.

As noted earlier, the *OED* cited Shakespeare as either a prominent user or the originator of more words than any other source and, in this way, he could be considered by nineteenth-century readers as speaking the same language that they had now so thoroughly preserved and regulated. It was not only single words that Shakespeare and the Victorians had in common; Thomas De Quincey, in his essay on Shakespeare for the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes that,

> One of the profoundest tests by which we can measure the congeniality of an
>
> author with the national genius and temper, is the degree in which his thoughts or

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[131] There is a caveat to this categorisation: the terms Whig and Tory in relation to historical interpretation are themselves contested, and not easily defined (see Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past*, esp. 2-3, and Knights, 'The Tory Interpretation of History in the Rage of Parties' 355). Their purpose here is to serve as a useful demarcation between two different methods of presenting the past which fit broadly into accepted partisan methodologies. There would perhaps be grounds for considering the view of the past as part of a progressive history as both Whiggish and Tory Radical (see Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past*, 7, and 231-51), and the conflating of past and present as something else. However, as the main concern of this thesis is not a thorough investigation and definition of Whig and Tory historiography, the use of the respective terms as labels is sufficient.

his phrases interweave themselves with our daily conversation, and pass into the currency of the language. *Few French authors*, if any, have imparted one phrase to the colloquial idiom; with respect to Shakspeare, a large dictionary might be made of such phrases as "win golden opinions," "in my mind's eye," "patience on a monument," "o'erstep the modesty of nature," "more honour'd in the breach than the observance," "palmy state," "my poverty and not my will consents," and so forth, without end. This reinforcement of the general language, by aids from the mintage of Shakspeare, had already commenced in the seventeenth century.[132]

Not only is De Quincey here placing the words of Shakespeare in everyday nineteenth-century conversation – and so making the way in which Shakespeare spoke the same way that he and his readers speak – but he is also using this proposition to make claims about the importance of Shakespeare. So Shakespeare is shown to be superior to most French authors, or all of them, due to the very fact of this close connection with his nineteenth-century descendants. There is also a wider point being made regarding the Académie Française and their regulation of the French language; presumably De Quincey considered the freedom with which the English language could develop to be a point of superiority over the intellectual culture of France.

In 1869, seventeen years before he would replace De Quincey as author of the *Britannica's* Shakespeare essay, Thomas Spencer Baynes wrote an article for *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* entitled 'Shakespeare's Vocabulary and Style.'[133] In this Baynes makes the case for Shakespeare's language being much more intelligible to 'hard-working Englishmen,' and 'intelligent English readers' than past critics had claimed.[134] Baynes argues against Henry Hallam and Samuel Johnson who felt that

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[132] De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 74 n.

[133] Thomas Spencer Baynes, 'Shakespeare's Vocabulary and Style', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* 80 (August 1869).

[134] Ibid., 237, 238.

Shakespeare's English was essentially a different language to their own and was inaccessible.[135] By claiming that Shakespeare can be easily understood by the average nineteenth-century English speaker, De Quincey's and Baynes' Tory interpretation is making Shakespeare their contemporary and, perhaps, their equal. If any English person can engage with Shakespeare then all English people share a common bond and are unified by this engagement, and an understanding of Shakespeare further means that all English nationals are elevated by their association with such a world-dominating genius. Not that this was the only view which could be held, however, George L. Craik (1798–1866), who was Professor of History and English Literature at Queen's College Belfast from 1849 to 1866, published a number of books about Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century, and felt it necessary to note that '[t]he English of the sixteenth century is in various respects a different language from that of the nineteenth.'[136] This was a Whig view of history and, despite being contrary to the ideas of Baynes and De Quincey, it still promoted a sense of nationalism. The fact that there was such antiquity in the language – a version of which was still being spoken in England in the nineteenth century – meant that the English language had a long pedigree and, as it had developed over time, was a superior version to the one spoken by Shakespeare. Thus if Shakespeare was the world-dominating user of English, those who spoke it in the nineteenth century are shown to be even greater still. While both Whig and Tory views of history could make use of Shakespeare for a nationalist agenda, they provided very

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[135] Henry Hallam (1777–1859) had stated that Shakespeare's writing was difficult to understand for both the modern and contemporary reader and that, as such, the works had to be studied in much the same way as a foreign language had to be. Hallam noted 'The phrases, unintelligible and improper, except in the sense of their primitive roots, which occur so copiously in his plays, seem to be unaccountable on the supposition of absolute ignorance.' (Henry Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. 2, 4 vols., (London: John Murray, 1839), 389). Samuel Johnson (1709–84) felt that Shakespeare's words were difficult to understand because of the extent to which the language had changed in the intervening years. Johnson proposed extensive study of Shakespeare's contemporaries in order to be able to understand the language used at the time when Shakespeare wrote. See Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage*.

[136] George L. Craik, *The English of Shakespeare, Illustrated in a Philological Commentary on his Julius Caesar*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), ix.

different outlooks on the relationship between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and on the identity of the nation itself.

i) Whig History

In 1888, Sidney Lee used the occasion of the 131st meeting of the New Shakspere Society to present a paper entitled 'Elizabethan England and the Jews' which was essentially an exploration of the different manner in which immigrants – primarily, as the title suggests, Jews – were treated by both the general populace and the government. The very fact that Lee felt compelled to deliver such evidence to the prestigious society suggests that this information was not common knowledge and implies a belief in there being differences between the nineteenth and sixteenth centuries; the descriptions that he gives – of an England sheltering persecuted Protestants from Catholic Europe – underline this.[137] Lee was not alone and a number of works were produced in the late nineteenth century which aimed to allow contemporary readers access into the world that Shakespeare had inhabited; some took the form of guides which translated and explained Elizabethan England for the nineteenth-century reader. As has been seen earlier in this chapter, *The England of Shakespeare* by Edwin Goadby proclaimed itself as a 'guide book' to Shakespeare's England.[138] Similarly, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First* was produced in 1865 by William Brenchley Rye (1818–1901), assistant-keeper of the Department of Printed Books for the British Museum; the book's purpose was to illustrate 'the fascinating and attractive theme of Old England – its men and manners, its

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[137] Sidney Lee, 'Elizabethan England and the Jews (read at the 131st meeting of the New Shakspere Society. Friday, February 10 1888)', in *New Shakspere Society Transactions*, (1888).

[138] Goadby, *The England of Shakespeare*.

women and their ways, as they were seen and noted by those observing foreigners during the glorious effulgence of the Shakespearian era.'[139] Nicholas Waterhouse produced a pamphlet entitled *The England of Shakspeare* and maintains the distance between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries by referring to 'Old England,' indeed he is able to state quite emphatically that 'Shakspeare's time was very different to today.'[140]

Not all works were so explicit in their exposition of the past and, in *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, Walter Bagehot (1826–77) explains to his readers how Elizabethans felt loyalty towards their sovereign 'not because it [the monarchy] was good, but because it existed. In his [Shakespeare's] time, people no more thought of the origin of the monarchy than they did of the origin of the Mendip Hills. The one had always been there, and so had the other.'[141] In feeling the need to explain Elizabethan attitudes to royalty, Bagehot evidently feels that they were dissimilar to his own era and so is highlighting the difference between sixteenth- and nineteenth-century views on the monarchy. Further to this, Bagehot is writing after the publication of *Principles of Geology* (3 vols. 1830-33) by Sir Charles Lyell (1797–1875), which had, very publicly, begun to suggest exactly how geological formations such as hills were created.[142] Lyell's theory highlighted geological development over time, and thus the difference between historical periods and, interestingly, noted the very formation of the Mendip Hills.[143] Also, Bagehot's reference invokes the idea of progress in scientific knowledge. Despite the fact that Bagehot is notoriously difficult to classify as simply Whig or Tory

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[139] William Brenchley Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1865), ix.

[140] Waterhouse, *The England of Shakspeare and the Greenwood of Shakspeare*, 24, 31.

[141] Walter Bagehot, *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen: A Series of Articles Reprinted by Permission, principally from the National Review*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), 259.

[142] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology: Being an Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface by Reference to Causes Now in Operation*, 3 vols., (London: John Murray, 1830-3).

[143] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, vol. 2, 221.

in his political activities, this is the epitome of a Whig historical text; not only does Bagehot see the past as a precursor to his own times, but the condescension in Bagehot's tone suggests that he considers decreasing reverence towards the monarchy to be a sign of progress.[144] This Whig historiography by Bagehot is praising the modern nation because of its improvement over the time of Shakespeare, which, as it was a time that produced a genius, shows Britain to be even greater still.

Not all writers who portrayed a sense of movement between the past and present saw it in terms of Positive Whiggish progress, however; George Walter Thornbury (1828-76) paints the Elizabethan years as a golden age from which nineteenth-century society had declined.[145] In the two volumes of *Shakspere's England; or, Sketches of our Social History in the Reign of Elizabeth*, Thornbury sets out his role as a guide to his audience; and '[t]he England to which we wish to introduce our readers is Shakspere's England, the England of the sixteenth century.'[146] That the age of Elizabeth is very different from his own time is implicit in the fact that Thornbury feels the need to guide people in the first place, but he also repeatedly reminds his readers that things were very different two-hundred and fifty years previously. While Thornbury's devotion might be to the nation of the past, the promotion of England and the unification of its people is clear; Elizabethan England was great, Thornbury feels, because

> A lion-hearted woman, and English-souled, sat on the throne… The times are great
>
> times, and patriotism is roused… Dying men on the stake turn their glazing eyes

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[144] 'The editor of his [Bagehot's] collected works, the former Conservative cabinet minister Norman St John-Stevas [*sic*.], sees his hero as a Conservative. The historian John Burrow identifies him as a Whig… Roger Kimball describes him as a "conservative Liberal".' See H. S. Jones, *Review of Walter Bagehot, Physics and Politics*, 1999, (H-Ideas, H-Net Reviews, Last Update Available: http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=3484937425105, May 17 2006).

[145] Thornbury was a prolific contributor to a number of prominent journals of the time including *Bentley's Miscellany, Ainsworth's, Welcome Guest, Once a Week,* the *Athenæum*, as well as Dickens' *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

[146] G. W. Thornbury, *Shakspere's England; or, Sketches of our Social History in the Reign of Elizabeth*, vol. 1, 2 vols., (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1856), 1.

towards England. Pale men withering in the dark dungeons of the Inquisition, pray for England. The Dutch, battling beside the sea dykes, or on his low flat sandy downs, use the name of England as the war-cry that scares the Spaniard. The Huguenot, bending to axe, whispers "England."'[147]

For Thornbury, nineteenth-century England is a pale imitation of an Elizabethan England in which 'patriotism and loyalty are… warm passions,' and not the 'cold abstractions' they are in Victorian Britain.[148] Similarly, 'Elizabeth proved the greatest queen that ever lived,' which was quite something to say in the age of another queen.[149] Yet all of this highlights the heritage and unity of the people of Britain and ultimately promotes a nationalist agenda. Thornbury's desire to emphasize the differences between the sixteenth and nineteenth century is clear: 'our present national colour, black, was in the golden age reserved for lawyers and divines. This solemn and melancholy hue could never have clothed men who delighted in the bright eyes of nature.'[150] Obviously Thornbury was happier with things as they had been in the sixteenth century; not only was that time a golden age, but he is incredulous that the people of Elizabethan England could ever have worn the solemn and melancholy colours which were now the national standard. Although this Negative Whig view might appear to be anti-nationalist in its denigration of the attitudes of Victorian Britain, the fact that Thornbury unites his readers in a shared heritage – combined with the fact that there is a 'national colour' and an apparently universal attitude of delight among the people of the nation – does serve to unify and promote the nation.

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[147] Ibid., 6.

[148] Ibid., 7.

[149] Ibid., 8.

[150] Ibid., 232.

Similarly, John Sherren Brewer (1810-79), describes an English past which he evidently feels was superior in many respects to his own century. There is no doubting that, for Brewer, the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries are very different, and that 'Shakspeare is above all other men the Englishman of the 16th century.'[151] It becomes obvious, however, that Brewer laments the changes that had taken place in the intervening years; there is a definite sense of regression. Shakespeare lived 'in times which were favourable to poetry – and to dramatic poetry especially – when men were still inspired by the excitement of past and of passing events – when individual characterism had not yet crystallised into one dull uniformity by fixed systems of education or engrossing commercial monopoly.'[152] In discussing whether Shakespeare really did have the poor education usually ascribed to him, Brewer makes the case that the general schooling of Shakespeare's time was better than that of Victorian Britain. Brewer asks '[c]an any period be pointed out in our history which provided on the whole abler schoolmasters or scholars more deeply interested in learning?'[153] It is clear that the love of learning, and able schoolmasters, are preferable to the fixed education of the nineteenth century which results in dull uniformity. Brewer also links this explicitly with a sense of nationalism and suggests that

> The diffusion of classical learning, numerous translations of the dramatic poets of Greece and Rome, intellects sharpened by the great theological controversies in which they had been lately engaged, the stronger sense of national and individual freedom, had prepared men for a keener relish of the higher production of art in all its branches.[154]

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[151] J. S. Brewer, 'Shakspeare', *Quarterly Review,* 131 (July 1871), 42.

[152] Ibid., 13.

[153] Ibid., 3-4.

[154] Ibid., 12.

For all of this Negative Whiggism however, it can be seen that Brewer's article was serving to promote nationalism in his own time. To begin with, Shakespeare, who is constantly praised, is linked with the English by being portrayed as the embodiment of the nation: the realism of his heroines 'stamps Shakspeare especially as an Englishman, and an Englishman of the reign of Elizabeth.'[155] Not only does this serve to unite and elevate the nation, the linking of Shakespeare to the nation carries with it praise of both. So, 'the occasional coarseness of Shakspeare is the coarseness of strong Englishmen, who "laughed and grew fat" over jokes which might shock the delicacy and moral digestion of more refined ages, or more sensitive and sentimental races.'[156] Brewer goes on, shifting his tense to the present:

> Dramatic poetry, especially dramatic poetry of the Shakspearian drama, is the poetry of Englishmen: first, because it is the poetry of action and passion, woven out of the wear and tear of this busy world, rather than the poetry of reflection; and, secondly, because it is peculiar to Englishmen not merely to tolerate all sides and all parties, but to let all sides and parties speak for themselves; and to like to hear them.[157]

The English are undeniably being elevated here and the shared heritage of the glorious past described by Brewer serves to unite the nation. As with Thornbury, although Negative Whig historicism appears to denigrate the present in its celebration of the past, there is actually a sense of nationalism being promoted. Despite the differences within

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[155] Ibid., 44.

[156] Ibid., 38.

[157] Ibid., 42.

Whig historical viewpoints – some negative and some positive – there is a coherent desire to move away from the Elizabethan age in order to promote Britain.

ii) Tory History

Positive and Negative Whig histories were evident in many of the literary pursuits of the second half of the nineteenth century, and both clearly serve to promote the nation; either the current state of the nation is an improvement over the past, thus showing that the nation has a bright future, or the past was a golden age from which the present has regressed, although the people of the nation can find unity and solace in their shared glorious heritage. Other writers, however, sought to equate Elizabethan England directly with Victorian Britain: this Tory interpretation viewed the relationship between the past and present as characterised by stasis rather than change. It has already been seen that there was a Tory version of history in which the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries shared a common language and, if Shakespeare was talking the same talk, he could also be considered to be walking the same walks. In 'Shakspeare's Country,' a two-part article for the *English Illustrated Magazine* in January and February 1885, Rose G. Kingsley states that, in order to 'understand Shakspeare's plays aright, [one must] go out into the villages round about his native place – villages that he must have known well.'[158] To this end, Kingsley's articles, which are lavishly illustrated, are spent 'exploring the country which Shakspeare knew so well and observed so closely.'[159] Writing about Shakespeare in this way ties him in with England (this is his 'native' country) and so any glory achieved by Shakespeare (he is the 'greatest poet') reflects on

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[158] Kingsley, 'Shakspeare's Country', 271.

[159] Ibid., 271.

England.[160] However, the fact that Kingsley claims the tour on which she takes her reader is around 'the country which Shakspeare knew so well' suggests that the land has not changed since Elizabethan times, meaning that the authority and value of antiquity is conferred on England as well as giving the impression that readers could forge a direct connection with Shakespeare by experiencing the same countryside as he did.

The fact that a reader can be taken on this virtual tour around the places that Shakespeare would have walked and lived creates a kind of accessibility for nineteenth-century readers; not only can they be shown where Shakespeare actually once lived, but they could visit the place themselves (and perhaps already had) thus coming as close as possible to the world-dominating genius. A nationalist promotion of the countryside also promotes the English people with the physical state of the nation producing some slight arrogance; Warwickshire has 'the prettiest villages in all England… [although] it is apt to engender a certain sluggishness of temperament, and deep-rooted belief in the entire superiority of "the heart of England" over every other country.'[161] Kingsley states that '[m]any a time he [Shakespeare] must have wandered up the path from Stratford, as the townsfolk now do on Sunday afternoons, and looked over the peaceful vale.'[162] So, although the problems of industrialisation and its effects on England would have been very real to Kingsley's audience, they could take heart that they still lived in the land of 'cosy red brick or grey stone farms, or sunny old manor houses.'[163] Despite the obvious nostalgia in such statements, the fact that the townsfolk walk the same path as Shakespeare, and live in the same buildings, relates the two eras more closely than through simple progression; the image created of Shakespeare dwelling within a pastoral idyll among the modern people of Stratford serves to make the two ages one. It

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[160] Ibid., 271.

[161] Ibid., 271.

[162] Kingsley, 'Shakspeare's Country (pt. II)', 329.

[163] Kingsley, 'Shakspeare's Country', 271.

is also interesting that Kingsley chooses Stratford as the location of the Shakespeare she

constructs, as the documentary record suggests that Shakespeare moved to London by at

least 1592 (when he was twenty-eight years old) and possibly as early as 1585 (when he

was twenty-one). Thus the Stratford that Kingsley evokes in order to link her readers

with the national poet was the same Stratford that Shakespeare appears to have left

behind at a relatively young age, and it seems that Shakespeare is being made to fit in

with Kingsley's agenda despite apparent evidence to the contrary. Physically at least,

late-nineteenth-century Britain had changed considerably since Elizabethan times,

especially with the general population shift from rural to urban living, meaning that the

pastoral idyll presented by Kingsley was not the reality known to many. However, as

was noted earlier in this thesis, the people who would be reading this work would not

necessarily be the economically and socially less-advantaged sections of society.

Rather, these readers would be the educated economic elite for whom time spent in the

countryside was a reality or a possibility; thus, even if this description did not

realistically link nineteenth-century Britain with the land of Shakespeare, it would at

least engender a sense of unity and pride in a shared vision of a romanticised nation.

Similar Tory ideas that the nineteenth century had changed little since the

sixteenth century can be seen in T. S. Baynes' essay from the ninth edition of the

Britannica. Baynes describes Richard Burbage (1568-1619) as 'the Garrick of the

Elizabethan stage;' this suggests that the British nation has a definite continuity in terms

of its great actors – Burbage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, David Garrick

(1717-79) in the eighteenth, and, presumably, Henry Irving in the nineteenth.[164] This

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[164] Garrick and Irving are the obvious choices to be part of this tradition as both were the most prominent actor/managers of their day. However the appending of Irving onto Baynes' statement would complicate matters. While Garrick was apparently unconcerned with the historical accuracy of his costumes (his *Richard III* for example was performed in the costume of the period of George III (1738–1820)), Irving went to great lengths to be as archaeologically exact as possible. However, these divergent approaches both serve to make Shakespeare's plays contemporary either through the representation in a style contemporary to their audience, or by allowing access to a timeless historical past.

tradition of great thespians shows stasis, and the constant presence of Shakespeare – in that these were great Shakespearian actors – further entwines the history and the people of Britain with Shakespeare. It is interesting that Garrick is portrayed in this way as he was primarily celebrated in his own time for the innovations he brought to the staging of Shakespeare's plays rather than any sense of continuity. However, Garrick's conflation of Elizabethan plays with Georgian dress, as well as the position of Garrick as a chronological intermediary between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, encourages the representation of a tradition of continuity.

Just as De Quincey and Baynes felt that Shakespeare shared a common language with the people of the nineteenth century, a natural extension of this Tory historiography is that the actual members of society are seen to have remained the same. In 1877 C. E. Browne wrote an article for *Fraser's Magazine* which essentially amounted to a discussion of the Gloucestershire and Cotswold scenery used by Shakespeare; Browne believed that '[a]llowing for certain changes which time has brought about in the social castes, we shall still find most of Shakespeare's people in the flesh.'[165] Characters like Abraham Slender and Peter Simple (from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) still walk the streets of Cirencester, Browne claims, and 'Shallow [from *2 Henry IV*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*] is least altered, perhaps of any. He may travel to quarter-sessions by Great Western Express, and get the *Times* to breakfast, but he is still Shallow.'[166] It is, of course, interesting that Browne uses these particular plays in his reference to Shakespeare as they are among the works that Shakespeare actually

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[165] C. Elliot Browne, 'Master Robert Shallow: A Study of the Shakespeare Country', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* 95 O.S., 15 N.S. (April 1877), 492.

[166] Ibid., 492.
Although it is unclear why Browne situates these events in Cirencester it is interesting, and presumably deliberate, that he has chosen one of the oldest towns in Britain. Cirencester retains much of its Roman and Elizabethan architecture and thus was a perfect location to use when trying to conflate contemporary Britain and the past. See Arthur Mee, *Gloucestershire*, The King's England, E. T. Long ed., (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), and Arthur T. Broadbent and Anthony Minoprio, *The Minor Domestic Architecture of Gloucestershire*, (London: John Tiranti & Co., 1931).

set in England; they are also often considered to be Shakespeare's more patriotic creations, containing the scenes of Hal and Falstaff's care-free carousing in old English pubs and brothels. Similarly, Charles Cowden Clarke (1787–1877), in *Shakespeare Characters*, noted that '[a]ll who have intercourse with the world can testify that the character of Slender is by no means an anomaly.'[167] In stating this, Clarke is placing Slender in the nineteenth century just as much as Browne was placing Shallow, as his audience must be assumed to have had no intercourse with the Elizabethan world. There can be no clearer effort to pursue this Tory historiography than to maintain that the people of the nation have not changed since Shakespeare's day. There is a definite linking of Shakespeare's characters with nineteenth-century lawyers, and, through Shakespeare's characters, a link with those who lived alongside Shakespeare, for the plays are 'a picture of Shakespeare's own country-side drawn by his own hand.'[168] The image of one of Shakespeare's characters travelling on a steam-train – the epitome of the Victorian age – is a powerful way of conflating the two eras.

The material surveyed in this chapter shows that nationalism is a recurrent presence in nineteenth-century Shakespearean literary pursuits, as a common desire to promote the nation finds expression through reference to the Renaissance playwright. This not only highlights the importance of nationalism in the nineteenth-century consciousness (as suggested by John Lucas and others), but also Shakespeare's function as a cultural barometer of the period (posited by scholars such as Taylor). It is possible to see definite general trends in terms of what this use of Shakespeare sought to achieve. Primarily, nationalism appears to have been concerned with the unification and promotion of the nation and its people; and this was achieved by a reliance on certain

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[167] Charles Cowden Clarke, *Shakespeare Characters: Chiefly Those Subordinate*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1863), 159.

[168] Browne, 'Master Robert Shallow', 488.

common definitions. It is clear that the concept of the nation revolved around ideas such as ancestry, geography, and patriotism, all of which allowed Shakespeare to be irrevocably linked with Britain. This sense of place and belonging could be coupled with more abstract ideas such as language (both place-names and the spoken vernacular), and literary appreciation so that Shakespeare could be portrayed as having something in common with the British people, while simultaneously lifting the nation into a position of superiority. This superiority was strongly reinforced and it promoted the nation through contrast with an 'other.' The nation to which Shakespeare was linked could itself be defined by certain common methods, mainly a sense of history and the way in which the past was seen to relate to the present.

However, within these common approaches to nationalism there is some complexity in terms of the approaches taken by individual writers. This meant that, while writers could be operating within the same framework of nationalism (such as, the idea of ancestry), they might construct different Shakespeares in order to promote their agenda (choosing either to concentrate on his paternal or maternal lineage for example). There were also subtle complexities about the particular type of nation that was being promoted and its role in the world. Ranging from isolationist Little Englandism to those advocating Imperial expansion, Britain could be either paraded as a paragon of unique characteristics which foreigners could not understand or imitate, or shown to have conquered the world through Shakespeare. Often, diverse Shakespeares were constructed due to writers' different approaches, despite the fact that the same source material was being used. Thus, while there was a uniform desire to promote the nation (even if it wasn't necessarily clear what that nation was or should be), there was not always a common Shakespeare. The various approaches taken by separate writers suggest that Shakespeare was not a single concrete phenomenon which could be used as

a cipher for the concept of nationalism. Rather, Shakespeare functioned as an arena within which the intellectual elite could present and rehearse their own ideas and anxieties in terms of what constituted nationalism. To return to a question which was raised towards the beginning of this chapter, the multitude of nationalist projects which were set in motion during the second half of the nineteenth century seem likely to have been instigated by an overall sense of anxiety and unease about the state of Britain. While there are certainly homogenous ideas concerning the way in which the nation could be defined, the diversity of approaches to this, as well as the fact that there is an ongoing dialogue instead of a single statement of identity, suggests that there was confusion about the exact status of the nation. This can be seen in the different approaches towards the nation in terms of its relationship with the rest of the world – the fact that some writers could construct a somewhat parochial Little England while others concentrated on the Expansionist elements of the British nation.

<center>*</center>

Having established the widespread usage of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century literary pursuits it has been shown that this apparently single phenomenon could be viewed by different writers as a tool for promoting disparate agendas and the different Shakespeares which could be created. This can be termed the aspectuality of the Shakespeare phenomenon. The rest of this thesis will move forward to examine how this aspectuality occurs and how it links to the ease with which Shakespeare can be used to explore and promote certain issues. One of the most striking things about the various uses of Shakespeare and the approaches to nationalism that have been seen in this chapter is that the playwright and the people of Britain are constructed and presented as

being very definite types of individual. While there is no holistic consensus it is clear that Shakespeare is a great man and Britain is populated by good people. Evidently the character and personality of the population is important and indeed J. R. Seeley – whose *Expansion of England* has already been noted as a seminal work on nationalism at this time – felt that it was the moral stature of the people which could make or break a nation. It was his belief that 'the clergy should draw largely upon English history and biography for illustrations of their moral teaching,' indeed, among the opening lines of *Expansion* is the sentence 'the history of England ought to end with something that might be called a moral.'[169] Seeley felt that the state should foster morality within its people and he saw this as being achieved through a turn to figures from the nation's past as moral exemplars.[170] As R. T. Shannon notes, Seeley felt that '[t]he history of England, in a word, must be moralized.'[171] It is with this in mind that this thesis now moves beyond concepts of the broader nation to consider the morals and characters of those who lived within it.

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[169] J. R. Seeley, 'The Church as a Teacher of Morality', in *Essays in Church Policy*, ed. W. L. Clay, (London: Macmillan, 1868), 266.
Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 7.

[170] See R. T. Shannon, 'John Robert Seeley and the Idea of a National Church: A Study in Churchmanship, Historiography, and Politics', in *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark*, ed. Robert Robson, (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1967), 236-267.

[171] Ibid., 244.

Chapter Two **Moralism**

FESTE   …To see this age! – A sentence is but a cheverel glove to a good
           wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward.

VIOLA   Nay, that's certain. They that dally nicely with words may
           quickly make them wanton.

- W. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, 3.1

That there lies in the human deeps a more precious metal than the gold
and silver of morals – an aesthetic radium – seemed unknown
to all mid-Victorian critics except Pater

- A. Ralli, *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*, (1932)[1]

a) Shakespeare and Moralism

In 1859 Samuel Smiles published one of the most famous – or infamous – books of the Victorian era; *Self-Help: with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*, a text inextricably linked to the idea of Victorian Values.[2] Adrian Jarvis has said that Smiles' text, had as much 'influence, direct or indirect, on the ordinary lives and attitudes of everyday people,' as Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* or John Stuart Mill's (1806-73) *On Liberty* which were published in the same year.[3] *Self-Help* was an extremely popular work and went through at least twenty-five editions before the end of the nineteenth century; it later became a caricature of the nineteenth-century's moral

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[1] Ralli, *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*, 497.

[2] The term Victorian Values will be used in this chapter to refer to the cliché of self help, moral earnestness, prudery, and thrift, which has come to define the term since its use by the Thatcher Government in the 1980s (see Asa Briggs, 'Victorian Values', in *In Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Eric M. Sigsworth, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) and Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society*, 3-9).

[3] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection of the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 1859, Sixth edn. with additions and corrections to 1872 edn. (London: John Murray, 1884). John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859, People's edn. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892).

code during the early twentieth-century reaction against Victorianism.[4] Upon opening

the book, the first thing a reader would have seen was the following:

> "This above all, – To thine own self be true;
>
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
>
> Thou canst not be false to any man.
>
> - Shakespeare[5]

The quintessential work of Victorian moral pedagogy invoked Shakespeare from the

outset. Despite the fact that this quote is taken from *Hamlet* and should be considered in

the comic and patronising idiom of the scene, by being lifted out of context, and

attributed to 'Shakespeare' rather than Polonius, it would appear that the sentiment is

advice given by Shakespeare himself. Added to this, there are only quotation marks at

the beginning of the line from Shakespeare, which gives the impression that the quote,

Shakespeare, and the self help imparted by Smiles throughout the rest of the work are

all part of one single phenomenon.

Smiles has been called 'a joke figure to generations of progressives,' and the

cliché of the Victorians as a people of exacting, prudish, and frequently hypocritical

double standards was, for many years, an abiding view of the period. The word

'Victorian' has been taken to be akin to 'puritan' when used pejoratively as a term for

moral prudery or over-bearing moral strictness, except that 'Victorian' often suggests

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[4] Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that '*Self-Help* was an enormous popular success. Four editions appeared in the first year alone; by the time of Smiles' death, in 1904, it had been reprinted over fifty times and had sold a quarter of a million copies in English.' (Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society*. Gordon Marsden states that 'Few books have been held to be more symbolic of the Victorian era than *Self-Help*,' (*Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. Gordon Marsden, (London: Longman, 1998), 103). A number of recent works on Smiles have attempted to refute the long-held view of Smiles' philosophy as being heartlessly laissez-faire and exploitatively bourgeoisie. See Aileen Smiles, *Samuel Smiles and his Surroundings*, (London: Robert Hales Limited, 1956), Jarvis, *Samuel Smiles*, and Asa Briggs, 'Samuel Smiles: The Gospel of Self-Help', in *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. Gordon Marsden, (London: Longman, 1998).

[5] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*, (London: John Murray, 1875), frontispiece.

double standards.[6] Recent scholarly work, however, has done much to suggest that such opinions do not do justice to the complexities of the age.[7] Even among more populist literature and the mainstream media the fallacy of the Victorians as a society which belies easy categorisation is beginning to be exposed.[8] Yet the scholarship which has shown the nineteenth century to be far more complicated than a society with a simple overall philosophy of disapproval and moral earnestness does not appear to have fully translated into work which has been carried-out into the ways in which the Victorians used Shakespeare. Gary Taylor's work – in which he feels that the Victorians often searched for 'satisfyingly moral' conclusions to Shakespeare's plays – or that of John Drakakis – stating that A. C. Bradley 'broke with Victorian moralizing, preferring a more pragmatic formulation' – have reinforced the idea of 'Victorian Values' as the dominant view.[9] The work of these critics, dealing as they do with general surveys of critical attitudes towards Shakespeare, is necessarily unable to consider fully the nuances of Victorian moral thought. Thus their findings need to be synthesised with a closer reading of a number of specific Victorian works on Shakespeare, through which a clearer picture of the contemporary attitudes towards moralism can be gauged. Chapter One of this thesis suggested that Shakespeare could be used as an arena within which

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[6] Raphael Samuel, 'Mrs. Thatcher's Return to Victorian Values', in *Victorian Values: A Joint Symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy. December 1990*, ed. T. C. Smout, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11.
Jeffrey Weeks has noted that 'The 'Victorian Age' has long been a synonym for a harsh and repressive sexual Puritanism,' where 'The authoritarian paterfamilias presided over the institutionalisation of the double standard, while the pedestalised mother and wife depended for her purity on the degradation of the fallen woman.' From Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, (London: Longman, 1981), 19.

[7] For general overviews of these debates see *In Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Eric M. Sigsworth, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), *Victorian Values: A Joint Symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy. December 1990*, ed. T. C. Smout, Proceedings of the British Academy No. 78, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), *Victorian Values*, ed. Marsden, *Unrespectable Recreations*, ed. Martin Hewitt, Leeds Centre Working Papers in Victorian Studies vol. 4, (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2001), and Davis, *The Victorians*.

[8] See, for example, Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), Adam Hart-Davis, *What the Victorians Did for Us*, (London: Headline Book Publishing Ltd., 2002), and A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, (London: Hutchinson, 2002).

[9] Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 166.
Alternative Shakespeares, ed. Drakakis, 6.

the anxieties and ideas of the period could be discussed and presented; it was seen that Shakespeare was widely used by writers of the period and could even be employed by different writers to promote or debate opposing ideas. Chapter One also began to suggest that Shakespeare was an aspectual phenomenon – that is, the works and the man could be viewed in numerous ways allowing a certain malleability to be exploited by those producing these literary pursuits. This chapter will move further and suggest that this aspectuality is enabled by the scarcity of documentary evidence about Shakespeare and that it is precisely the malleability which this provides that prompted Shakespeare to be so widely used.

As the moral state of the nation has been noted as a major concern of the period it should be no surprise that Shakespeare was often used by those with a moral agenda. By 'moralism' and 'moral thought' this chapter denotes ideas of life advice, and social guidelines as to how people should behave. Thus marriage, sexual activity, family relationships, the acquisition of wealth, social interaction, social hierarchies, and ethical ideas are all taken to be part of moral thought. An examination of how Shakespeare was used should serve both to reinforce the complexities and conflicts which have been seen in Victorian moral thought by the collections of Eric Sigsworth, T. C. Smout, Gordon Marsden, and Martin Hewitt and to add to the Shakespearean surveys carried out by Taylor and others.[10] Russell Jackson points the way towards this closer examination of nineteenth-century morals in Shakespeare by demonstrating how Victorian editors presented Shakespeare as an author in whose work could be seen the desirable values of 'Victorian Culture.'[11] Jackson describes how Henry Morley's (1822-94) 1886 edition of *As You Like It*, for Cassell's National Library, presented the play with 'an emphasis on

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[10] See *In Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Sigsworth; *Victorian Values*, ed. Smout; *Victorian Values*, ed. Marsden; and *Unrespectable Recreations*, ed. Hewitt.

[11] Jackson, 'Victorian Editors of *As You Like It* and the Purposes of Editing', 144.

social values,' and expressed the central idea of 'Love God; Love Your Neighbour; Do Your Work.'[12] Nevertheless, Jackson's focus is an investigation of editorial practices and, by looking at the wider sphere of literary pursuits, the present thesis can investigate in more depth the way in which Shakespeare could be used to serve nineteenth-century moral agendas.

Just as with nationalist agendas in Chapter One of this thesis, nineteenth-century ideas about morality were inflected by the intellectual debates of the day. While the present project is not a sustained exploration of nineteenth-century philosophy or epistemology it is worth briefly considering some broader issues. The professionalisation that has already been noted in this thesis regarding the disciplines of Geography, History and Literature was inevitably having an impact on intellectual debate and epistemology in the nineteenth-century.[13] Philosophy became increasingly concentrated within universities and specialist periodicals, and this meant that morals and ethics were increasingly debated by a growing intellectual community. This is one of the reasons – along with an increasing primacy of philosophical theorising – that Stefan Collini notes for the proliferation of moral agendas in literary pursuits; 'the volume of production of books on ethics may even have been measurably higher than at other periods.'[14] Intellectually, there were a number of competing and, sometimes, overlapping ideologies which were prominent in the nineteenth century.[15]

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[12] Ibid., 144.

[13] See *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), Collini, *Public Moralists*, and Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[14] Collini, *Public Moralists*, 64.

[15] Briefly, these included Benthamist Utilitarianism, Philosophical Idealism (which had developed from Hegelian Idealism), Evolutionism, Positivism, Materialism and fin de siècle Aestheticism. For more on these see Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870*, (London: Yale University Press, 1968),Peter P. Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists: Selected Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, 50-67; J. B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and

It is a commonplace that nearly all nineteenth-century philosophical viewpoints were influenced by two major schools of thought.[16] Put simply, these were the view that the human mind was innate and non-reactive and the view that the human mind was shaped by its experiences. The present thesis is not a detailed consideration of nineteenth-century philosophy and any reduction of such complex worldviews will fail to do them justice but it is necessary to consider briefly, if somewhat crudely, the way that they would have inflected contemporary appreciations of morality. Most importantly, the two aesthetic responses which grew out of these philosophies: Idealism and Sensualism. At their most basic Idealism and Sensualism can be seen to be polar opposites in their respective advocacy of the primacy of intellectual or physical experience. However, as with all of the worldviews that are examined in this thesis, this oversimplification obscures the nuances and overlaps present in the way that these two philosophies were interpreted and applied in the nineteenth century.

German Idealism began to influence British philosophy – after various works were translated in the second half of the nineteenth century – and was espoused by, most notably, Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), F.H. Bradley (1846-1924) and T. H. Green (1836-82).[17] These British Idealists – also known as the British Hegelians – were a group of moral philosophers who were primarily active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These thinkers were greatly influenced by Plato (428-347 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel and Kant in particular, were important influences on these philosophers who followed their doctrines concerning the innateness of the human mind

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Laura J. Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy: a Victorian Debate on Science and Society*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[16] Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture*, 40.

[17] J. M. D. Meiklejohn translated Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), in 1852 and J. Sibree translated Hegel's *Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*), in 1857.

and the primacy of thoughts and ideas over the material world. The British Idealists were deeply concerned with morality; as Peter Nicholson has noted, '[a]t a general level, all the British Idealists accept that human beings have to be considered from two viewpoints: as distinct individuals and as members of their society… the ultimate good is a morally worthwhile human life.'[18] Although the Idealists firmly held that individuals had to freely choose to follow their own morally upright path, they felt that the state needed to provide the appropriate framework within which the individual would be enabled to follow this course.

In stark contract to this German-influenced Idealism was the psychological Sensualism which was the experiential and materialist world-view that grew out of the French Revolutionary period. Sensualism was a philosophy which advocated the belief that sensations and physicality were the most important elements of perception. The Associationism of John Locke (1632-1704) was perhaps the most notable forerunner of this philosophy, this in turn was developed into a more materialist and fatalist doctrine by David Hartley (1705-57), and it played a significant role in the aesthetic appreciations of the later nineteenth century.[19] The corrosive influence of Sensualism was feared by many within the Idealist establishment. This was especially true of Thomas Reid (1710-96) and the Common Sense school of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy which fiercely resisted the materialism and amorality they saw as inherent in sensualist doctrines.[20] Those who followed the Germans tended to be conservative while those who followed Locke were radical. This was not absolute however and T. H. Green, for example, was a liberal and an idealist. Similarly it is not easy to disentangle the way in which threads of influence or affiliation operated within nineteenth-century

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[18] Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, 2.

[19] See Howard C. Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology*, (London: Constable and Co., 1921), and *E. J. Lowe, Locke on Human understanding, (London: Routledge, 1995)*.

[20] See Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, 50-67.

intellectual culture; the Sensualism that was a major part of the aesthetic appreciation of figures such as Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and John Addington Symonds (1840-93) and the conservative moralism that opposed such perceived amorality were both descended from the philosophy of Hegel.[21] As noted, there is no need for a through investigation of these worldviews here; it is sufficient to note some of the discriminations at work in these ideological and philosophical tensions which revealed themselves in arguments about human behaviour, ethics and morality.

It is important to understand that all of the elements considered by this thesis would have affected and influenced each other. While it has been necessary to split across different chapters the nationalistic and moralistic rhetoric that can be found in Shakespeare it should be understood that one would have influenced the other. This can be seen in the quotes from J. R. Seeley which ended the previous chapter of this thesis. Seeley felt that it was the morality of a nation's people which made that nation great and that this morality could be disseminated by using exemplars from the nation's historical past. This idea was widespread in the nineteenth century and it was common for writers to conflate moral and nationalist ideals within discussions of character and social conduct. Andrew Blake, for example, notes how the type of individual who was being promoted as a positive character by the end of the century – 'a middle-class soldier or bureaucrat "type", with the Classical education of the traditional grammar school or Clarendon Commission public school, the communal ethic of shared (normally Anglican) religious belief, games-fostered team spirit, and institutional rather than personal loyalties' – owed much of their status as a moral exemplar to the fact that they were 'the servants of Empire.'[22] These concepts will be brought together in Chapter

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[21] See Phillip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand, *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of Mind in the Making*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22-7.

[22] Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, 46-7.

Three where the use of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* highlights the ubiquity of such concerns throughout the nineteenth century.

The concept of an educated or intellectual elite has already been mentioned in this thesis (see pp. 29-32 above) and it is important to note that the works surveyed in this chapter would have been written and read, by these same groups of aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. The socio-economic status of those who were reading and writing this literature is not easily defined – even by those who were doing that very writing and reading (pp. 164-5 below) but it may be assumed that it was the upper and middle classes who were both the producers, and consumers, of this moralising literature. Even if a work proselytised the virtues of improving the working class it does not necessarily follow that such writing was intended for the working class to read. Not only was it a fact that a large (if decreasing) number of the working class had neither the ability nor the desire to read the literary pursuits with which this thesis concerns itself, it is also true that the middle classes were often talking to each other about the need to improve those less socially advanced than themselves.

An examination of the vast amount of literature that was produced in the nineteenth century, ranging from didactic sermons about Shakespeare to works which presented him in an exemplary light, shows that Shakespeare was obviously a popular vehicle for the promotion of moralising ideas. Also, the fact that Shakespeare was appearing in a number of anthologies of exemplary lives (such as the *DNB*, *Fifty Celebrated Men: Their Lives and Trials, and the Deeds that made them Famous*, and *Makers of Modern Thought: or, Five Hundred Years' Struggle (1200AD to 1699AD) between Science, Ignorance and Superstition*) shows that he was being used to teach lessons to people other than those who would be buying a work just because of its

relevance to Shakespeare.[23] In this thesis, the term 'Moral uses of Shakespeare' will be used to describe those texts which were ostensibly about Shakespeare but which also conveyed a moral philosophy and sought to bring about an improvement in their readers. 'Moral uses' is a particularly apt term for this practice because its function as both noun and adjective connotes not only ethics and 'good living' but also conveys that there is a pedagogical purpose to these works – a moral to be learnt.

Clearly, all works which advocate the improvement of people's lives take two initial assumptions for granted: that people's lives needed improving and that they are capable of being improved. As has already been noted (see pp. 29-36 above) the readership of these works was united by certain traits such as a common level of education and interest in Shakespeare as subject matter (or interest in anthologies for the works which were not solely about Shakespeare), yet there was a certain diversity in terms of social and economic status. By extension, as these texts appear to have been aimed at a relatively wide audience – they are located in a broad range of literary pursuits, including reference works, sermons, introductions to volumes of the complete works of Shakespeare, as well as more specialist biographies – the country as a whole was evidently considered to be in a state of moral decline or lapse rather than just one specific group. Later, this chapter will consider the idea of class standing and the moral exhortations that were presented through writings that were ostensibly about Shakespeare. As well as seeing the need for improvement, the writers of these texts must necessarily have felt that they had the answers to this problem and that the presentation of these solutions would lead to the desired improvements. Finally, the obvious assumption behind these works was that their lessons would be absorbed by

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[23] *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 63 vols., (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1885-1900); *Fifty Celebrated Men: Their Lives and Trials, and the Deeds that made them Famous*, (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1881); and David Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought: or, Five Hundred Years' Struggle (1200AD to 1699AD) between Science, Ignorance and Superstition*, (London: George Philip & Son, 1892).

their readers and that people would, perhaps after some persuasion, follow the advice that was imparted. It would be hard to believe that all of these texts were anomalous, or that their authors produced them merely to see their own names in print. It is likely that some vanity is involved here – in that the writers saw themselves as important enough to have something worth saying and to expect to be listened to – but the existence of this body of work shows that there was a general desire for moral improvement imparted through literary pursuits in the later half of the nineteenth century. Thus an investigation into a particular strand of these literary pursuits – in this case Shakespeare – will illuminate the attitudes and moral climate of Britain at this time.

In order for the ideas disseminated in writings about him to be heeded, Shakespeare had to be assumed to be a figure of authenticity, and authority – one who could convey a moral lesson. An example of this attitude can be seen in a lecture delivered before the Sunday Lecture Society on 16 November 1873, where Charles Plumptre (1818-87) discussed 'The Religion and Morality of Shakespeare's Works.'[24] In this talk Plumptre compared Shakespeare to a river, and noted that,

> as the noble river broadens and deepens, so does the intellect, the genius, the influence of Shakespeare. As the ages roll on, and one generation succeeds another, still more deeply, still more widely, is that influence felt; enriching men's minds, exalting their souls, humanising their affections with all its precious stores, its boundless wealth of Religion and morality.[25]

It can be seen here that Plumptre is taking for granted Shakespeare's influence and also, by using the metaphor of a river, is blurring the distinction between Shakespeare the

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[24] Charles J. Plumptre, *The Religion and Morality of Shakespeare's Works*, (London: The Sunday Lecture Society, 1873).

[25] Ibid., 10.

man and his works. Ostensibly, it is the individual whom Plumptre is likening to a natural phenomenon – John Milton (1608-74), for example, is compared 'in his sublimity, to the Alpine Mountain,' and the personal pronoun is very specific – yet the topic of the lecture is the religion and morality of Shakespeare's *works*.[26] In this way, the man and his works become conflated into the 'Shakespeare' phenomenon noted by Holderness (see p. 13 above). The phenomenon is more malleable than a specific individual and can be more easily worked into proposing a particular idea.

However, a number of less obvious claims are also being made which deserve closer scrutiny. Firstly, a Whiggish historiography is being applied to claim that Shakespeare's influence is increasing as time goes by, 'as the ages roll on,' and this means that the people of the nineteenth century (or, more specifically, the men of the nineteenth century) are, more than any people of any previous era, the most closely connected with the message of Shakespeare.[27] Thus Plumptre's audience are made to feel privileged and superior to their ancestors; a flattery which makes those listening more susceptible to his message. Assumptions are also being made here about the sort of message which Shakespeare is delivering; primarily it is taken for granted that the influence exerted by Shakespeare upon the people of the nineteenth century is of a positive type. Also, Plumptre assumes that the improving nature of Shakespeare arises through his 'boundless wealth of Religion and morality.'[28] Thus, it is suggested firstly that Shakespeare contains religion and morality (and it is interesting that Plumptre privileges religion over morality by capitalising the term), secondly that this morality and religion is an improving force, and thirdly that people are influenced by this force.

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[26] Ibid., 8.

[27] Ibid., 10.

[28] Ibid., 10.

It was obviously important that Shakespeare had to be a positive influence or there would be little point in using him to encourage people to improve their lives.

Plumptre was not alone: The Rev. Farrar (1831-1903), in another sermon – 'Shakespeare, the Man and the Poet' (1900) – uses Shakespeare as a pedagogical tool, referring to him as 'a moral teacher for all time.'[29] Similarly, in *Makers of Modern Thought*, David Nasmith (1829-94) presents a Shakespeare who was trying to preach to his audience; '[t]o him belongs the glory of having raised the stage to the level of the most exalted pulpit as a teacher of things both human and divine.'[30] Nasmith also calls theatre 'popular amusements combined with instruction,' and these literary pursuits are evidently attempting to promote a certain way of life through reference to Shakespeare.[31] The Rev. T. Carter (1808-1901) notes that Shakespeare 'is above all a teacher of true righteousness,' while the author of 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare' repeatedly refers to the 'lessons' that are to be 'learned' from a study of Shakespeare, and comments that '[w]e reverence our great men best when we draw the best lessons from their lives and works.' [32] What can be seen here is that works are seen to be lessons or tools for learning rather than simply works of aesthetic enjoyment; this is something that will be seen repeatedly throughout this chapter. There are also ideas here concerning the innate or absorbed nature of human thought which was noted at the beginning of this chapter. The dichotomy between these philosophical positions can be seen in much of the literature surveyed in this chapter although it is important to consider this more in terms of how it inflected contemporary thought rather than as

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[29] Rev. F. W. Farrar, 'Shakespeare, the Man and the Poet', in *Shakespeare Sermons*, ed. Rev. George Arbuthnot, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 115.

[30] Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought*, 190. The work also included figures from throughout history and from various backgrounds and nationalities, such as Dante Alighieri (1265-1321); Geoffrey Chaucer (*c.*1340–1400); William Caxton (*c.*1424–1492); Christopher Columbus (*c.*1451-1506); and Francis Bacon (1561–1626).

[31] Ibid., 190.

[32] Rev. T. Carter, *Shakespeare: Puritan and Recusant*, (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1897), 180.
See 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare', *Meliora,* (April 1864), 21, 22, 45, 46.
'The Moral Character of Shakespeare', 45.

crude partisan intellectual stances. Often the fact that Shakespeare is being presented as someone great (or, that the popular assumption of Shakespeare's greatness is played upon), is enough to implicitly promote the imitation of Shakespeare. As was seen in Chapter One, writers are able to construct their own particular Shakespeare and, in this case, it would seem that this is due to the malleability and aspectuality of Shakespeare as a phenomenon. These sermons and articles conflate the man and his works, and utilise the lack of certainty about Shakespeare's biography in order to map a particular agenda onto that conflation. The paucity of information that was understood to exist about Shakespeare, and thus the ease with which he could be used, allows these writers, like Plumptre, to present someone who was writing plays in order to convey a positive moral message.

In 'Some Canons of Character-Interpretation,' which was read on January 13 1888 at the 130th meeting of the New Shakspere Society, R. G. Moulton (1849-1924) notes how presentation of a Shakespeare play on stage or in book form could influence the way an audience may perceive a character:

> To those who do not see him on the stage Polonius is usually associated with his advice to Laertes on going to college, and it is in this connection natural to think of him as a wise and good man… seen apart from his maxims Polonius presents a very different appearance. He has not the moral sense to recognise the sweetness and purity of his own daughter.[33]

It might seem as though Moulton is criticising the way in which Shakespeare could be used by taking his words out of context, as in the example from Smiles' *Self-Help* seen at the beginning of this chapter; after all, Polonius' moral sense can only be judged by

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[33] R. G. Moulton, 'Some Canons of Character-Interpretation (read at the 130th meeting of the New Shakspere Society. Friday, January 13 1888)', in *New Shakspere Society Transactions*, (1888), 130.

his overall behaviour. Yet Moulton feels that there are certain passages of Shakespeare's which prove exceptions to this rule. This is because 'when a personage [in a play] is giving a lecture on the formation of character he affords the author, in his capacity as poet, a great opportunity.'[34] This is one of the clearest examples of a writer – and Moulton was a prominent Shakespearean critic in the later nineteenth-century – being selective in the evidence they use about Shakespeare. Moulton is here claiming that certain parts of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* are moral lessons while others are not and, of course, it is Moulton who decides which parts are which. This selectivity in terms of how the evidence is interpreted suggests that Shakespeare was often being made to fit in with a specific agenda, rather than naturally tending towards the promotion of morality.

The idea that Shakespeare's works were lessons was a ubiquitous one at the time; even those who profess to disagree that Shakespeare wrote his plays for a primarily didactic purpose could often argue to a surprisingly similar conclusion. J. T. Foard, in addressing the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, admits that 'it is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that Shakspere would have written to attract an audience, and please them when attracted. That his purpose was more directly to fill his treasury than furnish moral edification.'[35] Foard goes on to claim, however, that '[i]t is a base supposition to believe that it stopped at this point – that his ideas were limited by the "Little O" of the Globe Theatre. No impediment existed to his combining the elegant and the useful, pecuniary advantage with artistic superiority.'[36] Coventry Patmore (1823-96), writing in the *North British Review* on the subject of 'The Modern British Drama,' takes a similar if slightly less economically-driven position to Foard:

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[34] Ibid., 130.

[35] J. T. Foard, 'On the Moral Dignity of the Shaksperian Drama', *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool,* 1858), 86.

[36] Ibid. 87.

Every one of the plays of Shakespeare, every poem of every really great poet, has

been made "subservient to the enforcement," not of "his own opinions," but of his

own *certainties* in morality. A good poem or drama is never what is called

"didactic," not because it does not enforce definite moral views, but because its

modes of enforcing them are peculiar, that is to say, indirect, symbolical, and

representative, rather than obvious and perceptive.[37]

Patmore evidently feels that all truly great literature has a moral message but the Shakespeare he presents is no pedagogue, rather he is a writer whose works are so good that they cannot help but be morally instructive. Similarly, Arthur Gilman (1837-1909), in his 1879 *Shakespeare's Morals: Suggestive Selections, with Brief Collateral Readings and Scriptural References*, feels confident in asserting that '[i]t was not the intention of Shakespeare in his literary work to elaborate a system of morals, nor to give his hearers maxims for their guidance in life.'[38] Despite this claim, however, and as may be deduced from the title of his book, Gilman is unwilling to let Shakespeare's lack of moralising intent prevent his work from functioning as a system of guidance for life. This is because Shakespeare, 'by making true presentations of the workings of the human heart and of the actions of men in society… in a measure accomplished both ends.'[39] What this shows is that, despite the different attitudes of writers towards Shakespeare, there is an overriding desire to present certain commonalities. Thus the need to portray a Shakespeare whose works convey a morality is paramount, even when the evidence used by a writer – such as Shakespeare's economic motivation – appears to complicate this. What can be glimpsed here is a consequence of intellectual professionalisation and a reaction to the way that the social organisation of knowledge

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[37] Patmore, 'The Modern British Drama', 141.

[38] *Shakespeare's Morals: Suggestive Selections, with brief Collateral Readings and Scriptural References*, ed. Arthur Gilman, (London: John F. Shaw and Co., 1873), vii.

[39] Ibid., vii.

was changing at the time. As has been noted, literary pursuits were becoming more professionalised and formalised and so it was that Shakespeare's works could become subsumed into this culture of usefulness and purpose.

While it is clear that Shakespeare was being widely used for the promotion of a moral agenda, it is less clear exactly what this moral agenda was, as none of these works provide a concrete definition of how people should behave in order to lead an improved life. The similarities and differences in the 'educated elite' (see pp. 29-36 above) which would have comprised the readership of these works has already been observed, and it is worth noting that these works do speak differently about, and to, different sections of nineteenth-century society. There are a number of recurrent relativistic terms such as 'duty' and 'religion,' (Russell Jackson's 'Do Your Work' and 'Love God'), 'moral,' 'good,' 'middle-class,' and 'character,' and Smiles' works which followed *Self-Help* were called *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1875), and *Duty: with Illustrations of Courage, Patience, and Endurance* (1880).[40] Of course, ideas and attitudes necessarily shift over time but, while it would be a mistake to think that all Victorians held the same opinions at any point in the era, it will be shown that recurring ideas were being disseminated during the second half of the nineteenth century.[41] As has been seen, Smiles' *Self Help* was published throughout the period with over twenty-five different editions between

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[40] For the complexities in nomenclature for just the single term 'character' see Collini, *Public Moralists* (91-118 *passim*.) and Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*. Collini notes that there are essentially two different meanings to the term character; descriptive (in that everyone has a type of character that can be expressed), and evaluative (in that good character becomes abbreviated to just character – a man of character means a man of good character). Yet Collini still feels that the things which make up a positive character are reasonably fixed – 'There is no great obscurity about the basic core of qualities invoked by the evaluative sense of character: self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, courage in the face of adversity.' (Collini, *Public Moralists*, 100). Lauren Goodlad describes 'a profound shift in the meaning of character' which she sees happening in the middle of the nineteenth century; this is from what she terms 'prescriptive' – where character 'entailed a theoretically limitless potential for inner development,' – to 'descriptive' – where people can be judged by the type of character they present to the world. (Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*, 130).

[41] See Asa Briggs's discussion of the recurrence of 'cleanliness' in nineteenth-century Britain and the different meanings associated with it (Asa Briggs, 'Victorian Values', in *In Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Eric M. Sigsworth, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988)).

1859 and 1900, and the anonymous *Fifty Celebrated Men*, for example, first appeared in 1862 with a second edition towards the end of the century in 1881.[42] Asa Briggs has noted that 'if you look at the history of Queen Victoria's reign, you will find that it does not follow one single line. There were varieties of reactions to value clusters.'[43] While there is diversity and disagreement within these 'value clusters' or different types of moral, they provide a useful guide as to what the overall moral anxieties of nineteenth-century society – or, at least, the middle and upper classes who produced and consumed these literary pursuits – were. There were more moral concerns in the nineteenth century than those reviewed in this thesis; what are presented here are merely those which are most prevalent in literary pursuits concerning Shakespeare. However, this still allows for the period to be thought of in a more helpful fashion than there being one single Victorian moral ideal. Certain recurrent issues were being debated and, although different writers might approach these issues differently, the commonality of their aims suggests that Shakespeare provided a useful arena for discussion.

Essentially, the main moral anxieties which are visible in these literary pursuits can be divided into what this thesis will term 'Public Morality' (that is, behaviour in the municipal sphere – such as guidance related to financial status, work ethic, and social status), and 'Private Morality' (behaviour in the more personal world of family relations, including sexual relationships and marriage).[44] The main body of this chapter will therefore be divided between these two different types of morality, with each

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[42] The fifty chosen individuals were taken from various historical periods and spheres of influence and were not limited to British men. Thus Homer; Dante Alighieri; Geoffrey Chaucer; Christopher Columbus; Sir Walter Ralegh (1554–1618); Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616); and Napoleon Bonaparte, were included. It is interesting that Shakespeare was elevated amongst this company by the fact that a somewhat Chandos-esque engraving of the playwright was featured on the works' frontispiece.

[43] Briggs, 'Victorian Values', 25.

[44] 'Public Moralism' should here be understood as distinct from the term 'Public Moralists' as used by Stefan Collini to denote social critics or political theorists of the nineteenth century (Collini, *Public Moralists*, 2-3).
Similarly, while Asa Briggs describes 'Private Morality' as 'personal morality' (Briggs, 'Victorian Values', 22), the present thesis uses the term 'Private' to denote the fact that these morals were still being commented on by a wider community and thus were not necessarily personal.

section looking at different aspects of these ideas. Ultimately it is not the object of this thesis to attempt to identify exactly what Victorian society as a whole understood by any of these terms, even if such identification were possible. Rather it is sufficient to note that there was a common anxiety surrounding these issues and that Shakespeare was used in various ways to address this. The aspectuality and malleability of Shakespeare that has already been seen in this thesis meant that the Shakespeare phenomenon was capable of being used in different ways for different end within nineteenth-century moral debate.

One example of the different ways in which a single moral issue could be approached, and the diversity in how Shakespeare could be used to disseminate such ideas, is the discussion about ideas of hard work and destiny when addressing the improvement of an individual's life. It was noted near the beginning of this chapter that the major philosophical viewpoints of the day could be crudely grouped around ideas of human thought being either innate or reactive. In keeping with this, a common trait in many of these moral uses of Shakespeare revolves around a discussion of self help, and related anxieties about 'free will' and 'determinism.'[45] The idea of personal development discussed in Shakespearean literary pursuits can be understood as broadly advocating an idea of self help; that is, there is a tacit assumption that readers need to expend effort in order to achieve rewards. The author of *Fifty Great Men* calls the subjects of the book 'these eminent toilers in the human hive,' while T. S. Baynes, in his 1869 article 'Shakespeare's Vocabulary and Style,' notes that the sort of people who

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[45] The debate concerning 'free will' and 'determinism' in nineteenth-century intellectual discourse has been noted by, among others, Catherine Gallagher who has described how the controversies and conflicts within this debate were articulated by the English novel in the middle of the nineteenth century, (Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative from 1832-1867*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-110). See also, Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*, which investigates the approaches of various nineteenth-century thinkers towards ideas of free will and determinism in relation to mechanisms of the state.

were best placed to enjoy Shakespeare were 'hard-working Englishmen.'[46] A similar sense of the way in which an individual can improve themselves by a gradual and sustained effort throughout life is displayed by the sermon of the Rev. F. W. Farrar when he describes how Shakespeare's personality and 'immense endowments were not the gift of a moment, but were the gradual acquisition of a strenuous life.'[47] Again the idea is that an individual is not born a certain way but rather has to work in order to attain the personality traits which are considered admirable. In his *Self-Help*, Smiles places much importance on the idea of improving oneself without recourse to others. Thus, individuals 'must necessarily depend mainly upon themselves – upon their own diligent self-culture, self-discipline, and self-control – and, above all, on that honest and upright performance of individual duty, which is the glory of manly character.'[48] Early on in Smiles' work he makes mention of Shakespeare and the lack of biographical knowledge about his early years:

> No one knows to a certainty what Shakespeare was; but it is unquestionable that he sprang from a humble rank. His father was a butcher and grazier; and Shakespeare himself is supposed to have been in early life a woolcomber; whilst others aver that he was an usher in a school, and afterwards a scrivener's clerk.[49]

Despite the uncertainties surrounding Shakespeare's life, and lack of evidence to support his claim, Smiles is able to announce it as unquestionable that he was socially inferior and that he held these various occupations. What Smiles is constructing is a Shakespeare who began in a lowly position in life and managed to lift himself out of it –

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[46] *Fifty Celebrated Men*, iv.
 Baynes, 'Shakespeare's Vocabulary and Style', 237.

[47] Farrar, 'Shakespeare, the Man and the Poet', 109.

[48] Smiles, *Self-Help*, ix.

[49] Ibid., 7.

because '[i]t is certain, however, that he prospered in his business, and realized sufficient to enable him to retire upon a competency to his native town of Stratford-upon-Avon.'[50] Smiles is also showing that Shakespeare achieved this through hard work which suggests that his readers can transform their status from humble to prosperous in the same way. The number of different professions attributed to Shakespeare, as well as their increasing social status – woolcomber, to school usher, to scrivener's clerk, can be read as menial agricultural labourer, to worker in education, to professional writer (with possible legal connotations) – show that it is through his work ethic that he has improved his lot in life. Indeed Smiles can state it as fact that Shakespeare had a strong work ethic; 'he must have been a close student and a hard worker.'[51]

However, despite the prevalent theme of self-reliance and internalisation regarding any change that is needed, it is still Smiles' contention that individuals learn from each other:

> The book [*Self-Help*] has, doubtless, proved attractive to readers in different countries by reason of the variety of anecdotal illustrations of life and character which it contains, and the interest which all more or less feel in the labours, the trials, the struggles, and the achievements of others.[52]

Samuel Smiles notes that exemplary lives provide good examples 'of the power of self-help, of patient purpose, resolute working, and steadfast integrity, issuing in the formation of truly noble and manly character.'[53] Once more, here is the rhetoric of struggle and hard work, reinforced when Smiles describes the obstacles which must be

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[50] Ibid., 265.

[51] Ibid., 8.

[52] Ibid., iii.

[53] Ibid., 6-7.

overcome, such as poverty and lower social standing. Samuel Neil also presents his readers with the idea that 'character' or personality – which, for Shakespeare, includes being honest, open-natured, earnest, and good company – is something which involves struggle and is available to anyone prepared to work for it. Having noted the way in which some of Shakespeare's contemporaries praise his personality traits, Neil states that,

> If he merited and won this character when he was shaping the golden fabric of his
> visions for representation by
>
> > "Comedians, tragedians,
> >
> > Tragi-comedians, comi-tragedians, pastorists,
> >
> > Humourists, clownists, satirists," &c.,
>
> On the rude scaffoldage of that "wooden O" – the globe, – how much more worthy of it
> was he likely to be when the uncongenial destiny of struggle was over! when he roved
> at will among the sequestered woodlands of his native place…[54]

Again there is much emphasis here on the fact that an individual has to strive in order to achieve a desirable character – the toiling itself appears to be what makes the character – but there is also some confusion and contradiction upon examination of what is being said. Firstly, Neil mentions that Shakespeare had to deserve and fight for the personality that he was praised for – it was 'merited and won' – yet Neil also talks about the 'destiny of struggle.'[55] These two ideas would appear to be incompatible; if an individual is fated to struggle and gain a certain type of character then there can be no real celebration of that individual's toil as it is predestined. Pre-destiny and fate seem to render hard work somewhat Sisyphean, but nevertheless, it is an unavoidable part of

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[54] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 62.

[55] Ibid., 62.

becoming a better individual. Neil is actually being quite dismissive of the practice of working – indeed, it is uncongenial to Shakespeare, who is much more at home wandering in the woods – so work is not to be respected or enjoyed. This is very different from the exhortation to work by those such as Baynes and Smiles. So there is not simply one attitude to the role which work and toil should play within self-improvement. Later in this chapter it will be seen that ideas of nobility and social status were not concrete in the nineteenth century and it is clear that there is some disagreement about how Shakespeare's position in life should be understood.

Another reason why Samuel Neil finds the thought of Shakespeare working to be repellent is because Shakespeare is Shakespeare, and is thus innately superior. Many of these writers advocate a worldview whereby the character or personality of an individual is predestined, and yet are disseminating these ideas in works which are designed to encourage people to improve their behaviour. For example, Neil dismisses the idea that Shakespeare could have been involved in illegal poaching, or the writing of slanderous verses about Sir Thomas Lucy (who allegedly punished him for it), by saying that 'we believe Shakespere took his sport like a *man*, not like a vagabond; and we are the more inclined to think this because we know that a true attachment [to a wife] is the best safeguard to a young man's character.'[56] An analysis of this statement shows that a number of assumptions are being posited here. To begin with, Neil is using the term 'we' in quite a subtle way; both as a formal pronoun and as a first person plural nominative. As such he is able to include his readership in his own philosophical ideas so that, by the time he makes the statement 'we know…,' he can essentially state this as a fact. The beliefs that Neil is stating involve the idea that Shakespeare could not have

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[56] Ibid., 20.

One of the more picaresque and enduring legends about Shakespeare's early life is that he supposedly killed a deer belonging to a prominent local landowner and Justice of the Peace, Sir Thomas Lucy. Lucy is said to have punished Shakespeare, following which the young poet composed an insulting verse about the gentleman and was thus forced to leave Stratford-upon-Avon in order to escape further penalty (see Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare, A Documentary Life*, 78-87; and Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 68-72).

committed the acts of which he is accused due to the fact that he had married Anne Hathaway, and thus would not be poaching. But this assumes that Shakespeare would act in a certain way simply because of the sort of man that Neil thinks he is. This *petitio principii* argument ensures that any writer can make Shakespeare into whatever type of person they wish. The second part of Neil's refutation involves a stress on Shakespeare's masculinity to assert his innocence. Shakespeare would have acted 'like a *man*' – and it is Neil's emphasis – therefore, to impute that he acted in any other way would be to emasculate Shakespeare.[57] Taken further, Neil can be seen to be equating Shakespeare to mankind as a whole; indeed just a few pages later he asks; '[i]s there truth in man, and that man Shakespere?'[58] Thus, if Shakespeare represents the whole of humanity, Neil's Shakespeare is acting in the same way as other men, such as the readership of this work. This means that Shakespeare is acting in a way that is both within the grasp of Neil's readers, and also the way that they should act. However, if Shakespeare is seen to be an innately good individual – the fact that he was born into a certain social class and thus should be emulated will be seen later in this chapter – and readers are expected to strive for self-improvement, then there is a paradox. If characteristics or behaviour are seen as inherent then efforts to improve become negated.

It is clear that, although the general concerns of Neil appear to be similar to that of Baynes and Smiles, he is approaching them in a different way. While Baynes and Smiles use stories about Shakespeare the man as a tool for advancing their beliefs in hard work, Neil's philosophy – with its conflict between hard work and destiny – relies on both Shakespeare the man and Shakespeare the works. And the two parts of the Shakespeare phenomenon achieve different ends; In the quote concerning the 'destiny

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[57] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 20.

[58] Ibid., 22.

of struggle' above, Neil uses Shakespeare's life to talk about fate, and then uses lines from Shakespeare's *Henry V* ('that "wooden O" – the globe') to describe the theatre environment within which Shakespeare worked.[59] By portraying Shakespeare's life when discussing destiny, and then lines from Shakespeare's play when mentioning work, Neil can present the necessary exhortation for his readers to work hard, but can also rescue Shakespeare from such menial labour. This is reinforced by the fact that the majority of the lines Neil quotes ('Comedians, tragedians, Tragi-comedians…') are from not even from a Shakespeare play but come from Thomas Middleton's (*c.*1580-1627) *Hengist, King of Kent, or the Mayor of Queenborough*, which serves to separate Shakespeare even further from the idea of struggle or toil.[60] In this way a writer can champion the idea of hard work and still present a Shakespeare who was innately gifted.

Not that all writers chose to employ the plays of Shakespeare as support for their arguments regarding hard work. The Rev. H. Baar, for example, who preaches a philosophy of punishment and reward, uses *King Lear* to announce that

> Treacherous Edmund meets his death at the hands of his persecuted half-brother Edgar.
> Thus the termination of the tragedy conveys to us the moral lesson which Edgar teaches
> to his dying brother, saying :-
>
> > The gods are just, and our pleasant vices
> > Make instruments to scourge us.[61]

It is clear that this attitude is a lesson to be learned, although the idea of divine retribution – even if it is from a 'just' god – sits uneasily with any concept of free will

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[59] Ibid., 62.
    W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Prologue.13.

[60] Thomas Middleton, *Hengist, King of Kent: or, the Mayor of Queenborough*, *c.*1620, ed. Joseph Quincy Adams, Folger Library Shakespeare Publications, (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 79 (5.1.79-81).

[61] Rev. H. Baar, 'On the Moral Ideals of Shakespeare', 1864, 159.

and the belief that people modify their behaviour for their own reasons and of their own accord. An obvious problem with Baar's use of Shakespeare is that to consider the works of Shakespeare to be his own opinions is not only an authorial fallacy but also ignores the fact that most of the plays were based on pre-existing source material. This all suggests that it is the ease with which the Shakespeare phenomenon lent itself to being used which seems to have encouraged its use by these writers.

It can thus be seen that, as with the differing attitudes toward nationalism highlighted in Chapter One, there were a variety of approaches to Moralism at this time and, while Shakespeare was employed as a suitable vehicle by all of these writers, it was not always for the same ends or in the same way. Indeed, there seems to be a spectrum of opinion from that of Baynes and Smiles and their complex exhortation to self-improvement, through to the different intricate philosophies espoused by Neil and Baar which mix destiny and the ability to change an individual's future. At the other end of this spectrum is the sort of morality which R. G. Moulton sees represented in the works of Shakespeare; it is one in which individuals are ultimately powerless against a higher force. Referring to Richard III, Moulton notes that in behaving so callously, the king has managed to cast off 'all ordinary restraints upon individual will – sympathy, inherited affections, remorse.'[62] It seems clear from this that there is no concept of free will in Moulton's system as it is only when an individual circumvents the 'ordinary' – that is, moves beyond those factors which regulate behaviour – that they can act differently. It becomes apparent that good behaviour is not something that can necessarily be chosen as a course of action by individuals. Although Richard has managed to throw off those restraints, he had to become something other than human in

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[62] R. G. Moulton, *The Moral System of Shakespeare: a Popular Illustration of Fiction as the Experimental Side of Philosophy*, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1903), 43.

order to do so. And it is not something super-human which Richard becomes but rather something sub-human meaning that Richard III is not a positive moral example.

Moulton notes that the ghosts which haunt Richard's dream (*Richard III* 5.5) are a form of retribution and states that 'he is held as in a vice by Destiny, while outraged humanity asserts itself.'[63] Destiny is something which Moulton sees as having the power to decide a person's fate; similarly 'humanity' is apparently a larger force which controls people's lives. In discussing *King Lear*, Moulton touches on the mirroring aspect of the Lear/Cordelia story by the Edmond/Gloucester subplot. Moulton feels that Shakespeare uses this mirroring to explore 'one of the fundamental problems of the moral world: how there are two types of sinners, those whose environment is a restraining force, like an embodied conscience, and those on the contrary, whose whole surroundings make one embodied temptation.'[64] This would appear to contradict any sense of individual autonomy as people are restrained or encouraged by their environment. Moulton does suggest that people have the ability to create environments – or at least that their environments are fashioned through human intervention – it is just that an individual's environment is made by someone else. Thus, the reason for Edmond's evil behaviour is the fact that he exists in an environment of temptation: but it is the actions of his father, Gloucester, and Edmond's own illegitimate status which have caused this environment. If this book is an attempt by Moulton to provide an example of how to live a morally virtuous life, it seems strange that his philosophy would appear to be one that involves no free will – meaning that his readers are powerless to choose to live in the way that he promotes. Certainly Moulton is concerned with morals here and he talks about 'A moral system… [which] involves the association

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[63] Ibid., 44.

[64] Ibid., 142.

of character with fate.'[65] Thus there is a concept of an individual's actions or character having a bearing on life and this suggests that people need to behave virtuously and leave the rest to fate. Yet Moulton's system of fate or destiny is unclear as he appears to believe in an inconsistent framework of retribution; he states that any

> attempt to analyse all experience in terms of retribution is false alike to real life and to life in the ideal. In the real life about us a child dies: how in this experience has character determined fate? Not the character of the child for there has been no responsibility. There may be cases in which the death of a child is retribution upon the carelessness or folly of parents; but will any one contend that this is always so?[66]

Thus a worldview is presented within which there is a tension between the idea that there *can* be divine retribution, and the fact that such retribution is not necessarily consistent. It is this uncertainty about the extent to which individuals have control over their own lives and what constitutes the best sort of lifestyle to be lived, which seems to characterise the way in which many of these writers use Shakespeare to espouse moral arguments. As has been noted, the common view of Victorian Values is far more complicated and needs to be considered in relation to the social and intellectual climate of the time.

This reinforces what has already been seen in this chapter about the complex philosophical climate of the time. There were numerous different and competing ideologies and these all fed into debates about morality, behaviour and ideas of the self. Despite the broader categories of thought such as Idealism or Sensualism, the actual literary pursuits which formed the dialogue on Shakespeare and morality can not be so

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[65] Ibid., 40.

[66] Ibid., 48.

easily categorised. This cursory exploration of the common debate concerning concepts of free will and determinism shows that the nineteenth-century concept of morality and the way in which Shakespeare is used is far from uncomplicated. The dialogue of self help could be approached in a variety of ways by these literary pursuits – and Shakespeare could be employed in different ways within this. Indeed, disagreements concerning moral ideals appear to be even less straightforward than the nationalist concepts seen in Chapter One of this thesis. This glance at the debate surrounding free will and determinism also suggests that the lack of specific evidence about Shakespeare, and the freedom that this provides those wishing to use him, is a likely reason for his frequent employment as an arena within which to promote and rehearse certain ideological agendas.

b) Shakespeare and Private Moralism

i) Relationships and the Family

The *OED* definition of 'moral' states that the term refers to 'a person's lifestyle or self-conduct (esp. in sexual matters),' and sexual morality is one of the most common threads of discussion in nineteenth-century texts which combine Shakespeare with a promotion of a moral agenda. The debate about sexual morality encompasses the areas of sexual relationships and familial interaction, and the idea of sexual intercourse taking place outside marriage is, unsurprisingly, something of which these writers generally disapprove. It is equally no surprise to see that sexual orientation or appetite may have called one's moral stature into question; Oscar Wilde's imprisonment for 'an act of gross indecency,' for example, was a national scandal, and the fact that insinuations

regarding J. S. Mill's advocacy of contraception prevented the then prime minister W. E. Gladstone from supporting a public tribute to the philosopher, suggest a society uncomfortable with public displays and discussions of sexuality.[67] Licentiousness is evidently frowned upon and seen as something to be punished. It has been seen that R. G. Moulton feels the reasons for Edmond's behaviour in *King Lear* are to do with the fact that he was born out of Gloucester's 'illicit amour… the fruits of the former sins are seen to make the temptations of the future.'[68] It is certainly true that Edmond's status as a bastard is one reason given by the character for his plot to usurp his brother, but his behaviour stems more from Edmond's sense of injustice at the label of bastard, and his anger at a system which condemns children born outside of marriage, than any divine punishment for his father's adultery. In fact it is Moulton and not Shakespeare who uses the language of transgression and retribution by using the word sin; an equally, if not more, plausible reading of the play would suggest that, in fact, Edmond's actions are carried out because of the way he is treated by society for being illegitimate, rather than as a result of the illegitimacy itself. Indeed, he soliloquises the reasoning behind his actions in what amounts to a rejection of traditional ideas of legitimacy.[69] So Moulton is reading *Lear* with a very particular moral agenda.

The idea of love and matrimony is something that the Rev. H. Baar deals with in his 'On the Moral Ideals of Shakespeare;' he states that,

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[67] *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, ed. H. Montgomery Hyde, Notable British Trials, (London: William Hodge and Company, Limited, 1948), 336-7.
See John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols., (London, 1903), ii, 543-4, as quoted in Collini, *Public Moralists*, 313.

[68] Moulton, *The Moral System of Shakespeare: a Popular Illustration of Fiction as the Experimental Side of Philosophy*, 143.

[69] Why 'bastard'? Wherefore 'base',
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With 'base', with 'baseness, bastardy – base, base' –
… As to th' legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'.

(W. Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 1.2.6-18).

It was Shakespeare's great moral ideal and firm belief that domestic felicity could only be assured by that depth and power of affection through which two congenial hearts, as if by magic ties, are attracted to each other, and that therefore every attempt to base the sacredness of matrimony on disparity of age, position, wealth, or other selfish motives, should be discouraged and denounced with all the power of moral indignation. For this purpose the great poet places himself, in matter of love, on the side of that great principle which maintains that freedom of choice should guide us in the accomplishment of our matrimonial ideals…[70]

Baar is claiming that Shakespeare was using his plays to present a specific moral agenda but, by examining what Baar actually says, this agenda turns out to be far from clear. A cursory reading would suggest that Baar believes Shakespeare to be championing the idea that people should be free to marry whomever they choose yet Baar is also stating that those choosing to marry someone who is of a different age, or social or economic position are damaging the sacred concept of matrimony.[71] It would seem that, despite his rhetoric of freedom and choice, Baar is actually being quite prescriptive in terms of people's freedom to marry; indeed, selfishness is denounced despite the fact that freedom and choice would surely necessitate a certain level of self-interest. So it seems that Baar is in fact promoting an adherence to the laws and sacraments of the church rather than personal liberty. Later Baar notes that,

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[70] Baar, 'On the Moral Ideals of Shakespeare'*,* 151.

[71] Ibid.*,* 151.

> Closely associated with King Lear is the dramatic interpolation of Earl Gloucester and his sons, which shows us the fatal consequences of youthful aberrations, by which we lose that purity of feeling with which we should enter upon wedded life.[72]

Anyone not approaching marriage with absolute purity will receive 'fatal' consequences. So Baar's exhortation as to the beauty and magic of love is, in actuality, an enforcing of traditional Christian doctrine and the idea of celibacy outside marriage, under the threat of some form of divine retribution. Baar discusses what he considers to be the correct approach to domesticity when he notes that *King Lear* is an illustration of the problems which can occur when family life goes wrong:

> In this tragedy the poet describes with great force and, we may say, with unsparing truth the fatal results that must arise when a family life, which should be based on parental love and filial reverence, disregards and disobeys those natural instincts and holy duties which can only secure the sound state of our affections.[73]

Similarly, Baar is able to overlook the fact that the tragedy which befalls Othello is engineered by Iago and instead puts the sequence of events down to the fact that,

> the marriage between the Moor and Desdemona does not entirely rest upon holy grounds; it is concluded by secrecy and intrigue against the knowledge and will of the father, and thus offers for future days to right-minded and straightforward souls a large field to dwell upon with uneasiness and regret.[74]

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[72] Ibid., 157.

[73] Ibid., 156.

[74] Ibid., 162.

Here are further exhortations to observe the traditional laws of familial relations in that the patriarch's consent is required prior to any wedding, and importance is placed on children and parents performing their 'proper' roles.

While a number of the plays present opportunities for family relationships to be used, many of these writers make mention of Shakespeare's own marriage and children because familial position, and a good relationship with one's friends, is seen as the sign of a good person and therefore something for which readers should strive. The idea of social order and sexual morality – such as fidelity to a spouse or partner – is encapsulated by the idea of family. So Samuel Neil, for example, talks about how 'Shakespere had a great (apparent) design to found a family.'[75] Neil also paints a picture of Shakespeare's despondency when the family unit of which he is part begins to disintegrate between the death of Hamnet (1585-96), and that of William's brother Richard (1574–1613):

> Shakespere was *now* parentless, brotherless, and sonless; there was already no near existent male relative to bear his name, and keep alive, by an actual representation, the memory of his family. About this time his energies are *said* to have slackened, and he is *supposed* to have ceased to interest himself in the theatre. His hope of founding a family, if ever entertained, was gone, and now he *felt* – what before he had only *said* – an indifference to fame.[76]

It is interesting here that Neil has shifted in his belief that Shakespeare had a desire to found a family; that which was 'apparent' earlier is now called into question by the less certain 'if.' Perhaps part of this shift is the evident failure of Shakespeare to succeed in terms of creating the sort of family unit that Neil is promoting, and, not wanting

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[75] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 47.

[76] Ibid., 55.

Shakespeare to appear to be anything other than successful, he lessens Shakespeare's desire for it. It should also be noted that the family being referred to here is very much a patriarchal one and predicated on the presence of males; there is a significant correlation between this masculinity and the importance placed upon fame and the preservation of reputation. Neil is making it clear that, once Shakespeare had lost male company, he became despondent and felt that any attempt to ensure the longevity of his name was futile. The preservation of Shakespeare's name is seen as important and fits with the context in which these morals are presented. As has been noted (p. 126 above), part of the reason Shakespeare is being used is because he is famous and the preservation of someone's name – especially by 'actual representation' – enables them to become an example to others. Similarly, the erection of the bust of Shakespeare in Stratford Church 'is evidence of the affection borne to the dramatist by his wife and children,' presumably because it kept his name alive.[77] Indeed the name of Shakespeare could, Neil believes, be 'looked upon as a boast by his kinsmen.'[78] Again, the idea of family unity and doing right in order to make your family proud are stressed as the key to emulating Shakespeare so that the readers of such works would be encouraged to act in the same way.

A final point worth mentioning here is the inherent chauvinism in Neil's account of Shakespeare's life. In 1613 Shakespeare still had two daughters – Susanna (1583-1649) and Judith (1585-1662) – as well as his younger sister Joan (1569-1646), and a wife. It is clear that Neil is not simply lamenting a lack of male members of Shakespeare's family because of their ability to carry on the Shakespeare lineage, as Shakespeare is portrayed as dejected despite the fact that his reputation would still be remembered. Although Shakespeare's wife and daughters could not keep the family

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[77] Ibid., 66.

[78] Ibid., 71.

name alive it was they, as Neil notes, who erected the memorial in Stratford Church and so helped, in part, to ensure the long lasting remembrance of Shakespeare. Thus Neil's construction of a despondent Shakespeare who ceases to care about his life or work relies on a belief that female members of a family are considerably inferior to males. This links back to the comments made by De Quincey in Chapter One (see p. 67 above) regarding the fact that the English were allowing a woman to be their monarch and a certain thread of misogyny certainly can be seen to be running through these literary pursuits.

ii) The Marriage of Anne and William Shakespeare

One of the most recurrent themes when considering Shakespeare and sexual morality is the nature of his relationship with Anne Hathaway (*c*.1555-1623). The facts which exist in the historical record revolve around two documents from the 1580s: a marriage license bond from 28 November 1582, which states that 'William Shagspere' and 'Anne hathwey' are granted license to marry, and the Stratford Parish Register which records the baptism of 'Susanna daughter to William Shakspere' on 26 May 1583.[79] Obviously, the six month gap between the two events suggests that Shakespeare's daughter was conceived at a time when her two parents were unmarried. This creates a problem if a writer is attempting to hold Shakespeare up as an exemplar of any set of moral codes which endorses abstinence from pre-marital sexual intercourse.[80] There are essentially three main ways for a writer to approach this

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[79] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare, A Documentary Life*, 63, 76.

[80] The granting of the marriage license itself is something which suggests that the wedding was a result of Anne's pregnancy; Schoenbaum details how the usual practice 'was the proclaiming of the banns three times in church on successive Sundays or Holy Days, so that anybody with knowledge of an impediment to matrimony might come forward and protest. After that, a ceremony before family, friends, and neighbours.' The granting of a license served to excuse the couple from these regulations and thus allowed a swift wedding; something which

problem: they can ignore this historical account and pass over this part of Shakespeare's life without comment so that their readers are not exposed to any hint of a pre-marital relationship with Anne; or they can accept that Susanna's conception needs justifying and either argue against the documentary record or explain a way in which Shakespeare can still be seen as morally virtuous; or, they can accept the timing of the birth of Shakespeare's daughter and either censure him for it or claim that it does not really matter. The various ways in which writers tackle the marriage of Shakespeare and the circumstances surrounding the birth of Susanna can be quite telling in terms of how they treat the ideas of sex and marriage as moral agendas.

In *Makers of Modern Thought*, David Nasmith chooses to describe the events of Shakespeare's marriage as follows:

> One thing is generally accepted, and that is, that when Shakespeare had barely attained the age of 18 he married Ann, the daughter of Richard Hathaway, a substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford, his senior by 8 years, by whom he had several children, but who neither bettered his circumstances or social status.[81]

As already noted in this thesis, there appears to be a certain element of male chauvinism in the way that a number of writers approach their work on Shakespeare. Despite Nasmith noting the fact, first recorded by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), that Anne Hathaway's father was a substantial yeoman, he almost immediately remarks that she did nothing to improve either the social or financial position of Shakespeare.[82]

Anne and William would have been desirous of if they were to marry before Anne's pregnancy became too obvious. See Ibid., 62.

[81] Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought*, 189.

[82] Nicholas Rowe's 'Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespear,' had been appended to his 1709 edition of the plays and was constantly reprinted afterwards.

Regardless of the latent misogyny in the need to mention Anne's effect on Shakespeare's status – as though it were her duty – Nasmith has no real evidence for his assertion and, as he does not mention William's effect upon Anne, it must be assumed that he is implicitly denigrating Anne due to her gender.

The most obvious feature of Nasmith's account of the Shakespeares' wedding is what he omits – the birth of their first child. However, a number of other effects are being achieved in this passage and it is worth examining them in some depth. To begin with, Nasmith states that the date of Shakespeare's wedding is generally accepted, rather than being a virtual certainty. The marriage license bond had been found in a bundle of legal papers in Worcestershire Records Office in 1836 and was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in September of that year, so there was really very little doubt as to the date of Shakespeare's wedding and Nasmith's 'generally accepted' confers an unjustified sense of uncertainty.[83] Nasmith's decision not to rely on the marriage bond is made all the more suspicious by the fact that he takes other, more apocryphal, tales from Shakespeare's life as factual.[84] In treating the marriage in this way, Nasmith allows the reader to believe that this may all be conjecture and thus any aspersions that such an imprudent marriage casts on the good name of Shakespeare could be dismissed. Another thing that is noticeable about this version of the marriage between William and Anne is that Nasmith chooses to concentrate on Anne's father and his social position. By defining Anne through the name and position of her father she becomes subordinate to him and thus immediately less important. Anne's unimportance is further reinforced by the fact that her father is 'a substantial yeoman' and thus a respectable, successful figure,

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[83] See R. B. Wheeler, 'Memorials of Literary Characters, No. XV: Shakspeare's Marriage License Bond', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 6 (September 1836), 266-8.

[84] Nasmith accepts the veracity of the deer-stealing legend and even goes so far as to reproduce one of the stanzas of Shakespeare's alleged verse on Sir Thomas Lucy.

while Anne herself fails to improve either William's social status or circumstances.[85] So Nasmith is able to marginalise and censure Anne without noting the timing of the birth of Susanna which would only serve to equally implicate William. This negative attitude towards Anne also means that any readers who were familiar with the possibility of the marriage being forced, and the suggestion of Shakespeare's pre-marital relationship with Anne would be able to read more into the failure of Anne to improve William's lot.

Similarly, the biography attached to the Albion edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare*, a popular version which passed through at least three editions between 1892 and 1900, describes Shakespeare's marital set-up very briefly:

> …he married at the age of eighteen Anne Hathaway, the daughter of Richard Hathaway, of Shottery, a substantial yeoman. The bride was eight years older than her husband. Before Shakspeare was twenty-one, he was the father of three children, a daughter, – Susanna, the darling of his after life, and a twin son and daughter, Hamnet (or Hamlet) and Judith.[86]

The fact that these events are passed over so succinctly, taking up a fraction of the overall biography (which mostly chronicles Shakespeare's hard work, prosperity, and influential friends), suggests that it is something with which the author wanted to deal as quickly and quietly as possible. It seems clear that both Nasmith and the anonymous author of the Albion biography wish to present a Shakespeare who married an older woman – they both stress the eight-year age difference – but not a Shakespeare who fathered a child before he was married. This is the least sophisticated way of obscuring any moral problem regarding Shakespeare's sexual behaviour although it is perhaps the

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[85] Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought*, 189.

[86] *The Works of William Shakspeare: with Life, Glossary, etc.*, The "Albion" edn. (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1892), x.

most straightforward. However, if a reader was acquainted with the suggestion that Anne Hathaway was pregnant before the wedding, such lacunae as these would appear clumsy. It has already been noted that the majority of the producers and consumers of these literary pursuits would have been fairly knowledgeable about Shakespeare as they were involved in an ongoing conversation between a community of scholarship; it is therefore likely that many of these people *would* have known about the possibility of Anne being pregnant before marriage. Thus many writers chose not simply to avoid the issue of Susanna's birth but rather to tackle it directly.

This is the tactic taken by George Walter Thornbury, in volume two of his *Shakspere's England; or, Sketches of our Social History in the Reign of Elizabeth*; unlike Nasmith and the Albion edition, Thornbury's work sets out the argument that 'their [William and Anne's] first child was born several months too soon, so the marriage was not premature.'[87] In this way he chooses to accept the documentary record as far as the dates of Shakespeare's wedding and Susanna's birth are concerned, but he then conjectures that the baby was born three months prematurely. That Thornbury evidently felt able to state the premature birth of Susanna without any documentary evidence would appear to suggest that there was a certain amount of credence given to this belief. It might alternatively suggest that enough people would be amenable to the construction of a more morally upright Shakespeare, thus ensuring support for this argument. Thornbury was not merely a lone eccentric – he was a prolific contributor to a number of prominent journals of the time – although his version of events is somewhat unusual, and other writers chose less fantastic interpretations of this episode in order to exonerate Shakespeare.[88] Frederick Fleay in *The Land of Shakespeare* draws

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[87] Thornbury, *Shakspere's England*, 39.

[88] Thornbury's articles appeared in publications including *Bentley's Miscellany, Ainsworth's, Welcome Guest, Once a Week,* the *Athenæum*, and Dickens' *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

explicit attention to Susanna's date of birth, choosing to portray a Shakespeare who was the victim of coercion rather than a willing participant in events. Like so many of these writers, Fleay feels confident in asserting that the conclusions he has reached are based on 'the naked facts, namely, that William Shakespeare, ætatis 18, married Anne Hathaway, ætatis 26; that no trace of consent of *his* relatives has been discovered; that her position in life was certainly inferior to his; that within six months of the date of the marriage-bond their first child was born.'[89] Again there is a subtle disparagement of Anne with regard to the Shakespeares' marriage here. As has already been seen in this thesis, William is portrayed as an aggrieved party. Indeed, although there is no explicit documentary evidence that the Hathaway family approved of the weeding it is only William's relatives who are noted to have not consented. This continues the general misogynistic attitude displayed in a number of these works.

Concerning Susanna's birth, Samuel Neil is more than willing to draw attention to Shakespeare's marriage and the timing of the birth of his first child. However, rather than accept the implication of the documentary record, Neil chooses to look on the events in a different light. Neil is adamant as to the moral if not legal propriety of William and Anne's pre-marital relationship, noting that

> they had deported themselves, as the registers of Stratford in this time will prove to have been often the case, as married persons, esteeming the troth-plight and betrothal as equivalent to *moral* though destitute of *legal* sanction.[90]

There is a certain amount of admonishment on Neil's part, however – the term 'destitute' clearly implies that this is a serious lapse – yet Neil can claim that Susanna

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[89] Fleay, *The Land of Shakespeare*.

[90] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 21.

was 'a child begotten in wedlock.'[91] Neil is also at pains to point out that both the Shakespeare and Hathaway families were involved and consenting, thus making the couple's behaviour much more responsible. Also, unlike other writers he praises Anne Hathaway as being a positive influence on Shakespeare's life:

> With Anne Hathaway to occupy his thoughts and time – with her influence to keep him right – we cannot picture him as a wildling and a worldling, nor believe him to have been a culprit, exposed to penalty and ignominy. *Before* his marriage that would be unlikely; *after* it, still more improbable.[92]

The idea of troth-plight is also used in an article which appeared in *Meliora* magazine in April 1864, claiming that the custom, 'while no excuse for modern license, takes from the undoubted facts the force intended.'[93] As far as this author is concerned, '[t]he idea of proclivity to illicit love suggested by the date of Susanna's birth is only tenable when we project our customs back to that age.'[94] It is clear that this writer considers sex outside marriage to be a bad thing and uses a Whig historiography to ensure that his readers are not tempted to indulge in such activity – noting that there is 'no excuse' for such behaviour.[95] It is also telling that the author describes non-marital sex as 'illicit' and has already made reference to Shakespeare's will; noting that it is a good thing that 'there is no provision for children "born out of wedlock."'[96] A similar approach is taken by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps in his *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* (1881). Halliwell-

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[91] Ibid., 21.
   The *OED* details the use of 'destitute' as meaning 'Devoid *of*, wanting or entirely lacking *in* (something desirable),' during the nineteenth century.

[92] Ibid., 20.

[93] 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare', 42.

[94] Ibid. 41.

[95] Ibid. 42.

[96] Ibid. 41.

Phillipps makes much of the fact that he believes William and Anne to have been in love and that pre-marriage contracts, in Elizabethan England, were as binding as an actual marriage contract.[97]

That a number of prominent works do not try to obscure the timing of Susanna's birth and are quite open in their account of events suggests the diversity of possible approaches to the common anxiety about sex outside marriage. This also serves to complicate the idea of a prudish Victorian morality as, although all of these writers are concerned with the same issue, there are those to whom the behaviour of Shakespeare was not a problem. Thomas De Quincey, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, notes the facts surrounding Shakespeare's marriage and the birth of his first child and is explicit in stating that it does not really matter. While certain works might try to avoid the issue or the controversy surrounding it, De Quincey engages with other writers and, if anything, spends rather too long labouring the point. To be sure, he places the 'blame' for the incident with Anne – '[n]either do we like the spectacle of a mature young woman, five years past her majority, wearing the semblance of having been led astray by a boy who had still two years and a half to run of his minority' – but De Quincey still describes events as 'a simple case of natural frailty, youthful precipitancy of passion, of all trespasses the most venial, where the final intentions are honourable.'[98] Similarly, given the brevity of the biography that he presents, it is surprising that George Saintsbury includes the detail of Susanna's birth in his *Elizabethan Literature*, the second in a four-volume *History of English Literature*. Rather than ignore the facts as often happened in larger biographies, Saintsbury is quite explicit, yet refrains from passing any judgement. The particulars of Shakespeare's life are passed over very briefly and he simply states that

[97] See Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, 38-9.

[98] De Quincey, 'Shakspeare', 80.

> Nothing is known of his youth and education… Before he was nineteen he was married, at the end of November 1582, to Anne Hathaway, who was seven years his senior. Their first child, Susanna, was baptised six months later. He is said to have left Stratford for London in 1585, or thereabouts, and to have connected himself at once with the theatre, first in humble and then in more important positions. But all this is mist and myth.[99]

As this biography is so short, and as Saintsbury announces his distaste for biographical detail in the preface to this work, it is certainly strange that one of the most prominent facts with which he presents his readers is the timing of the birth of Shakespeare's daughter.[100] Neither of these works can be seen as anomalous – both were prominent publications and were reprinted throughout the period, De Quincey's in 1860 and 1886 and Saintsbury's, produced in the 1880s, was still being reprinted in 1970.

The variety of ways in which this one single issue of Shakespeare's marriage can be approached is clear, but the commonality – that there is concern about Shakespeare fathering Susanna outside wedlock – raises some interesting questions about using Shakespeare as a moral exemplar. Primarily, it is interesting that Shakespeare is held up as a moral ideal despite the evidence suggesting that he was not a perfect candidate for such a role. Even if a writer's argument that the engagement between William and Anne allowed for them to have sex is accepted, it is usually still behaviour that the author feels should not be practiced by their own readers and this surely makes Shakespeare an unsuitable subject for such a work. There are numerous figures throughout history, and not only saints or religious icons, who presumably led lives untainted by any hint of sexual impropriety and who had also perhaps been

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[99] Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature*, 158.

[100] See Ibid., viii-ix.

financially successful, yet Shakespeare is picked to be a model of morality. The other question raised by the handling of this episode in Shakespeare's life by Samuel Neil, or in the *Meliora*, and others, is why it is included in this way. If a writer feels that the sexual relationship between Shakespeare and his wife is to be frowned upon, even though it was excusable in the context of Elizabethan England, it would presumably be a much more appropriate handling if the writer was to chastise Shakespeare for it. It would perhaps even make the discussion more of a reasoned treatment of morality and the figure of Shakespeare if he could be praised for behaviour consistent with such a moral philosophy and censured for what was not in keeping with this moral view.

Ultimately, the use of Shakespeare in order to promote a moral agenda, despite a lack of suitability, begins to shed light on the broader use of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century. There appears to be a complex relationship whereby Shakespeare is chosen because of his ubiquity, and malleability or aspectuality, while he is also, it would appear, chosen *despite* difficulties in the historical evidence. In other words he was already too important for a nineteenth-century writer to ignore and so had to be used no matter how clumsy or inconsistent that usage was. The unwillingness to avoid Shakespeare clearly has implications for the consideration of canon formation as it would appear that an author is being chosen not because he embodies a certain set of cultural values but rather because he is polyvalent.

c) Shakespeare and Public Moralism

Moving out of the smaller sphere of Private Morality and into Public Morality, writers concerned themselves with the overall state of the populace and the way that citizens should interact and behave within society. The second most noticeable common

preoccupation of these literary pursuits on Shakespeare is that of wealth, class status, and interaction with the wider world. A significant number of these writers advocate a moral philosophy in which a strong emphasis is placed upon the improvement of one's social and economic standing – often in the form of an aggressive capitalist desire to accumulate monetary wealth. To this end, a number of literary pursuits strive to create a Shakespeare who was successful both financially and in terms of his social standing. The anxieties between free will and determinism are again apparent in this strand of morality and the conflicts witnessed in that debate prefigure the diversity of opinion present within the overarching commonality of Public Morals.

i) Social Status and Class Position

In his brief description of Shakespeare's life David Nasmith notes that '[w]hether Shakespeare was or was not a distinguished actor is of little moment.'[101] Elizabethan actors, it seems, were essentially little more than servants, while '[t]he society of dramatic writers, on the other hand, was courted by the opulent, and the nobility adopted them as acquaintances, making them the objects of their bounty and esteem.'[102] This biography presents a Shakespeare who is acutely aware of his social standing, and it is this awareness which governs the way he lives his life. Thus it is upon Shakespeare the writer, rather than Shakespeare the actor, that Nasmith chooses to dwell. Indeed, '[i]t is highly probable that the question of status had somewhat to do with Shakespeare's retirement from the stage as actor.'[103] This retirement from acting ensured that Shakespeare was able to fraternise with the nobility of the period, including

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[101] Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought*, 195-6.

[102] Ibid., 198.

[103] Ibid., 198.

'[t]he accomplished Lord Southampton,' and 'the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery,' who 'vied with Lord Southampton in the patronage of Shakespeare.'[104] Clearly it is important that wealthy and prominent young men wished to socialise with Shakespeare – indeed, competed with each other to socialise with him – as the documentary record only regards them as Shakespeare's patrons rather than, as is stated here, 'warm admirers' who 'contracted a warm and life-long attachment for Shakespeare.'[105] The warmth of these relationships is stressed as it is just such attachments which Nasmith is trying to promote due to the fact that they made Shakespeare a better man.

That Nasmith wants his Shakespeare to have been one who was courted by the opulent members of Elizabethan society becomes even clearer when he recounts the tale of the Queen's involvement with one of Shakespeare's later plays. Popular tradition has it that Shakespeare wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the personal request of Queen Elizabeth who wished to see a play in which Falstaff was in love. The first recording of this story dates from 1702, and its veracity is far from certain – Anthony Davies describes the tale as an 'unlikely piece of hearsay' – yet Nasmith decides to present the idea as fact.[106] Having noted that 'Elizabeth, and subsequently James, were his [Shakespeare's] warm admirers,' Nasmith states:

> Indeed, it is to Elizabeth that the world is indebted for the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. She so thoroughly relished the humour in the two parts of *Henry IV* as to induce her to command the appearance of the keen-witted voluptuary, Falstaff, under the influence of love. It is said that Shakespeare wrote the play in the short space of a fortnight.[107]

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[104] Ibid., 198.

[105] Ibid., 198.

[106] See Anthony Davies, 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[107] Nasmith, *Makers of Modern Thought*, 198.

Nasmith is very confident in stating this information, and there is no possibility of error – it *is* to Elizabeth that the world is indebted, when he has previously been sure to note that information was 'far from sufficiently established' (in the case of John Shakespeare's (*c.*1530-1601) occupation), or only true 'if tradition is to be credited' (for William Shakespeare's early training as a butcher). From what he has already mentioned in connection with Shakespeare and social status, it seems reasonable to suppose that Nasmith is eager to make his Shakespeare someone with close ties to the affluent and powerful classes of England and clearly the monarchy are the most affluent and powerful people he can choose. Thus Shakespeare is made into an individual who is not only conscious of, and concerned about, his own social position, but who is also courted by influential people, and who manages to arouse feelings of admiration in the monarch of his time. Even the fact that he is able to produce the play to order, and in only two weeks, portrays Shakespeare as an adept, hard-working, and reliable man. In a similar fashion, the Albion edition of the complete works, from 1892, notes the social position of Shakespeare in the biography which precedes the works: '[t]he Queen – whose grand character he [Shakespeare] could so well appreciate – smiled on him, and deigned to direct and call forth his genius; while England's most chivalrous nobles were his friends.'[108]

It is not just the rich and famous outside the theatre who honoured Shakespeare, the *Meliora* magazine is able to show the esteem in which Shakespeare was held by his contemporaries by noting that Shakespeare had been 'a performer at the Globe in Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," and holds the highest place on the list.'[109] Shakespeare is shown as being honoured by one of the other major dramatists of the

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[108] *The Works of William Shakspeare*, x-xi.

[109] 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare', 29.

period and so his status as an important and influential individual is assured. It is equally important to the *Meliora* that Shakespeare was a member of the gentry; '"William Shakespeare, *gentleman*" – so runs the phrase in the legal document of an age chary of social distinctions.'[110] Thomas Baynes, in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, is at some pains to point out that Shakespeare's ancestors were not farm labourers but, rather, land-owners:

> A very needless and abortive attempt has been made to call in question [*sic*.] Robert Arden's social and family position on the ground that in a contemporary deed he is called a husbandman (*agricola*), – the assumption being that a husbandman is simply a farm-labourer. But the term husbandman was often used in Shakespeare's day to designate a landed proprietor who farmed one of his own estates. The fact of his being spoken of in official documents as a husbandman does not therefore in the least affect Robert Arden's social position, or his relation to the great house of Arden…[111]

The inclusion of this claim by Baynes demonstrates that the social position of Shakespeare's family was of importance, and that it was equally necessary for this social position to be one of inherited wealth rather than successful labour. G. W. Thornbury has a similar confidence in Shakespeare's social status at the beginning of his life: Shakespeare's 'birth was of that great middle class, that has produced the greatest and the best of England; not so rich as to be mere loungers, not so poor as to be degraded by poverty.'[112] The actual social status advocated by the two writers however is slightly different, with Baynes advocating a Shakespeare who was born into what

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[110] Ibid., 28.

[111] Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 747.

[112] Thornbury, *Shakspere's England*, 67.

could almost be described as the landed gentry – Arden is a 'great house' and Shakespeare's grandfather was a significant landowner – while Thornbury describes a lower middle-class Shakespeare of a family made respectable by access to sufficient finances but who still had to work for their living.

There were yet more approaches than these two, however, and a number of biographies at this time created a Shakespeare who migrated between the relative social positions proposed by Baynes and Thornbury. In many of these Shakespeare is born into a lower middle-class family (which bestows the respectability of Thornbury's Shakespeare), and manages, through hard work, to elevate himself to the level of upper middle class bordering on the gentry. Samuel Neil believes that he has

> evidence that Shakespere was the possessor of no small amount of disposable capital, and that he diligently looked after the adequate employment of it, – in subservience to his great (apparent) design to found a family, and not only elevate, but fix the name of Shakespere among those who enjoy the greatest amount of ease, honour and happiness – the middle class, the landed gentry of England.[113]

There is some uncertainty about the nomenclature used here as all of these writers use the terms 'middle class' and 'gentry' despite there being different meanings attached. To Thornbury the middle class are not rich enough to be 'loungers,' while Neil notes that the middle class 'enjoy the greatest amount of ease,' and Baynes sees the landed gentry as something that an individual is born into – the 'great house of Arden' certainly implies lineage – while Neil's Shakespeare moves social strata to become part of the landed gentry. This fits with what scholars have noted about the ambivalence of terms used to describe social and economic positions in the nineteenth century. Andrew

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[113] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 44.

Blake, for example, notes that 'the notion of gentlemanliness was not graven on tablets of stone, but a confused, if very important, yardstick for behaviour, constantly being reinterpreted and reconstructed in conversation and writing.'[114] These conflicting attitudes, both as to what Shakespeare was and how to define certain levels of social status, highlight the ease with which Shakespeare could be used by writers for different ends. However, the overall message here is that wealth and material prosperity, combined with a somewhat vainglorious awareness of one's own position within the established social hierarchy – Shakespeare wants to fix his name among the other members of the middle class – are the traits which distinguish a desirable social class. The exhortation to the readers of these literary pursuits is clear; being part of the middle class will actually make someone happy and so is obviously highly desirable. The fact that many writers also present handy instructions as to how to achieve middle-class status – pecuniary accumulation and partaking in capitalist transactions – increases the didactic nature of these works.

There is a suggestion of class-mobility with Samuel Neil's Shakespeare, and the fact that he is apparently seeking to elevate his status. This mobility would fit into the idea of wanting the readers of this work to try and elevate their own social status because, if class could not be altered by an individual, there would be very little point in showing people the advantages of other classes. There is an underlying tension here, however, as there can only be a middle class if lower and upper classes exist to enable middle as a definition. If the working classes *did* all attempt to move up the social hierarchy it could potentially lead to the dissolution of the class system as a whole. There is a general feeling that people need to better themselves both financially and socially, but this is tempered by an uneasiness that people may forget their 'proper'

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[114] Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction*, 59.

position in life and challenge the already wealthy or those who consider themselves to be socially superior. Clearly this was targeted at Neil's readership who would have wanted to be reminded of their own enviable position while not wanting it challenged; it has already been shown that the middle- and upper-classes would have been the main producers and consumers of these works. Although didactic in the sense that these literary pursuits showed their readerships what it was to be socially superior and how this could be achieved, there is an element self-congratulation in these works which fits with the fact that it is unlikely many working class individuals (those who could read) would have been reading *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*.

The Rev. H. Baar had presented Shakespeare as showing how ambition was 'capable of bringing to maturity the sweetest fruits on the tree of our political and social life' and also of the danger of 'haughty aspirations.'[115] There are further complications in that the desire to portray Shakespeare as an adept businessman and the desire to have him as a refined gentleman can be mutually exclusive. One of the legends that exists around Shakespeare's first years in London concerns the fact that he may have started work at the theatres by looking after the horses of those who came to watch the plays. This story first appeared in 'Lives of the Poets' (1753), which has been assigned to Theophilus Cibber (1703-58), and Samuel Johnson expanded upon it in 1765 for his edition of the plays. Johnson's story paints Shakespeare as a young entrepreneur:

> In this office he became so conspicuous for his care and readiness, that in a short time every man as he alighted called for *Will. Shakespear*… This was the first dawn of better fortune. *Shakespear* finding more horses put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his inspection… In time *Shakespear* found higher

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[115] Baar, 'On the Moral Ideals of Shakespeare', 153.

employment, but as long as the practice of riding to the play-house continued, the

waiters that held the horses retained the appellation of Shakespear's *Boys*.[116]

In the *DNB* entry for Shakespeare Sidney Lee notes that while '[t]here is no inherent improbability in the tale [as told by Cibber]. Dr. Johnson's amplified version, in which Shakespeare was represented as organising a service of boys for the purpose of tending visitors' horses, sounds apocryphal.'[117] This middle-ground approach of accepting that Shakespeare started out in a lowly position within the theatre environment but rejecting the idea that he created his own business empire not only makes Lee's presentation more believable – in leaving out Johnson's hyperbole – but also means that Lee's Shakespeare can be portrayed as a hard worker without having him tainted by the prosaic toil which would presumably be beneath the future world-renowned playwright. T. S. Baynes, in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, takes this tale even further and actively promotes the horse-holding story because it is testament to the young Shakespeare's business acumen.[118] Conversely, the Rev. H. N. Hudson feels that while 'there need be no question that Shakespeare held at first a subordinate rank in the theatre' on initially moving to London, Shakespeare would not have lowered himself to the position of holding the horses of gentlemen outside the theatre.[119] Hudson states that he 'cannot perceive the slightest likelihood of truth in' the 'well-known story of his being reduced to the extremity of "picking up a little money by taking care of the gentlemen's horses that came to the play,"' his main argument for this being that 'the station which the Poet's family had long held at Stratford, and the fact of his having

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[116] From William Shakespeare, *Plays*, ed. Samuel Johnson (London, 1765), vol. 1, p.c. as quoted in Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 75.

[117] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1292.

[118] See Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 756.

[119] H. N. Hudson, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters with an Historical Sketch of the Origin and Growth of the Drama in England*, vol. 1, 4th rev. edn. 2 vols., (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1872), 29.

influential friends at hand from Warwickshire, are enough to stamp it as an arrant fiction.'[120] As with the different ways in which writers could choose to deal with the social status of Shakespeare and his ancestors, the subject of Shakespeare's employment prior to working in the theatre is also an area of contention. Evidently Lee and Baynes use the horse-holding story to promote to their readers a moral of self-improvement and capitalist accumulation of wealth, while Hudson prefers to present a Shakespeare who was part of a semi-aristocratic network and so had no need for menial labour.

As with all of the different facets of Shakespeare's life that have been examined so far in this thesis, these literary pursuits take one aspect of Shakespeare and use it to promote their own particular agenda. The aspectuality of Shakespeare allows him to be used as an exemplar of social standing both by those who view him as a hard-working success story and those to whom he is an embodiment of the bourgeois structures of British society.

ii) The Business of John and William Shakespeare

It is generally accepted that Shakespeare's father, John, was a successful man in Stratford – holding a number of important positions in the community, culminating in that of High Bailiff or Mayor in 1568. At some time around 1577, however, the mortgaging of some property, failure to attend council meetings and church services, and the exemption from paying certain taxes suggest that his fortunes had faded.[121] This quite dramatic change in prosperity, as well as the customary ability of Shakespeare's Victorian critics and biographers to exaggerate facts and read things in a certain way,

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[120] Ibid., 29.

[121] See Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 8-10; and Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare, John', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

means that there are two possibilities open to those who wished to use Shakespeare as an exemplar for how good business sense was an important character trait. One approach is to emphasise the business failings of John Shakespeare and show that these were to galvanise the young William into steeling himself against a similar fate. T. S. Baynes in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains that John Shakespeare's fortunes meant that William had to be taken out of school early but '[n]o doubt the boy did his best, trying to understand his father's position, and discharging with prompt alacrity any duties that came to be done.'[122] Clearly, however, the fact that Shakespeare is presented at the end of this biography as being a highly successful individual, both financially and socially, shows that Shakespeare had managed to learn a lesson from his father's misfortunes.[123]

Sidney Lee in the *DNB* biography of Shakespeare notes both the prosperity and the hardship faced by John Shakespeare but takes the approach that these events were beyond John's ability to control. In the mid 1560s '[f]ortune still favoured him,' and Lee notes that '[i]n July 1564, when William was three months old, the plague raged with unwonted vehemence at Stratford, and his father liberally contributed to the relief of its poverty-stricken victims;' later, however, 'signs were soon apparent that his luck had turned.'[124] In this way, John Shakespeare is absolved of any culpability for the decline in his financial status and it can be seen as fate, or bad luck. This would suffice if the aim of Lee's biography was simply to portray Shakespeare and, by implication, his family as being good people. Yet the intent of the *DNB* was quite explicitly didactic; Lee himself noted that the dictionary would serve 'the national and beneficial purpose' of allowing future generations access to 'the character of their ancestors' collective

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[122] Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 752.

[123] 'He was a vigilant and acute man of business, of great executive ability… he was at the same time the most generous and affectionate of men, honoured and loved by all who knew him' Ibid., 768.

[124] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1288.

achievement,' and ideas of fate or chance sit uncomfortably with any idea of an individual benefiting from exposure to exemplary lives.[125] The portrait of John Shakespeare is one of a man who was unhappy at losing his previous social and financial position, and who makes attempts to relieve the debt he had succumbed to; in fact, Lee feels able to state categorically that 'John Shakespeare obviously chafed under the humiliation of having parted, although as he hoped only temporarily, with his wife's property of Asbies, and in the autumn of 1580 offered to pay off the mortgage.'[126] In this way, the *DNB*'s readers are shown that it is right to try and work one's way out of arrears, indeed, the only reason that John Shakespeare could not alleviate his debt was due to the unreasonableness of his creditor: '[Edmund] Lambert, retorted that other sums were owing, and he would accept all or none. The negotiation, which proved the beginning of much litigation, thus proved abortive.'[127] The John Shakespeare constructed by Sidney Lee is one who was simply unfortunate rather than foolish or devious, yet Lee still gets to impart a moral lesson by showing how easy it is to fall on hard times and that his readers need to be more careful in their financial affairs and with whom they deal.

The other approach that could be taken by writers who wished to use Shakespeare to promote a moral agenda was to argue against the idea that John Shakespeare had faced any financial difficulties. This would show that hard work and its financial reward are to be aspired to as it was the behaviour of the father of Shakespeare. Samuel Neil makes much of John Shakespeare's social position as a self-made businessman and traces the progression of his career, noting how he was '[r]ising

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[125] Lee, 'The Dictionary of National Biography: A Statistical Account', lxxviii.

[126] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1288.

[127] Ibid., 1288.

in municipal dignity.'[128] Neil also places importance on the fact that John Shakespeare was a 'man of business,' and feels it necessary to paint a picture of Shakespeare's father as a man who had not lost his business and savings.[129] When discussing various legal actions taken against John Shakespeare in the 1580s, Neil states that

> These several law transactions *may* imply that he was then a man of falling or fallen fortunes, though they *can* also bear the interpretation that he was then living beyond the jurisdiction and power of the courts of Stratford. Were these legal actions indeed against *this* John Shakespeare? – there was another, a shoemaker, resident in Stratford *then*.[130]

This desperate attempt to disprove John Shakespeare's lack of financial acumen betrays a desire on the part of Neil, as with other writers, to have Shakespeare's family both wealthy and hard-working. Similarly, despite the apparent evidence in the documentary record of John Shakespeare's troubles, the author of 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare' in the *Meliora* magazine decides that 'the proofs of the decadence of the Shakespeare family,' are not anything of the sort and that, in fact '[w]e think they are susceptible of another interpretation.'[131] The article claims that the reason for his absence from the town meetings was because 'John Shakespeare had become a "yeoman," a *probus et legalis homo*, at the head of the classes below a gentleman,' and so 'had devoted himself to his extra-burghal pursuits, had forsaken the town, and had comparatively lost his interest in them.'[132] The accuracy of this argument is irrelevant (although the author does make the salient point that, if John Shakespeare truly was in

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[128] Neil, *Shakespere: A Critical Biography*, 7.

[129] Ibid., 6.

[130] Ibid., 23.

[131] 'The Moral Character of Shakespeare', 23.

[132] Ibid., 23.

financial dire straits, it is strange that he retained possession of the Henley Street properties which he was able to bequeath to his son); the fact is that this writer is willing to use conjecture in order to claim that Shakespeare's father was, far from the poor businessman of popular tradition, rather a successful man who was almost elevated to the gentry. The *Meliora* author also believes that '[t]he early history of a man is involved in his parentage, connections, education, and surroundings,' and so a Shakespeare is presented – despite a lack of documented facts – whose childhood is similar to how his later life will be. Evidently the author feels that this is how their readers should live their lives:

> We believe, then, that we may safely state that the boyhood of William Shakespeare was spent in the midst of active business matters – cared for morally by his mother, and looked after as to conduct and school-progress by his father, in comfort and plenty, in a family honoured not only for their position in the town, but for themselves.[133]

This would seem to explain why there is a desire to make John Shakespeare 'not the poverty-stricken man usually thought, but a man of extra-burghal substance;' because a successful father allows Shakespeare to have a privileged childhood and thus become a worthy adult.[134]

There is a third way to employ John Shakespeare's apparent loss of finances as a moral lesson; some writers use both the successes and failings of John Shakespeare to advance their agenda, rather than picking just one. While not choosing to ignore the evident decline in John Shakespeare's fortunes, Baynes' biography in the *Britannica* does seek to highlight his successes. Baynes portrays William Shakespeare gaining

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[133] Ibid., 22, 23.

[134] Ibid., 41.

useful experience when he was taken out of school to help with his father's financial difficulties – showing that this provided a lesson for Shakespeare to learn – yet there is much more emphasis placed on John Shakespeare's triumphs. So Shakespeare's father is praised as being 'evidently a man of energy, ambition, and public spirit, with the knowledge and ability requisite for pushing his fortune with fair success in his new career.'[135] The section dealing with the 'reverse of fortune' of John Shakespeare, on the other hand, is in small type at the foot of the page, and so is obviously deemed to be less important, or is intended to be missed by the casual reader. Baynes not only praises John Shakespeare, but also presents a William Shakespeare who had a shrewd and adept business mind. This is a Shakespeare who became a dramatist because he saw it to be the best way to make money using the talents at his disposal. Baynes notes that 'with the unfailing sense and sagacity he displayed in practical affairs, he [Shakespeare] seems to have formed a sober and just estimate of his own powers, and made a careful survey of the various fields available for their remunerative exercise.'[136] Obviously this story is entirely conjectural but it is clear that such a prosaic account of how Shakespeare became a playwright is intended to make him a man who was focused and prudent. Baynes also makes much of the fact that Shakespeare appears to have made frequent recourse to the courts in order to claim back money he had lent, thus constructing a Shakespeare who was both intelligent enough, and sufficiently prudent with his money, to use the legal apparatus of the country in order to advance his own causes. Thus the portrait of Shakespeare which is presented here is of a man who learned both from his father's business acumen, and also from his father's failings. In this way Baynes can ensure that Shakespeare came from a good background and that he also improved upon that with which he had started.

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[135] Baynes, 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', 745.

[136] Ibid., 755.

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The moralist uses of Shakespeare within the literary pursuits examined in this thesis further reinforce the idea that Shakespeare was being used as an arena within which certain moral issues could be discussed. As with nationalist uses there is a definite dialogue through which there are numerous common definitions of moralism. The general concepts of morality, such as personal sexual behaviour or an individual's role within societal structures, were able to be discussed using Shakespeare as a platform for debate. Within this debate, and the broadly homogenous definitions of morality, there were different approaches taken to Shakespeare and, occasionally, conflicting conclusions, such as the extent of control an individual has over their own life. It would seem that attitudes to morality are more complex than those to nationalism as there is more direct disagreement about which type of moral behaviour is the best rather than simply being differences of approach. What this highlights is the freedom provided by using Shakespeare as a locus for discussion as these writers can easily engage in debate regarding conflicting views. This freedom arises out of the perceived lack of information about Shakespeare; this leads to his malleability or aspectuality.

Where Chapter One noted the different Shakespeares which could be constructed depending on how a writer chose to approach an issue, this chapter has shed light on the reasons behind these differences. Writers could construct different Shakespeares according to what best suited their particular agenda and this relied on the freedom provided by a paucity of evidence regarding Shakespeare's life and works. The aspectuality noted by Bate in regard to Shakespeare's works can equally be applied to the phenomenon of Shakespeare as a whole and this malleability allowed Shakespeare to be easily used by those wishing to advance an ideology. This begins to go some way towards explaining why Shakespeare was such a frequent choice in the promotion of

national and moral agendas despite the occasional presence of problematic evidence suggesting his inappropriateness for the task. This thesis will now move forward to consider the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare as a case study within which to examine both the ubiquity of national and moral debates within Shakespearean literary pursuits, and the apparent desperation to make Shakespeare fit certain agendas despite his evident unsuitability. Elements of nineteenth-century thought that have already been considered such as the search for a national and moral identity as well as the frequent turn to different types of historicism and intellectual approach will recur in the forthcoming chapter. The antipathy or envy of other nations and the privileging of thought or sensory experience will again be seen as Victorian literary pursuits use Shakespeare and, more specifically, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* as an arena within which to debate their concerns and anxieties.

Part Two **Case Study**

Chapter Three **The** *Sonnets*

> I will not urge the priceless legacy he has left us, nor the fact that the
> common heart, brain, and conscience of mankind holds him foremost
> among all Englishmen as the crowning glory of our race
>
> > \- S. Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, (1899)[1]

> As a poet the sonnets enhance the fame even of Shakespeare; do they lower
> the estimate we might otherwise form of his moral character?
>
> > \- J. Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, (1883)[2]

> The spirit of a new time had entered the land, to take shape in a proud array of
> great deeds, and a literature unparagoned; such as would place this England
> of ours side by side, if not high above either Greece or Rome.
>
> > \- G. Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, (1888)[3]

a) **The** *Sonnets*

The two major concerns of nationalism and moralism which were voiced through Shakespeare in the nineteenth century, and the diversity of approach towards that voicing, found their most interesting expression within writing on *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. The fact that both agendas were being addressed, not only using the broader Shakespeare phenomenon as a locus, but also within literary pursuits about this single work, suggests that moralism and nationalism were important enough at the time to permeate all levels of critical discourse. More precisely, it is the references to ancient Greece or the use of ancient Greek imagery within writing on the *Sonnets* which

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[1] Samuel Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Reconsidered and in part Rearranged with Introductory Chapters, Notes, and a Reprint of the Original 1609 Edition*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), 87.

[2] John Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, (London: Edward Stanford, 1883), 414.

[3] Gerald Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets: A New Work on Old Lines, a Rational Plea on Behalf of Shakspeare's Sonnets, A Permanent Reply to His Misinterpreters, A Labour of Love, Dedicated to His Lovers, A Necessary Supplement to All Editions of His Works*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888), 406.

highlight how the two areas of nationalism and moralism are linked. Anxieties about the nation and its people were often addressed by reference to ancient Greece and related ideas about civic behaviour and the state; similar ideas, for example, were discussed in contemporary Victorian poetry. When this discussion takes place in the context of the *Sonnets*, however, it further sheds light on how and why Shakespeare in particular was such a useful arena within which to address concerns about nineteenth-century Britain. This chapter will bring to attention the sophistication and complexity of nineteenth-century engagements with *Shakespeare's Sonnets* – something often overlooked by modern scholars. In so doing it will become evident that the discussions about nationalism and morality, which have been shown to permeate general Shakespearean literary pursuits in this period, are present in writing on the *Sonnets*. Finally this will allow for suggestions to be made as to why this dialogue was located within the sphere of Shakespearean literary pursuits.

It is perhaps surprising that nineteenth-century literary criticism of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is so frequently overlooked by modern scholars. The attitude taken by twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics to the Victorian reception of the *Sonnets* is revealing in terms of how the critical importance of the period has been perceived. For example, J. M. Robertson (1856-1933) in *The Problems of the Shakespeare Sonnets* (1926) states his intent of 'collating all the competing theories with each other and with the data, to indicate the direction in which critical research may most profitably proceed.'[4] Yet, despite the usefulness of Robertson's work as one of the earliest overviews of nineteenth-century *Sonnets* criticism, he devotes as much space to the first twenty-six years of the twentieth century as he does to the entire nineteenth century. In his edition of *Shakespeare: The Sonnets* in the Casebook Series of collected

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[4] J. M. Robertson, *The Problems of the Shakespeare Sonnets*, (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1926), v.

criticism, Peter Jones barely mentions Victorian critical appreciation and the selections he chooses to demonstrate the critical reception of the *Sonnets* is telling. They are taken from the years 1803, 1815, 1817, 1821, 1826, 1828, 1833, 1875, 1880, 1882, 1899, 1905, 1909, and so forth. When placed alongside each other, these dates highlight a significant absence of material from the 1830s to1870s: the core years of Victoria's reign. In the Introduction to his volume, Jones provides a survey of important developments in *Sonnets* scholarship in which he moves from Edmond Malone's (1741–1812) re-editing of the *Sonnets* for his 1780 complete works straight to H. C. Beeching's edition of 1904.[5] Given the lack of attention given to the mid-to-late nineteenth century it is perhaps surprising that the final part of Jones' Introduction amounts to an attack on Victorian critics. The paragraph is worth quoting in full to give a sense of this hostility; having discussed the views of L. C. Knights and the idea that the group of sonnets is not actually a homogenous whole, Jones announces that

> We may be able to appreciate the Sonnets more readily than nineteenth-century readers. They were concerned for Shakespeare's moral reputation. 'O my son!' cries Coleridge, 'I pray fervently that thou may'st know inwardly how impossible it was for Shakespeare not to have been in his heart's heart chaste.' Even Samuel Butler, conceding that Shakespeare's affection may have amounted to more than a 'typical Renaissance friendship', protects the poet by the idea that 'Mr W. H. must have lured him on.' Coleridge blames the 'very inferior women of that age'. The approach was biographical first. Lee helped to change that, and the moral climate has changed sufficiently for prescriptive censure to cease to mar our reading of the poems. Apart from A. L. Rowse's recent efforts, there is less serious attention paid

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[5] *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, ed. Peter Jones, Casebook Series, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1977), 14.

to the unverifiable biographical source of the work, more to the human and poetic

source and nature of the sequence.[6]

This attack stands out because it is placed out of sequence with the rest of his précising of the critical tradition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. However, his comments are misleading for a number of reasons: primarily Jones gives no sense of the sophistication and complexities which, as the present chapter will show, characterised the views of nineteenth-century writers and readers. Jones also implies that there were few critics engaging with the *Sonnets*. To mention just Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) (whose only writings on the *Sonnets* were in 1817 and 1833), and Samuel Butler (1835–1902) (whose *Shakespeare's Sonnets* appeared in 1899), is hardly a fair survey of the period.[7] Moreover, it is a strange claim that Sidney Lee initiated a shift away from biographical criticism considering that such approaches are still common today and, as this chapter will show, were far from the only critical stance taken before his writings. There is also the fact that Lee was notoriously inconsistent in what he actually believed, changing his mind in a matter of weeks as to the nature of the *Sonnets* (see p. 230 below).

Even where Jones' own thinking matches that of a late-nineteenth-century writer, he is scant with his praise, feeling that 'William Sharp [in 1885] … has anticipated us in suggesting this meaning,' rather than that William Sharp was correct in and of himself.[8] Nineteenth-century appreciation of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is similarly

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[6] Ibid., 20-1.

[7] Coleridge did present a number of lectures on Shakespeare in 1811-2, but the content of these was not published until 1856 by John Payne Collier and these were Collier's own transcriptions rather than Coleridge's notes which were not published in their original form until Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, 1930, Thomas Middleton Raysor ed., (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1960). See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria: or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, 2 vols., (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), esp. chapters 15-6; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, 1833, (London: John Murray, 1874). Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

[8] *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, ed. Jones, 29.

dismissed by Michael Dobson in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, where he notes that: '[T]he bulk of 19th-century comment on the Sonnets… is preoccupied with their alleged biographical content at the expense of their artistry… Only with the rise of modernism in the early 20th century – with its delight in complexity, irony, and ambiguity – did the Sonnets at last appear to belong in the mainstream of English poetry.'[9] The material assembled in this chapter will show that Dobson is correct in his assertion of the dominance of biographical readings, but it will also reveal that the dismissive way in which he deals with nineteenth-century comment is unwarranted. This chapter will contest the claim that the Victorians missed, or refused to engage with, the complexities and ambiguities of the *Sonnets*; indeed it is precisely these characteristics, and the attendant freedom which allowed the construction of different Shakespeares, which enabled such wide-spread use of Shakespeare.

The apparent trivializing of the second half of the nineteenth century is even more surprising given that publication figures show editions of the *Sonnets* and works of criticism concerned with them beginning to increase rapidly during this period (see Appendix One). According to the British Library Catalogue, there were no editions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* published in the nineteenth century prior to Robert Cartwright's *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare, Rearranged and Divided into Four Parts* in 1859; after Cartwright's edition there were a further twenty-four separate editions of the *Sonnets* published before the end of the century.[10] A similar story is told by the catalogue of the Birmingham Shakespeare Library, which holds an even larger collection of Shakespeare-related works. This library holds no nineteenth-century editions of the *Sonnets* prior to Cartwright's and then a further thirty-seven before

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[9] Michael Dobson, 'Sonnets', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[10] See *British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*, 286.

1900.[11] In terms of criticism on the *Sonnets*, Birmingham Shakespeare Library holds two works published before 1850, and sixty-eight published between 1851 and 1900, while the British Library shows one pre-1850, and fifteen in the second half of the century. It must therefore be assumed that the entire first half of the nineteenth century passed without the publication of a single edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* – and very little criticism – but, following 1859, publication and criticism took place at an exponential rate towards the end of the century.

The dismissive attitude of later critics is perhaps explained, or at least mirrored, by the fact that there appears to have been a confused attitude towards engagement with the *Sonnets* during the nineteenth century. Henry Brown, in *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved* (1870), begins by stating that

> The Sonnets of Shakespeare, till within the last few years, have been strangely neglected, and even now few readers of his dramatic works read these poems; they have been and still remain a sealed book to his world-wide admirers.[12]

Hannah Lawrence (1795–1875) writing in the *British Quarterly Review* in 1867 also suggests that the *Sonnets* had 'been all but forgotten for more than a century,' although, unlike Brown, she believes that a resurgence in interest in the poems was not as recent as the last few years; '[a]mong the vexed questions that have engaged the literary world during the last thirty or forty years, that of Shakespeare's sonnets has held a conspicuous place.'[13] Regardless of when the upturn in interest was perceived to have taken place, by

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[11] See *A Shakespeare Bibliography: The Catalogue of the Birmingham Shakespeare Library*, vol. 1 'English Editions; English Shakespeariana, A. - Hall, A.' 3 vols., (London: Mansell Information / Publishing Ltd., 1971), 202-7.

[12] Henry Brown, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved, and the Mystery of his Friendship, Love, and Rivalry Revealed. Illustrated by Numerous Extracts from the Poet's Works, Contemporary Writers, and Other Authors*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1870), i.

[13] Hannah Lawrence, 'Shakespeare in Domestic Life', *British Quarterly Review,* 45 (January 1867), 81.

1899, Samuel Butler was noting that the *Sonnets* 'are being studied yearly more and more,' and was able to comment that 'I cannot see that the Sonnets are in any respect less priceless than the Plays, except in so far as they are less in volume.'[14]

Despite evidence of increased interest in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, not all writers shared this view and in 1888 Horace Davis, president of the University of California, wrote that 'the old-fashioned diction and the odd, obsolete words' may have been the reason why 'everybody reads Shakspere's plays, but very few are familiar with his sonnets.'[15] C. Green, in 1897, felt that the lack of attention to the *Sonnets* reflected the fact that they were a more specialised pursuit than the rest of the Shakespeare canon:

> There is no part of our mighty master's work that has been at once so much neglected and so closely and minutely studied as that portion known as the Sonnets. Neglected, that is, not only by the ordinary admirers, but also for the most part by the lovers of the great bard, while on the other hand some life-devoted students have given their time, their learning, and their ingenuity to uplift the veil of mystery which seems to envelop them from the dedication to the last couplet.[16]

This argument would suggest that the reason for any lack of appreciation of the *Sonnets* was due to them being seen as a puzzle to be solved rather than as a purely entertaining work of art; or perhaps it was the case that any lesson the *Sonnets* were supposed to teach was too obscure, and so more clearly didactic works were preferred. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century there was some debate about whether the works of Milton may have required 'more effort… than an average reader is able to make,' thus resulting in

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[14] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 85, 119.

[15] Horace Davis, 'Shakspere's Sonnets: an Essay', *Overland Monthly,* (March 1888), 3.

[16] C. Green, 'A Look Into Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Central Literary Magazine,* 13, no. 2 (April 1897), 62.

them being 'more admired than read.'[17] The idea that some literature might require too much effort to be widely appreciated could feasibly be why the *Sonnets* may have been perceived as unpopular. In 1815 William Hazlitt announced that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* 'are I think overcharged and monotonous, and as to their ultimate drift, as for myself, I can make neither head nor tail of it.'[18]

Certainly the sonnet as a type of poetry was popular in the later nineteenth century and a number of widely regarded poems in the sonnet form were produced at this time. John Holmes notes that 'the 1870s and 1880s saw a fashion for writing sonnet sequences unlike any seen in English poetry since the 1590s. Dozens of sequences comprising hundreds of sonnets were written in these two decades alone, and the fashion persisted, like its Renaissance antecedent, into the next century.'[19] Joseph Phelen seconds this claim, stating that '[t]he years around 1880 saw a "Sonnettomania" to rival that of the closing decades of the previous century.'[20] *Shakespeare's Sonnets* evidently played a role in this interest and Angela Leighton has noted that Elizabeth Barrett Browning's (1806-61) *Sonnets from the Portuguese* 'were eagerly and favourably compared with the sonnet sequences of Petrarch and Shakespeare.'[21] The same year, 1850, also saw the publishing of Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam A. H. H.* which, as Christopher Ricks has noted, was heavily influenced by *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.[22] Phelan believes this turn to Shakespeare to be a reaction against earlier nineteenth-century

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[17] Mark Pattison, *Milton*, 1879, ed. John Morley, English Men of Letters, (London: Macmillan & Co., Limited, 1909), 215.

[18] William Hazlitt, *Table-Talk: Essays on Men and Manners*, 1824, The World's Classics, (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 236.

[19] John Holmes, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Late Victorian Sonnet Sequence: Sexuality, Belief and the Self*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), vii.

[20] Joseph Phelan, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonnet*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 134.

[21] Angela Leighton, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Sue Roe, Key Women Writers, (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1986), 3.

[22] See Christopher Ricks, '*In Memoriam*, 1850', in *Tennyson*, 2nd edn., ed. Christopher Ricks, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 204. For further information on Tennyson and Shakespeare see Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, 181-92.

sonnets and states that '[d]uring the years after 1850… poets began to look to Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, to Keats and to the Italian originators of the sonnet in the search for alternatives to the Miltonic-Wordsworthian model and everything that it implied.'[23]

Interest in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* was certainly growing and there are a number of other explanations for why they became an increasingly popular phenomenon in the nineteenth century. As has been seen, the upturn in interest regarding Shakespeare that occurred during the nineteenth century coincided with a strong belief that engaging with Shakespeare's works as a reader of texts was equal to, if not more important than, being a spectator of his plays (see pp. 5-8 above). Thus the part of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* which was specifically literary rather than theatrical became an obvious subject of interest. Not only does the nature of Shakespeare's poetry as a page-based experience make it a more likely candidate for Victorian consumption from an intellectual point of view, but the small size of a volume of poetry would also make it more practical for a society which found itself becoming increasingly mobile and in need of material to read on the train or omnibus. John Gross has commented that 'people everywhere were now eager for packaged information, casual entertainment, reading-matter which they could get at in a hurry, "like sandwiches on a railway journey."'[24] Indeed, in 1883, John Dennis (1825-1911) advised that '[i]f any reader is still unacquainted with this golden treasury of thought and imagination, we counsel him to obtain a pocket edition of the poems [of Shakespeare], and carry it about with him until he gain familiarity with its contents.'[25] Similarly, Charles Ellis, in his *"The Christ in Shakspeare," Shakspeare and the Bible* believes that '[t]he reader will discover ample scope for meditation on them

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[23] Phelan, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonnet*, 4.

[24] Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800*, 76.

[25] Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, 415-6.

[the *Sonnets*] when, even on a journey, he can retire into himself.'[26] As *Shakespeare's Sonnets* became more popular there was a simultaneous increase in the way that writers co-opted them for various agendas, although it is difficult to determine in which direction this causality moved. Certainly the poems lend themselves to being used more than Shakespeare's plays as the narrative voice of the *Sonnets* speaks largely in the first person which enables critics to see in them Shakespeare's own persona.

As this thesis is an investigation into how *Shakespeare's Sonnets* were used by nineteenth-century writers to discuss the concerns of the day, there is no need for a detailed study of Victorian poetry. That said, a brief look at the work of recent scholars in the field of nineteenth-century poetics is useful in contextualising the way in which nineteenth-century writers would have approached the *Sonnets*. As has been seen frequently throughout the present thesis, broad categorisations are often crude and misleading and generalisations about Victorian poetry risk being reductive. Indeed, as the work of such canonical writers as Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Edward Lear (1812-88), A. C. Swinburne, Matthew Arnold (1822-88), Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-89) and Oscar Wilde make clear, the genre is exceptionally diverse. This caveat notwithstanding, some generalisations can clearly provide a useful point of reference. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of increasing sophistication in the sphere of poetics; Joseph Bristow's recent work in this area has done much to highlight how diversity was a consequence of complexity and innovation, particularly among women poets and those whose poems were concerned with aesthetics.[27] Bristow has charted a period which can perhaps best

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[26] Charles Ellis, *"The Christ in Shakspeare," Shakspeare and the Bible: Shakspeare, a reading from the Merchant of Venice; Shakspeariana; Sonnets, with their Scriptural harmonies*, Victorian edn. (Plymouth: Houlston & Sons, 1897), 165.

[27] See *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and the 1890s*, ed. Joseph Bristow, (Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2005).

be defined through an ongoing (and unresolved) debate about the purpose and function of poetry; its terms can be seen via the distinctions between the overtly utilitarian political poetry of Ebenezer Elliot (1781-1849), the poetry of public laureate Tennyson, and the self-consciously aesthetic, poetry of Wilde. These tensions concerning the function of poetry are important in relation to the concerns of this chapter; as will be seen, there are numerous opinions about the purpose of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and varying stances toward whether the poems are didactic or literary conceits.

As well as the propensity toward experimentation noted by Bristow, Carol T. Christ has charted contemporary debates concerning the separation of the speaker of a poem from its writer, arguing that they anticipate later modernist forms of mask and persona.[28] By noting how the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning and Alfred Lord Tennyson elide the poets' own voices Christ shows that nineteenth-century popular poetry was challenging the concept of poetic voice. Although Christ's main focus is on Browning, Tennyson and Wilde, and their relation to William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972), her work is important in situating the climate of nineteenth-century poetics. In highlighting the approach to public and personal poetic voice taken by a writer such as Wilde – that the impersonality achieved through the use of a persona or mask could enable a poet to escape the confines and confusions of the author's own profile – Christ illuminates the development of attitudes towards persona in nineteenth-century critical discourse. The literary pursuits with which this thesis is concerned were obviously seeking to describe poetry from 250 years in the past rather than formulate a poetics to address contemporary concerns; nonetheless these writers' understanding of, and attitudes towards, contemporary poetry are important. Isobel Armstrong, in a similar focus on the poetic voices of nineteenth-

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[28] See Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 15-52.

century poetry, discusses how the two forms of internalised self-expression and external critical interrogation come together in what she terms the 'double poems' which are found in the nineteenth century. Indeed, '[w]hat the Victorian poet achieved was often quite literally two concurrent poems in the same words.'[29] As with Christ's work, this perceptive interpretation of Victorian poetics is helpful in terms of understanding the way that nineteenth-century readers and critics would have approached *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. It is Armstrong's thesis that Victorian poems were both introspective with regard to the poetic voice and extrospective regarding the wider cultural conditions within which the poem operates. This helps to illuminate the aspectuality of Shakespeare as a phenomenon which could be used to address various issues by taking different approaches and resulting in different outcomes. In this chapter, the duality of the nineteenth-century poem, and the effect that this had on nineteenth-century concepts of poetics, can be glimpsed in the duality of approach towards the voice and character behind *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, with critical stances ranging from viewing the sonnets as biography, to seeing them as literary exercises.

Yopie Prins has also noted that the nineteenth century was a time of increasingly complex ideas about the importance of the 'voice' behind a poem, as can be seen in the emerging sophistication of Victorian interest in meter. Not only were poets becoming more experimental in their choice of meter – 'departing from eighteenth-century heroic couplets and neoclassical odes' – but also the study of poetic meter and voice was, as has been seen with all scholarly endeavours in this period, increasingly professionalised.[30] The growing attention to a perceived authorial presence, combined with the proliferation of printed poetry – which served to further distance the text before

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[29] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 12.

[30] Yopie Prins, 'Victorian Meters', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89.

a reader from the poet and thus the poetic voice – meant that Victorian readers were able to reconsider their approach to all poetry. Indeed, Karen Alkalay-Gut has suggested that there was a shift in literary perception in the later nineteenth century as readers began to question the voice in which literature was written. Paraphrasing Charles Algernon Swinburne's attempts to distance himself from the decadent voice of his lyric poetry ('I'm not sick – it's those crazy characters of mine'), Alkalay-Gut describes how 'many Victorian readers reacted to this response by observing that the kind of mind that conceived of such personae could only be diseased.'[31] It will be seen that this interest in the idea of a speaker whose voice lies behind a poem serves to explain both the concern with, and desire to elucidate, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. As will be seen later in this chapter, there was an attempt to distance Shakespeare from any morally troubling aspects of the *Sonnets* by claiming that that the voices in the poems were merely literary constructions – yet this argument was evidently not persuasive for many contemporary readers. Here a writers' work was being used to judge the moral fitness of his mind, a process made significantly easier process when the literary form was lyric poetry.

Although the collection of 154 sonnets is neither necessarily sequential nor, indeed, a sequence at all, a general narrative thread has long been seen to run through the poems. That thread involves the 'characters' of the Poet, the Fair Youth (possibly the 'Mr W. H.' of the dedication), the Dark Lady, and the Rival.[32] The basic plot that develops from this way of viewing *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is one of romantic and sexual

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[31] Karen Alkalay-Gut, 'Aesthetic and Decadent Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 228.

[32] The idea that the *Sonnets* contain a narrative, refer to these characters, or even make up a coherent sequence is contentious and debate is ongoing as to how best to approach these poems. Compare, for example, Stephen Booth's famous 'William Shakespeare was almost certainly homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. The sonnets provide no evidence on the matter' (*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth, (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 548) with Katherine Duncan Jones' Arden *Sonnets* which treats the poems as biographical and views previous dismissals of biography as implicitly homophobic (*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan Jones, The Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, (London: Thompson Learning, 1997), Introduction). For ease of reference in the present thesis, however, it will be assumed that the *Sonnets* contain certain characters and they will be referred to as the 'Dark Lady,' the 'Fair Youth,' 'Mr W. H.,' and the 'Poet.' Arguments as to whether Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), Third Earl of Southampton, or William Herbert (1580-1630), Third Earl of Pembroke, are the individuals mentioned do not concern this thesis.

liaisons between these protagonists which in turn can either be read as actual events in Shakespeare's life, or as Shakespeare's own opinions on matters of love and sex. While, as has been seen in this thesis, writers interpreted lines from the plays and apocryphal stories about Shakespeare as relating the thoughts of Shakespeare the man, interpretation of lines from lyric poetry allow for a more convincing argument that this is what Shakespeare thought.[33] So, for example, T. A. Spalding interprets the 'I' of the poems to be a first-person reference to Shakespeare, portraying a man who disapproves of selfish or conceited individuals:

> "For shame," says Shakspere,
>
> > Deny that thou bear'st love to any
>
> Who for thyself art so unprovident.
>
> Grant if thou wilt thou art beloved of many,
>
> But that thou none lovest is most evident.[34]

Indeed many editions of the *Sonnets* – such as Gerald Massey's *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted* and Alexander Dyce's *The Poems of Shakespeare* – encouraged such readings by including a biography or memoir of Shakespeare alongside the poems. It is also the case that, while undoubtedly influenced by his contemporaries, most of the *Sonnets* were not based on pre-existing source material as was the case with the majority of Shakespeare's other work, and this meant that any ideas felt to be propounded by the poems could more easily be attributed to the poet himself. However, while the ambiguities of the poems could enable writers to construct different

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[33] It is not important in the context of this thesis whether the poems are, or are not, biographical to Shakespeare, rather it is important to highlight the different approaches taken by nineteenth-century critics. For more on the biographical aspect of the *Sonnets* see Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Peter Holland and Stanley Wells, Oxford Shakespeare Topics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), particularly chapter 3.

[34] T. A. Spalding, 'Shakspere's Sonnets', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 242 (March 1878), 301.

Shakespeares, those same ambiguities caused problems and a number of critics spent time arguing about the precise purpose of the *Sonnets* or to whom they were addressed. As already noted in this chapter, this debate concerning the function and purpose of poetry was something that, in many ways, defined Victorian poetics and this shows that the literary pursuits which focused on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* were operating within, and informed by, the wider contemporary literary milieu.

It was possible for a writer to construct a biography or persona for Shakespeare behind the *Sonnets* and to use a fairly crude idea of authorial intention to show that Shakespeare had written the poems for a particular reason. Robert Cartwright, for example, in his 1870 edition of the *Sonnets* felt that Shakespeare had composed *Venus and Adonis* to represent the pursuit of the Fair Youth by the Dark Lady. Cartwright further contends that *The Rape of Lucrece* was penned by Shakespeare upon discovering that the two had conducted an affair, as a 'vehicle for delivering a lecture on morality – not only to the young friend but especially to the lady.'[35] Similarly Richard Simpson (1820-76), in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, compares the poems to 'text-books,' and claims that the *Sonnets* were intended by Shakespeare to function as a didactic way of expounding a certain worldview.[36] A similar construct of a particular type of Shakespeare – one who writes for, in this case, a moral agenda – is also evident in Charles Ellis' *"The Christ in Shakspeare"* (1897). Ellis reprinted each sonnet alongside a brief 'explanation' of what the poem is about followed by passages from the Bible, presumably with the aim of forming connections in the reader's mind. It is apparently calculated by its author to be an accessible and influential work and Ellis (echoing Samuel Jonson) has taken it upon himself 'to demonstrate what has been

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[35] Robert Cartwright, *The Sonnets of William Shakspere: Rearranged and Divided into Four Parts with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1870), 5.

[36] Richard Simpson, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868), 3.

privately understood and felt throughout the ages, that he [Shakespeare] wrote for all time and for all readers.'[37] Ellis makes the claim that Shakespeare was deliberately pedagogical in his works, noting that 'his object always being to hold up vice to abhorrence, and virtue to honour and imitation.'[38] It was, according to Ellis, Shakespeare's 'happy purpose' to highlight scriptural readings in his plays, yet Ellis is able to explain the fact that Shakespeare's works are not explicitly moralistic or religious by stating that he 'avoids quoting the text of Scripture, lest he should incur the reproof of, or offend, the Clergy.'[39] In the *Sonnets* then, Shakespeare was 'abstaining from an open reference to Bible figures,' instead 'he breathes out spiritual truth in figurative language full of devout aspirations.'[40] Ellis states that it was important to alter the original 1609 text for nineteenth-century readers; 'it has become necessary, and especially at this epoch of the Victorian Age, to provide some such setting forth as is now presented to the hand of all in every English home.'[41] Ellis is arguing that the *Sonnets* should be in every home, or at least, every English home, yet the use of the term English is also interesting at a time when, as noted in Chapter One (pp. 54-6 above), a British readership would have provided a much wider audience.

It is also worthy of note that Ellis feels the need to revise the text for his contemporary readership despite his claim that Shakespeare was for all time and for all readers. It seems that Shakespeare was only really timeless once he had been sufficiently modified. This process of revision involved the appending of numerous prefatory quotations and poems, as well as different pagination to the original quarto rather than any actual changes to the text itself, so Ellis is actually claiming more input on his part

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[37] Ellis, *Shakspeare and the Bible*, 17.

[38] Ibid., 19.

[39] Ibid., 167.

[40] Ibid., 167.

[41] Ibid., 17.

than is fair. Ellis' claim that modification of the *Sonnets* was 'especially' necessary at this particular point in history suggests that the nation and its people had moved on from Elizabethan England. This Whiggish view serves to highlight the long history of England and show, to the nation's credit, that it had been producing important literature – which was still relevant to the population of the nineteenth century – for a long period of time. Despite the fact that Ellis is claiming a pedagogical purpose for *Shakespeare's Sonnets* it is one that has to be mediated because '[a]s they exist in their accepted consecutive order they are buried – lost to the general reader, and barred to the Christian life.'[42] This is some claim, as Ellis is essentially saying that there is no way for a Victorian reader to access the intention that Shakespeare seemingly had for the *Sonnets* – and it is not just that the meaning of the sonnets are obscured, they are 'buried,' and 'barred.' The self-aggrandisement involved in Ellis claiming that it is he who is able to translate these sonnets (which are completely inaccessible to 'the general reader') is considerable, and begs the question of why Ellis would have chosen the *Sonnets* if they are inaccessible without the right kind of presentation and commentary. Press notices of *Shakspeare and the Bible* show how easy it was for those with a religious agenda to feel comfortable in using *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. The *St James' Budget*, for example, stated that Ellis' volume makes clear that Shakespeare's 'mind was not only dominated by the influence of an Almighty Being, but that in many instances his writings were actually inspired by passages from the Scriptures.'[43] Similarly the *Hemel Hempstead Gazette* notes that the book is '[w]orthy of a large circulation.'[44] These publications were not the most widely read periodicals of the nineteenth century, yet they were evidently taking

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[42] Ibid., 24-5.

[43] 'Shakspeare's Sonnets and the Bible: Some Press Opinions', in *"The Christ in Shakspeare," Shakspeare and the Bible: Shakspeare, a reading from the Merchant of Venice; Shakspeariana; Sonnets, with their Scriptural harmonies*, Victorian edn., (Plymouth: Houlston & Sons, 1897).

[44] Ibid.

part in the ongoing dialogue concerning Shakespeare and moral identity. It is also worth noting the commendatory notices reprinted in the first few pages of *Shakspeare and the Bible*, which come from such notable and influential figures as A. Tennyson, W. E. Gladstone, and F. W. Farrar.

While Peter Jones categorised nineteenth-century critics as preoccupied with the biographical aspect of the *Sonnets*, contemporary writers were well aware that there was plenty of scope for differences of opinion about the *Sonnets* and poetics in general. Robert Shindler (1823-1903), for example, notes that even amongst 'those who maintain the autobiographical character of *Shakespeare's* Sonnets – there is still a very plentiful diversity of view;' indeed, many works of criticism begin with a synopsis of the ongoing debate.[45] Similarly John Dennis notes in *Studies in English Literature* that

> A German critic regards Shakespeare's sonnets as allegorical; one recent writer treats them as a burlesque upon "mistress sonnetting;" another holds that the two lovers of Sonnet CXLIV are the Celibate Church and the Reformed Church; and another, and American, propounds a still stranger theory. These sonnets, he asserts, are hermetic writings, and the passion uttered in them is expressed for the Divine Being.[46]

There is increasing evidence that the traits which were found in Part One of this thesis are attendant in writings which are more specifically about the *Sonnets*. This dismissal of foreign criticism (the latter is 'still stranger' implying that the former are strange), and particularly the German writer, is further evidence of how the nation could be

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[45] Robert Shindler, 'The Stolen Key', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 272 (Jan. 1892), 72.

[46] Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, 411. The 'German critic' to whom Dennis refers is D. Barnstorff whose *Schlüssel zu Shakspeare's Sonnetten* (1860) has been translated into English by T. J. Graham in 1862. The 'recent writer' would appear to be Henry Brown who published *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved* in 1870. The final work Dennis is referring to here is John A. Heraud, *Shakspere: His Inner Life as Intimated in his Works*, (London: John Maxwell and Company, 1865).

promoted and unified by disparaging foreign Shakespeare criticism (see pp. 88-90 above).

As elsewhere in nineteenth-century Shakespeare criticism there is a large amount of collaboration and cross-pollination between the critics who are writing about the *Sonnets*. Often this is signalled quite explicitly by the writer; Edward Dowden, for example, in preparing his 1881 edition, notes that he has 'had before me in preparing this volume the editions of Bell, Clark and Wright, Collier, Delius, Dyce, Halliwell, Hazlitt, Knight, Palgrave, Staunton, Grant White,' and others.[47] This acknowledgement was considered important in the arena of Shakespeare criticism and an advert for *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Edited with Notes and Introduction, by Thomas Tyler* notes that Tyler's is a 'theory which has won the acceptance of, amongst others, Dr George

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[47] *The Sonnets of William Shakspere*, ed. Edward Dowden, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1881), 1.

John Charles Bell (1745-1831), first published the works of Shakespeare as an acting edition (J. C. Bell ed., *Shakespeare's Plays: as They are Now Performed at the Theatres Royal in London. Regulated from the Prompt Books of Each House by Permission*, (London: J. Bell, 1774)). This included the poems as well as an introduction and notes to all the works, by Francis Gentleman, (1728-84).

William George Clark (1821-78) and William Aldis Wright (1836-1914), edited the first Cambridge edition of Shakespeare which was a standard reference work until well into the twentieth century (Clark, W. G. and Wright, W. A. eds., *The Works of William Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1863-6), 9 vols.,).

John Payne Collier (1789-1883), editor of a number of different editions between 1842 and 1878, was involved in a controversy regarding an annotated folio which he claimed to have found and which was subsequently denounced as a forgery. See Ganzel, *Fortune & Men's Eyes: The Career of John Payne Collier*, Collier's 1843-4 edition of the complete works of Shakespeare had included the *Sonnets* re-edited and with a brief introduction regarding their composition and content. See John Payne Collier, *The Works of William Shakespeare*.

Nikolaus Delius (1813-88) a German scholar whose edition (Delius, Nikolaus ed., *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1854-61)) influenced F. J. Furnivall (1825-1910) in his *The Leopold Shakspere: The Poet's Works in Chronological Order* (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1887).

Alexander Dyce (1798-1869) first published an edition of Shakespeare's poems in 1832 and it went through eleven editions before 1891 (Rev. Alexander Dyce, *The Poems of Shakespeare: with a Memoir by Rev. Alexander Dyce*, 1832, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856)).

James Orchard Halliwell (from 1872 Halliwell-Phillipps) was a prominent Shakespearean of the period and edited the works of Shakespeare in sixteen volumes (Halliwell-Phillipps, J. O. ed., *The Works of William Shakespeare*, (London: C. & J. Adlard, 1853-65), 16 vols.,). Dowden is presumably also referring to Halliwell-Phillipps' biography which came out in the same year as Dowden's work (Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*).

William Hazlitt added to his 1851 edition (Hazlitt, William ed., *The Dramatic Works of William Shakspeare*, (London: George Routledge & Co., 1851), 4 vols.,), with work containing Shakespeare's poems, as well as plays of doubtful authorship (Hazlitt, William ed., *The Supplementary Works of William Shakespeare: Comprising his Poems and Doubtful Plays*, (London: G. Routledge, 1852)).

Charles Knight (1791-1873) produced *The Comedies, Histories, Tragedies, and Poems of William Shakspere*, (London: C. Knight, 1842-1844), 12 vols., followed by *William Shakspere: a Biography and Poems*, (London: Charles Knight, 1851).

F. T. Palgrave, edited *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879).

Howard Staunton (1810-74) edited *The Works of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1862), 3 vols., which included the *Sonnets*.

Richard Grant White (1821-85) edited *The Works of Shakespeare*, including the poems (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1857-66), 12 vols.

Brandes, Mr William Archer, and Dr F. J. Furnivall.'[48] Similarly *Poet-Lore: A Monthly*

Magazine Devoted to Shakespeare, Browning, and the Comparative Study of Literature

carried 'A New Word on Shakespeare's Sonnets' by I. Goodlet in 1891 which begins by

locating his work within the context of a larger debate that involves Alexander Dyce,

Henry Brown, Dr Charles Mackay, Gerald Massey, T. Tyler, and the New Shakspere

Society, as well as Edward Dowden.[49] Despite a dearth of editions of *Shakespeare's*

Sonnets in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Goodlet feels that '[s]ince

Malone, a great many new and elegant editions have appeared, among which an edition

by Palgrave, and an edition by Dowden, are by far the best, although the latter is

disfigured by the eccentric interpretations in which the editor indulges.'[50] Not all work

was openly acknowledged, however, and Horst Schroeder has shown how Oscar Wilde

was influenced by an 1891 *Athenæum* article called 'Was Mr W. H. the Earl of

Pembroke?,' by Brinsley Nicholson, from which Wilde silently borrowed information

for the extended version of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' – published posthumously in

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[48] Thomas Tyler, *The Herbert-Fitton Theory of Shakespeare's Sonnets: A Reply*, (London: David Nutt, 1898), inside cover. Thomas Tyler (1826-1902) was a prominent proponent of the theory that Mr W. H. was William Herbert, and that the Dark Lady was Mary Fitton (*c*.1578-1641).
George Brandes (1842-1927), a Danish writer, produced *William Shakespeare* (1895-6), which was translated by William Archer (*Shakespeare: A Critical Study* (London: William Heinemann, 1898), 2 vols.,).
Frederick James Furnivall published two articles concerning the *Sonnets* in the 1890s (Frederick James Furnivall, 'Shakspere's Sweetheart: Discovery of the Dark Woman of the Sonnets', *Pall Mall Gazette,* (8 Jan 1890), and Frederick James Furnivall, 'Shakspere and Mary Fitton', *Theatre,* (1 Dec 1897), 1-6).

[49] I. Goodlet, 'A New Word on Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Poet-Lore: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Shakespeare, Browning, and the Comparative Study of Literature,* 3, no. 10 (Oct. 15 1891), 506-11.
For Alexander Dyce see n. 47 above.
Henry Brown, wrote *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved, and the Mystery of his Friendship, Love, and Rivalry Revealed*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1870).
Charles Mackay (1814-89) published *New Light on Some Obscure Words and Phrases in the Works of Shakspeare and his Contemporaries*, (London: Reeves & Turner, 1884), and wrote 'A Tangled Skein Unravelled: or the Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets', (*Nineteenth Century*, vol. 16, no. 90 (August 1884), 238-262).
Gerald Massey, wrote a number of influential nineteenth-century works on the *Sonnets*; see pp. 200-1 below.
For Thomas Tyler see n. 48 above.
For The New Shakspere Society see p. 7 above.
Edward Dowden was one of the most prominent Shakespeare scholars of the period, a member of the New Shakspere Society, and his 1881 edition of the *Sonnets* went through six editions before the end of the century.
Poet Lore, while not one of the most popular journals of the nineteenth century, was nevertheless a periodical which carried the work of, among others, Horace Howard Furness, Theodore Child, and Frederick Fleay and so was evidently an arena in which serious and important discussion on Shakespeare was taking place.

[50] Ibid., 30.

book form in 1921.[51] Evidently then, those writing about Shakespeare in the second half

of the nineteenth century, while clearly not all following exactly the same agenda, are

nevertheless all part of the same intellectual discourse. Previous chapters have noted the

common perceptions of nationalism and moralism and the diverse approaches which

could be taken by critics towards these agendas, and this has been shown to be equally

true of discussions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Having shown that there was far from a

unified hegemony of approach to either poetics or the poetry of Shakespeare, the present

chapter now seeks to focus upon the *Sonnets*, thus making the interaction between

writers more obvious and illuminating the complexity of, and reasons which underpin,

the use of Shakespeare. An examination of one single work of Shakespeare's illustrates

the evident importance of anxieties about morality and nationalism to the educated elite

of the nineteenth century; their presence within such a small part of the *oeuvre* of a

single author indicates how pervasive these feelings were.

That aspects of morality should arise in literary pursuits of *Shakespeare's*

Sonnets is unsurprising given the content of the poems. Primarily, and perhaps most

obviously, the fact that the *Sonnets* are on the whole amatory poems means that there is

scope for discussion about human relationships and corresponding ideas on sex and

fidelity. This also allows the writers of these literary pursuits to rehearse concepts of

Idealism and Sensualism that have already been seen to be preoccupations of this

nineteenth-century educated community. Secondly, since Malone's edition in 1796, the

first 126 sonnets have been generally accepted to be written to a man; and this

authorship obviously meant that there was room for the *Sonnets* to be used to either

condemn or celebrate homosexuality. Perhaps, too, there was a need to vindicate

Shakespeare from any perceived sexual transgression, including, given the nature of the

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[51] Horst Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde, The Portrait of Mr W. H.: Its Composition, Publication and Reception*, (Braunschweig: Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig, 1984), 25-6. The original, shorter, version of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' was published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in July 1889.

Sonnets, anxiety about homosexuality and ideas of male/male relationships.[52] The emergence of homosexuality as a categorisation has been much discussed in recent years and there is still no agreement on how exactly the modern concept of the homosexual came about in the late nineteenth century.[53] Ascertaining whether the literary pursuits examined here were in any way responsible for conceptualising the homosexual is not an issue with which this thesis concerns itself; rather it is sufficient to note that anxieties about homosexuality – which have been noted as a preoccupation in histories of Victorian Britain – were discussed and rehearsed within writing about Shakespeare.

The occurrence of nationalist concerns within writing about the *Sonnets* is less expected than the presence of moralism. That said, the incidence of nationalism, despite its lack of obvious relation to the *Sonnets*, can be seen as indicative of strong nationalist anxieties in the period. Recent scholars have noted the nationalism which inflected and directed Victorian poetry in general, and Yopie Prins has described how the English poetical tradition was an important part of the promotion of nationalism as nineteenth-century poets were able to call on their predecessors. George Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*, for example, created a 'reconstruction of the past [which] newly enfranchises Victorian poetry through a genealogy of English poets including Chaucer,

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[52] Here, and elsewhere in this chapter, the term 'homosexual' denotes an erotic or sexualised desire (not necessarily reciprocated) by one male for another. It should be noted that the term is not one with which many of the individuals surveyed in this thesis would have been familiar and that there are numerous problems when using such nomenclature. For example, Edmondson and Wells claim that Benjamin Jowett (1817-93), in dismissing Tennyson's enthusiasm for the *Sonnets* 'expressed his own sense that they [the *Sonnets*] are homoerotic.' (See Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 138). Yet 'homoerotic' would not have been a term that Jowett would have understood; the *OED* notes its first usage as being in Ernest Jones' 1916 translation of Sándor Ferenczi's *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*. Thus, to label Jowett's feeling as touching on homoeroticism is misleading. However, as this work is not primarily concerned with defining or seeking to explore homosexuality in itself, and as a label is needed for male/male erotic desire, the use of this term, following this caveat, is acceptable. For more on the language and construction of the homosexual in nineteenth-century Britain see Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2003), Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[53] See Bristow, *Effeminate England*, Joseph Bristow, *Sexuality*, New Critical Idiom, (London: Routledge, 1997), Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, and Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain*.

Spenser, and Milton (with Shakespeare waiting in the wings).'[54] Again, it was the

biographical aspect of the poems which allowed these writers to digress into discussions

of Shakespeare's patriotism and pre-eminence in the world of literature. There were also

those who were able to portray particular visions of Britain by including apparently

irrelevant material (which was actually nationalist) in their ostensibly *Sonnets*-related

work.

Concerns about nationalism and morality have been shown to have a close

ideological link, and Linda Dowling has noted that nineteenth-century efforts to improve

public moral virtue were driven by a desire to avert England's perceived fall from its

dominant position on the world stage.[55] Dowling situates these events firmly in the early

to mid-nineteenth century and feels that, by the later decades, the intellectual

frameworks which had been employed to counteract these social problems, could be

subverted by those wishing to promote homosexuality.[56] Sean Brady complicates this

argument by suggesting that concerns which conflated nationalism and moralism were

very much present in the late nineteenth-century, noting that, in the final decades of the

century, 'British politicians and moralists reinforced notions that the success of British

society and the unparalleled power and extent of the Empire was due, in part, to the

moral fitness of its men.'[57] Thus Brady suggests that the focus on the moral fitness of

the nation's males was due to anxieties about, rather than confidence in, the state of the

nation. The present thesis does not seek to resolve this debate, rather it examines the

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[54] Prins, 'Victorian Meters', 93.

[55] See Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*.

[56] In 1872, Robert Buchanan (1841–1901) had attacked the Pre-Raphaelites, denouncing them as the Fleshly School, hoping to damage them in the same way that Hunt and Keats had been labelled the Cockney School by *Blackwood's* in the 1820s. Dowling asserts that this backfired on Buchanan and the majority of the intellectual elite refused to support him, which led to John Addington Symonds' (1840-93) challenges on the laws and institutions which controlled homosexuality in England. Dowling suggests that Victorian Britain had become far more liberal and was, in 1872, prepared to happily accept the eroticism and sensuality of poetry like that of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82). (Ibid., 12-5, 24-6).

[57] Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain*, 214. See also Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, (London: Virago, 1995), who examines the moral panics and attendant debates which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century.

place of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* within the moral discourse of the late nineteenth century. This chapter does, however, support Dowling in her engagement with Richard Jenkyns and Frank Turner who both highlight how anxieties about morality and the nation manifested themselves in a turn towards ancient Greek culture.[58] It is therefore with the fascinating amount of ancient Greek imagery evident in these literary pursuits of the *Sonnets* that this chapter will ultimately concern itself.

b) The *Sonnets* and Nationalism

As was seen in Chapter One, those using Shakespeare for a nationalistic agenda sought to unify the nation and promote the place occupied by that nation in relation to the rest of the world. It can be seen in writing about *Shakespeare's Sonnets* that there are clear attempts to link Shakespeare to Britain through either its history or geography; there were also efforts to promote Shakespeare and the nation by showing the poems or the poet to be superior to others. Often there was an overlap between these approaches as anxieties about nationalism were given expression through the promotion of nationalist agendas. Nationalist uses of the *Sonnets* are most evident when the poems are assumed to be biographical and reflective of the historical context within which they were written. As with the more general usage of Shakespeare and the linking of him to a unified nation, Gerald Massey's work on the *Sonnets* presents its readers with a Shakespeare who was very much part of the landscape of England:

> He [Shakespeare] loved her [England's] tender glory of green grass, her grey skies,
>
> her miles on miles of apple-bloom in spring time, her valleys brim-full of the rich

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[58] See Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); Frank Turner, M., *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, (London: Yale University Press, 1981); and Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*.

harvest-gold in autumn; her leafy lanes and field-paths, and lazy, loitering river-

reaches; her hamlets nestling in the quiet heart of rural life; her scarred old Gothic

towers and mellow red-brick chimneys with their Tudor twist, and white cottages

peeping through the roses and honeysuckles. We know how he loved his own

native woods and wild flowers, the daisy, the primrose, the wild honeysuckle, the

cowslip, and most of all, the violet.[59]

This geographic style of rhetoric – similar to that used by Sidney Lee, Halliwell-

Phillipps, and others (see pp. 76-80 above) – connects the England that Massey's

readers would have known with Shakespeare, serving to unite them both and bestow the

authority of antiquity on the nation. So too, '[h]is favourite birds also are the common

homely English singing birds, the lark and nightingale, the cuckoo and blackbird that

sang to Shakspeare in his childhood and still sing to-day in the pleasant woods of

Warwickshire.'[60]

Gerald Massey was a ubiquitous figure in nineteenth-century writing on

Shakespeare's Sonnets and his work highlights the ongoing discourse which surrounded

the *Sonnets*: his first publication on the subject came in the *Quarterly Review* in 1864,

and his writing was still being published in 1890. Moreover, Massey's work was

immensely popular; it was frequently reprinted, and referenced by other *Sonnets*

critics.[61] Even those who disagree with Massey seem compelled to acknowledge his

work, as Dowden did in 1903; '[t]he only thing Mr Massey's elaborate theory seems to

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[59] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 546.

[60] Ibid., 547.

[61] He is cited by: Simpson, in his *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 68-9); W. Theobald (1829-1908) (W. Theobald, *On the Authorship of the Sonnets Attributed to Shakespeare: An Enquiry into the Respective Claims of Bacon, Sir Philip Sidney and Others to be their Author*, (Devon: F. N. Parsons, 1896)); S. S. Travers (S. Smith Travers, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: To Whom were they Addressed?*, (Tasmania: Davies Bros., 1881), 8); J. R. Green (1837-83) in his *History of the English People* (1874) – a citation which is modestly mentioned by Massey in his own 1888 edition (Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 11, 15) – and by David Main in his *Treasury of English Sonnets* (*A Treasury of English Sonnets: Edited from the Original Sources with Notes and Illustrations*, ed. David Main, (Manchester: Alexander Ireland and Co., 1880) 279-80).

me to lack is some evidence in support. His arguments may well remain unanswered. One hardly knows how to tug at the other end of a rope of sand.'[62] So too John Cuming Walters despite stating that 'I shall presently show why I am convinced that his position is untenable, his reasoning inaccurate, and his theory unjust.'[63] Most writers refer to Gerald Massey's 'theory' and it appears to be by far the most influential (although not necessarily widely accepted) hypothesis on the *Sonnets* in the late nineteenth century; accordingly he will be a recurrent presence in this chapter.[64]

In Massey's work, Shakespeare is presented as firmly part of the nation of England, and it is not only Shakespeare who is being constructed here, it can be seen that Massey is also inventing a certain image of the nation. Exactly what sort of England Massey constructs is evident in statements such as:

> Nearness to nature we may look on as the great desideratum for the nurture of a national poet, and this was secured to Shakspeare. He came of good healthy yeoman blood, he belonged to a race that has always been heartily national, and clung to their bit of soil from generation to generation – ploughed a good deal of their life into it, and fought for it too, in the day of their country's need.[65]

Massey's historiography is Tory in orientation and throughout his work he links his readers with Shakespeare and Elizabethan England. Although phrases like 'from

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[62] *Shakspere's Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Edward Dowden, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner & Company Limited, 1903), xxxvi.

[63] John Cuming Walters, *The Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Attempted Elucidation*, (London: The New Century Press Limited, 1899), 17.

[64] Briefly, Massey's theory regarding the *Sonnets* was that they were written by Shakespeare to convey a story, and that different sonnets were afforded different narrative voices: some were from Shakespeare to Wriothesley and regarded their friendship; some were written as though from Wriothesley to Elizabeth Vernon (1572-1655); some were from Vernon to Wriothesley; some (such as 144Q) were written as though by Vernon about Wriothesley and Elizabeth Rich; and some were from William Herbert to Rich. In this way, Massey could describe some sonnets as conveying Shakespeare's own feelings ('Personal Sonnets'), and some as being purely literary exercises ('Dramatic Sonnets'). See Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*.

[65] Ibid., 495.

generation to generation' might appear to suggest a Whiggish movement or progression, the fact that each successive generation still clings – and the verb implies a resistance to change – to the soil of the nation reveals that things do not change and thus Tory stasis is promoted. This essay was appended to a work entitled *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted* (1866) which was reprinted in 1872, 1888 and 1890 under the title *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*. As Massey's titles suggest, he felt himself to have a strong connection with Shakespeare and the seventeenth century in that he was able to interpret the secret hidden within the poems.

Similarly, in a review of Charles Ellis' *Shakespeare and the Bible*, a nationalist tone is struck by the *St James' Budget* when it states that

> Sir Henry Irving has said, 'the thought of such a man [as Shakespeare] is an incomparable inheritance for any nation;' and truly, it is impossible to calculate the far-reaching influence which the lessons conveyed in his writings have exercised upon the nations of the world.[66]

This not only ensures that Shakespeare is unequivocally the product and possession of England, but also promotes both Shakespeare and England as having influenced, and thus controlled, the rest of the world. In both this review and Massey's work can be seen the wider trend of linking Shakespeare with either the geographic reality of Britain, or the shared heritage of its people. Either way, the population of Britain is united in that they all have a connection with Shakespeare and, because Shakespeare is the 'greatest Englishman' and 'so English in feeling' – all of these unified people are elevated by association.[67] These examples highlight how two different approaches can be taken by

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[66] 'Shakspeare's Sonnets and the Bible: Some Press Opinions'.

[67] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 495.
    Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 475.

writers seeking the same promotion of Britain, no matter how nebulous the link to Shakespeare. There is, for example, a certain tenuousness in Gerald Massey noting that the second incarnation of his book on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is published in 'the tri-centennial year in which we celebrate the famous defeat of the Invincible Spanish Armada.'[68] Similarly, Hannah Lawrence, writing in the *Quarterly Review* in 1867, describes how Shakespeare would have participated in 'all the eager and anxious excitement' of the year of the Spanish Armada; 'he, whose inmost heart was so thoroughly English; he, who in his "King John" has enshrined so many bursts of the noblest patriotism.'[69] Also, as part of his project to date the *Sonnets* as the autobiographical writings of Shakespeare, Samuel Butler decides that sonnet 107Q is about the fear of the English nation in the face of the Spanish Armada. Although the description of such an attack by a foreign power serves to unite the defensive nation, Butler underscores this unity by claiming that '[n]ot England only, but the whole civilised word was in suspense; no one knew what might happen; a shadow over hung the throne, and who could say whether it would pass away, or prove to be the doom and date of all things.'[70] Butler makes Elizabethan England the centre of the world and, whatever their wishes, every 'civilised' person is affected by any threat to the English way of life. As with more general writing on Shakespeare, the *Sonnets* serve to remind their English readers of how important their country is to the world as a whole.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was obviously a patriotic event, and the fact that it was possible to tie it, however tenuously, to Shakespeare, was a rich source of nationalist feeling which writers could exploit. Indeed, Massey almost makes Shakespeare himself responsible for repelling the Spaniards:

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[68] Ibid., 403.

[69] Lawrence, 'Shakespeare in Domestic Life', 95.

[70] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 103.

> We may see also in his early plays what were his personal relations to the England
> of that memorable time which helped to mould him: see how the war stirred his
> nature to its roots, and made them clasp England with all their fibres: we may see
> how he fought the Spaniard in feeling, and helped to shatter their armadas.[71]

There is no documentary evidence that Shakespeare was in any way connected to the defeat of the Armada, but this does not prevent Massey from shaping Shakespeare into a true English hero who is ready to defend his country against invasion. Massey states that '[t]he world could not have been more ripe, or England more ready' than it was for Shakespeare's birth, and states that the defeat of the Armada was due to the strength of England at this time – a strength that somehow transferred itself to Shakespeare.[72] Indeed,

> The full-statured spirit of the nation had just found its sea-legs and was clothing
> itself with wings. Shakspeare's starting-place for his victorious career was the fine
> vantage ground which England had won when she had broken the strength of the
> Spaniard, burst the girdle they had sought to put round her, and sat enthroned
> higher than ever in her sea-sovereignty – breathing an ampler air of liberty, strong
> in the sense of a lustier life, and glad in the great dawn of a future new and
> limitless.[73]

Despite the fact that this is ostensibly a work about *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, it is clear that Massey brings a nationalist agenda into play. England is placed as the premier location in the world, and juxtaposed with a foreign nation, there is the martial

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[71] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 546.

[72] Ibid., 493.

[73] Ibid., 493.

terminology of Shakespeare's 'victorious' career and England's besting of the Spanish, and also the elegiac language used with regard to England's past and future glory. Massey also uses his investigation into Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton – a common contender to be the 'real' Fair Youth of the *Sonnets* – to make much of the nationalistic feeling that was roused by the Spanish Armada. The threat of invasion by the Spanish was a constant fear during the reign of Elizabeth, although Massey is eager to include the event regardless of its relevance to his work on the *Sonnets*. Indeed, the reference arises, not from *the* earliest mention of Wriothesley, but rather out of '[o]ne of the earliest notices of the earl [which] is in the State Papers.'[74] Massey reprints a quote, which states that 'the Earl of Southampton's armour is to be scoured and dressed up by his executors,' and then reminds his readers that this is in relation to 'the "Armada" in which the encroaching tide of Spanish power was dashed back broken, from the wooden walls of England.'[75] This passionate description of the defeat of the Spanish, and the romantic way in which England is described, certainly suggests that there was more to Massey's writing than simply historical contextualisation of the *Sonnets*. Later, Massey describes Wriothesley's attack on the King of Spain's Indian fleet, when 'like a fearful herd they fled from the fury of our earl.'[76] The alliteration employed by Massey both here and in the earlier quote also gives the impression that he is writing with more than a simple presentation of the events in Southampton's life, but rather is using a style of rhetoric which promotes a nationalist agenda.

    The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved by Henry Brown also uses seemingly incidental detail in order to promote a nationalist agenda. Brown announces that the 'friend spoken of so much in the poems' is William Herbert, and then states that '[i]t is

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[74] Ibid., 53-4.

[75] *Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 1581-1590, 417, quoted in Ibid., 54.
    Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 54.

[76] Ibid., 61.

also to this nobleman's honour that to his patronage England can boast one of her greatest architects, Inigo Jones.'[77] Jones (1573-1652), was a highly influential figure in early-modern England and was largely responsible for the modernisation of London's buildings in the early seventeenth century, and Brown is evidently trying to show that Herbert was a powerful and important man with good taste. What Brown also achieves here, however, is that he is naming a writer and an architect who are supposedly England's best, and as such, are able to compete internationally, thus promoting England's standing in the fields of literature and architecture. What comes across in all of this tenuous detail is a certain desperation to make Shakespeare an appropriate figure for nationalist promotion, regardless of the suitability of Shakespeare for the job.

The linking of Shakespeare's biography with events from British history was not the only way in which he could be employed for a nationalistic agenda, however, and even those writers who embraced the oft-cited lack of information about Shakespeare's biography could use this freedom in order to utilise the *Sonnets*. In a very different manner to writers like Massey, Lawrence, or Brown, who chose to create a very definite history for Shakespeare, some writings on the *Sonnets* used a deliberate lack of information to construct their own Shakespeare. The notes which accompany David Main's selected sonnets of Shakespeare are rife with nationalistic fervour. For example, when explaining the lack of biographical detail extant concerning Shakespeare, he states that Shakespeare 'might as well be one of the shadowy figures in Arthurian legend.'[78] Quite which shadowy figures Main is referring to is not clear but the comparison serves two purposes; firstly it invokes the legends of Camelot and Albion in readers' minds and thus infuses the life-history of Shakespeare with a romantically English, and thus positive, quality. By conflating Shakespeare and King Arthur (or some other character

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[77] Brown, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved*, 1.

[78] *A Treasury of English Sonnets*, ed. Main, 277.

out of the Arthurian legends), Main manages both to make Shakespeare more mythical –
and so awe-inspiring – and make Arthur more grounded in biographical fact – making
the idea of an England founded by noble knights and romantic deeds seem more
realistic. All of this elevates Shakespeare and the nation of England. The figure of King
Arthur was a popular one in nineteenth-century Britain and can be found in the poetry of
both Tennyson and Morris.[79] As Sam Smiles shows in 'Albion's Legacy – Myth,
History and "the Matter of Britain,"' the icon of Arthurian legend was able to invoke a
powerful, if occasionally problematic, sense of nationalism.[80] It is also worth noting that
the past which Main creates for the nation is clearly Whiggish. The reference to the
Arthurian idyll presents a past that Main's readers would no longer have access to
although all could share in the heritage that such a common history brought to the
nation.

Placing Shakespeare firmly in the past of the nation – regardless of whether this
is a mythical or a supposedly factual past – and thus creating both a shared heritage and
conferring the authority of antiquity upon Shakespeare was commonly done. Returning
to Gerald Massey's work, it can seen that his description of Elizabethan England
explicitly makes Shakespeare undeniably English; 'when the eager national spirit stood
on the very threshold of expectation, our Shakspeare was born, literally in the heart of
England.'[81] Later, Massey states that Shakespeare 'had the feeling, inexpressibly strong
with Englishmen, for owning a bit of this dear land of ours and living in one's own

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[79] Alfred Tennyson wrote a number of poems based on the myth of King Arthur and connected stories. These included 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832), 'Mort d'Arthur' and 'Sir Galahad' (1842), and the volumes *Idylls of the King* (1859) and *The Holy Grail and Other Poems* (1869). William Morris (1834-96) similarly wrote a number of poems based around the King Arthur myth many of which were included in *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858).

[80] Sam Smiles' work, which concentrates on art and architecture, notes that problems arise from the fact that an attempt to portray an imaginary past in a historicist way is both pluralist and contradictory, thus causing a weakness in the foundation from which a nation can be constructed. (Smiles, 'Albion's Legacy', 168-81). See also Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, for an examination of how regular invocations of King Arthur fed into ideas about national identity during the nineteenth century.

[81] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 494-5.

house; paying rent to no man,' thus he 'acquired houses and lands, and obtained a grant of arms, and shown every desire to found a county family; to possess a bit of this dear England in which he could plant the family tree, and go down to posterity *that* way.' [82] This romanticised capitalist vision of Shakespeare existing within an England that would have been familiar to Massey's readers – the present tense of 'this dear land of ours' – also functions as an instructional tale. Massey is showing his readers how to obtain a place in posterity themselves; not necessarily as important a place as Shakespeare's, but a lasting place nonetheless. Massey continues:

> We learn how these things [threats against England such as the Spanish Armada] made him turn to his country's history, and pourtray [*sic*.] its past and exalt its heroes in the eyes of Englishmen. How often does he show them the curse of civil strife, and read them the lesson that England is safe so long as she is united! Thus he lets us know how true an Englishman he was; how full of patriotic fire and communicative warmth. [83]

In showing Shakespeare turning to the history of England during times of difficulty, Massey allows his readers to also view Shakespeare as a suitable figure in which to find unity and support. However, Massey does not always seek to place Shakespeare in the past and uses his Tory historiography to shift him from historical to contemporary; stating that '[h]e had the English spirit of sport in his blood, such as runs through the whole race from peer to poacher.' [84] By using the present tense of the verb, Massey is connecting Shakespeare to the nineteenth century and thus uniting his readers – of all social classes – and the ambiguity as to whether it is the spirit or the blood which 'runs

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[82] Ibid., 559, 509.

[83] Ibid., 546.

[84] Ibid., 533.

through the whole race,' creates a common blood line between Shakespeare and Massey's readership. This Tory location of Shakespeare in history allows a nineteenth-century critic to employ Shakespeare as both an ancient figure of authority and a contemporary symbol of dominance. For example, the way that Massey mixes up his tenses in the following statement; '[t]he rest of the world are welcome to prove him a cosmopolitan; but we know where his nationality lies. He was a dear lover of this dear land of ours.'[85] In this sentence Shakespeare is both historical ('[h]e was a dear lover…') and contemporary ('this dear land of ours,' and 'we know where his nationality lies').

Regardless of the diversity in the historiographical approach to Shakespeare – Tory or Whig, factual or mythical – the inclusion of the Armada defeat and the story of Camelot both suggest martial conflict and the possibility of having Shakespeare or Britain defeat another nation. Here the idea of Britain's imperial expansion is used to pursue a nationalist agenda. Having mentioned the critics who would try to absolve Shakespeare of the claim that he had been a poacher at times, Massey states that '[p]oaching has done good service in its time, if only in sending many a stout fellow to help found our other Englands on the southern side of the world. It is more than likely that it may have sent Shakspeare to found new empires on the stage.[86] This imperialistic way of championing the story that Shakespeare had committed crimes is interesting in that it uses a possible transgression to bring home to the reader the fact that England, as a nation, was in a position to expatriate its citizens to the other side of the globe. That England possessed Australia shows Massey's nation in a positive and strong light. In his 1888 work on *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Massey dismisses those who support the idea that the poems were written to William Herbert – and who thus disagree with Massey's

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[85] Ibid., 546.

[86] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 410.

interpretation – accusing them of hypocrisy in ignoring the 'facts;' '[t]hey remind me of those Africans who cannot face a dead fly in their drink, but who will hunt each other's heads for live delicacies.'[87] This is certainly an extreme, and somewhat tenuous, analogy and it seems that Massey is here relating those who hold opposing views to his own as savages in order to belittle their theory. However, the portrayal of the savage 'other' focuses attention on the refined, civilised, and therefore superior English. Similarly imperialistic ideas are present in the way that John Cuming Walters notes '[w]e cannot tolerate elephants in the place of towns on the map of Africa, and we do not want "probables" and "perhaps's" in the place of facts in Shakespeare's career.'[88] Walters is here paraphrasing Jonathan Swift's (1667–1745) 'On Poetry: A Rhapsody' but he is also equating the discovery of facts about Shakespeare's life to the colonisation – albeit couched in terms of 'discovery' by Walters – of the African continent.[89] In comparing Shakespeare to a country (and one that was explored and conquered by European nations), Walters is tying Shakespeare up with western civilisation. Also the fact that Africa is implicitly connected with the unknown and the savage is a way of asserting the dominance of European culture over the rest of the world.

In the same way that the British nation could be shown to dominate others, Shakespeare the poet was portrayed as being superior to the poets of other nations. One problem with any nationalistic agenda being pursued through the *Sonnets* is that they were originally an Italian style of poem and this means that the national poet of England was working with a foreign art form – suggesting that there was a certain amount of

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[87] Ibid., 14.

[88] Walters, *The Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Attempted Elucidation*, 11.

[89]   So geographers, in Afric-maps
        And o'er unhabitable downs
        With savage-pictures fill their gaps
        Place elephants for want of towns

    (Jonathan Swift, 'On Poetry: A Rhapsody' (1733)).

reliance on other countries. This is an issue which John Dennis addresses in his *Studies in English Literature*, first published in 1876. Dennis was the author of *English Sonnets: A Selection* (1873) and *Heroes of Literature – English Poets; A Book for Young Readers* (1883), and the titles of these latter works offer an insight into the preoccupations of their author. In *Studies in English Literature*, Dennis states that English poets 'transplanted the [Italian] sonnet to their native land,' but that such a process was not merely the English being influenced by the Italians, rather

> they made it their own… gave to it greater elasticity, and produced in this shape such gems of English art, that it would be as reasonable to complain that English watches were not genuine, because the first watch was invented by a German, as that the sonnet does not form a genuine portion of English verse, because the first sonnets were written by Italians.[90]

While this is clearly an attempt to reclaim the sonnet form for English poets, Dennis' nationalist agenda is further served by his use of chronographic imagery: as noted on p. 50 above, Greenwich Mean Time had been enforced by an Act of Parliament in 1884 and within twelve months would be the accepted standard for worldwide time-keeping. Thus England's superiority is championed in more than just the poetical arena.

According to Dennis, although the Italians may have been the originators of the sonnet form, the English soon surpassed them because '[t]he amatory sonneteers of Italy became frequently monotonous by harping too long upon one string, but in England our poets have rarely fallen into this error, and the variety to be found in the English sonnet is one of its great charms.'[91] Thus, Dennis' readers are presented with a very English form of poetry, and by specifically calling them English sonnets and Italian sonnets

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[90] Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, 394.

[91] Ibid., 396.

(rather than Shakespearean or Petrarchan) Dennis makes the two types of poem seem distinct and unconnected while managing to also give both forms parity. The English sonnet is then shown to be the form which eventually surpassed that of the Italian, thus asserting its superiority. The Rev. Alexander Dyce, in the 'Memoir of Shakespeare' attached to an 1856 edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, strives to make the sonnet an English art form and spends some considerable space chronicling the use of the sonnet by English poets, '[i]n order to show what progress had been made by Englishmen in the cultivation of the Sonnet, before it engaged the pen of Shakespeare.'[92] There then follow examples by Henry Howard (*c.*1516-47), Thomas Watson (*c.*1555-92), Walter Ralegh, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86), Samuel Daniel (1554-86), Michael Drayton (1563–1631), Henry Constable (1562–1613), William Percy (1574–1648), Barnaby Barnes (c.1571-1609), Edmund Spencer (*c.*1552-99), Richard Barnefielde (*c.*1574-1620), William Smith (*c.*1596), Bartholomew Griffin (*c.*1596) (incorrectly called 'R, Griifin' by Dyce) and William Alexander (1577–1640). The repetition of all of these English sonneteers serves to reinforce Dyce's claim that the sonnet is English and no mention of any other tradition of sonnets is made. There was obviously some demand for anthologies of sonnets in the later nineteenth century and 1880 saw the publication of a handsome volume entitled *A Treasury of English Sonnets* which, judging by its name alone, evidently had an overtly nationalist purpose. The Preface states that

> The aim of this work is to provide students and lovers of good poetry with a comprehensive selection of the best original Sonnets known to the Editor, written by native English poets not living; and to illustrate it from English poetical and prose literature.[93]

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[92] Rev. Alexander Dyce, 'Memoir of Shakespeare', in *The Poems of Shakespeare: with a Memoir by Rev. Alexander Dyce*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856), lxxiv.

[93] *A Treasury of English Sonnets*, ed. Main, vii.

The emphasis on nativism and Englishness is clear here and, as the work was intended as a digest of good English sonnets, it seems that the unifying nature of the contents' Englishness would be the main selling point. As David Main, the editor, includes fifty-six of the *Sonnets*, Shakespeare is placed firmly within his construction of a canon of English poetry. Again, as with the tenuous use of Armada imagery earlier, these writers are verging on the desperate in their desire to make Shakespeare fit with the agenda they are trying to pursue.

As well as ensuring that Shakespeare himself, and the sonnets he wrote, were of indisputably British origin, another way of utilising Shakespeare for a nationalist agenda was for a writer to claim that the most sophisticated criticism being written was also British, and that British critics were superior to their foreign counterparts. For example, a footnote appended to an anonymous article in the *Westminster Review* in 1857 is used by the writer of 'The Sonnets of Shakspeare' to discuss – and object to – recent editions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* which saw fit to rearrange the order in which they were presented, such as that by François Victor Hugo (1828-73). At the foot of the page, the writer adds:

> Let us here notice the edition of the sonnets by M. François Hugo, who now, since all freedom of thought and original opinion is stifled in France, has nobly employed himself in giving his countrymen a translation of our great poet, and heartily express – although differing with him on many points – our admiration of its execution, and the thorough acquaintance he shows with Shakspeare in the notes and prefaces.[94]

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[94] 'The Sonnets of Shakspeare', *Westminster Review,* 68 O.S., 12 N.S. (July 1857), 127.
F. V. Hugo's edition, (*Les Sonnets de William Shakespeare*, ed. François Victor Hugo, (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857)), had arranged the sonnets in a very different order to that of the 1609 quarto: 135-6Q, 143Q, 145Q, 128Q, *Passionate Pilgrim* VIII ('If music and sweet poetry agree,'), 139-40Q, 127Q, 131-2Q, 130Q, 21Q,

It is strange that this writer is so disparaging of foreign critics of the *Sonnets* as there was hardly any activity in this direction taking place in Britain; as noted earlier there had been no edition of the *Sonnets* since the turn of the century and would not be until Robert Cartwright's 1859 edition which preceded the upturn in editions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in the later half of the century. Nevertheless the feeling of superiority over the French is clear here and, combined with the patronising way in which he applauds Hugo for being able to understand the *Sonnets*, it is evident that a nationalist agenda is behind this writing. There is also a political point being made in that France is portrayed as a country of censorship, where 'freedom of thought and original opinion is stifled' while the readers of this article can presumably feel unity and pride in the fact that they live in what is, by extension, a free and original Britain.[95]

149Q, 137-8Q, 147-8Q, 141Q, 150Q, 142Q, 152Q, 154-5Q, 151Q, 129Q, 133-4Q, 144Q, 33-5Q, 40-2Q, 26Q, 23Q, 25Q, 20Q, 24Q, 46-7Q, 29-31Q, 121Q, 36Q, 66Q, 39Q, 50-1Q, 48Q, 52Q, 75Q 56Q, 27-8Q, 61Q, 43-5Q, 97-9Q, 53Q, 109-20Q, 77Q, 122-5Q, 94-6Q, 69Q, 67Q, 68Q, 70Q, 49Q, 88-93Q, 57-8Q, 78Q, 38Q, 79-80Q, 82-7Q, 32Q, 146Q, 100-3Q, 105Q, 76Q, 106Q, 59, 126Q, 104Q, 1-19Q, 60Q, 73Q, 37Q, 22Q, 62Q, 71-2Q, 74Q, 81Q, 64Q, 63Q, 65Q, 108Q, 107Q, 54-5Q.

[95] The claim that France was more strictly censorial than Britain is somewhat disingenuous. As Robert Justin Goldstein notes 'although until 1881 the French authorities regularly subjected the printed word to a great deal of administrative regulatory harassment and postpublication prosecution, the written press was not – save for a few very brief and exceptional circumstances – ever subjected to prior censorship after 1822.' (Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, (London: The Kent State University Press, 1989), vii-viii). That said, both Goldstein and Thomas J. Cragin highlights the fact that there was state control of printed matter throughout most of the nineteenth century and it might be to this suppression of certain works that the *Westminster* reviewer is alluding. Despite the fact that the press in England had been effectively 'free' since 1695, there were still a number of obstacles to truly free publication in the nineteenth century. The Society for the Suppression of Vice and the Encouragement of Religion and Virtue for example brought about a number of prosecutions for 'blasphemy' during the period for example. See Joel H. Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Life of Richard Carlyle*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1983). See also Thomas J. Cragin, 'The Failings of Popular News Censorship in Nineteenth-Century France', *Book History,* vol. 4 2001). For a comparison of the relative freedom of the British and French press see Robert Justin Goldstein, 'A Land of Relative Freedom: Censorship of the Press and the Arts in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914)', in *Writing and Censorship in Britain*, ed. Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells, (London: Routledge, 1992), 125-40. Goldstein notes that 'Britain was viewed by European liberals and radicals not only as a model of political freedom but, more specifically, as a model of freedom for the press. Slone among the major European countries, Britain had eliminated prior censorship of the written and illustrated press before 1820, with the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695. In contrast, such censorship remained in force almost everywhere else in Europe until the middle of the nineteenth century or beyond. In France (where censorship of the written press was terminated in 1822, but the illustrated press remained subject to such prior approval until 1881), Britain was repeatedly pointed to by advocates of 'freedom of they crayon'. For example, when censorship of drawings was debated by the French legislature in 1820. Count Stanislaw de Girardin (1762-1827) declared that the British example demonstrated that the 'mischief' created by 'piquant' caricatures would not worry 'true men of state' (Goldstein, 'A Land of Relative Freedom', 127).

In Gerald Massey, too, can be seen a nationalist agenda in discussing the relative merits of previous criticism of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Massey, like almost all of those who were writing on the *Sonnets* at this time, reviews past criticism and is disparaging of that which does not fit with his own theory; he dwells in particular on the fact that certain German critics felt the *Sonnets* to be allegorical. The main German being referred to is D. Barnstorff who, in *Schlüssel zu Shakspeare's Sonnetten* (1860, translated into English by T. J. Graham in 1862), announced that the *Sonnets* were allegorical, with 'Drama' and 'Genius' being the main characters, while Mr W. H. meant Mr William Himself. Massey moves on to discuss an article by J. A. Heraud (1799–1887), which is similar. He adds:

> When writing of the German-subjective-transcendental-symbolic view of the sonnets in the first chapter of this work, I did not know that it had been out-Herauded in our country by a writer in 'Temple Bar.' Had this been written as a burlesque on the German book, it would have made an excellent jest. But Mr Heraud is as absurdly serious as his cousin-German.[96]

The fact that Barnstorff's work is referred to by its nationality, as well as the fact that Heraud – who was of Huguenot descent although born in Holborn, London – is labelled by his origin, gives Massey's comments an overtly nationalist, and somewhat racist, slant.[97] When dismissing Heraud's work, he becomes a 'cousin-German' rather than an English writer, and the allusion to the colloquial phrase 'to Out-Herod Herod' (regardless of its phonetic suitability) is a particularly negative allusion. Similarly Robert Shindler notes the 'excellent editions' of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Dowden and

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[96] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 438.

[97] John Russell Stephens, *Heraud, John Abraham (1799–1887)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13012, 19 Jan 2005).

Tyler, while dismissing the work of Barnstorff and Karl Friedrich Elze (1821-89), which seems to be purely motivated by the writers' respective nationalities.[98] The hostility to foreign critics, and particularly those from France and Germany, echoes the way in which nationalism was pursued in more general Shakespearean literary pursuits. The presence of it in this small section of writing on Shakespeare strongly suggests that the dismissal of foreign literary criticism was an important facet of Britain's attempt to assert a national identity during this period.

Not all writing was as explicit as these examples however, and there are other, more complex, ways in which *Shakespeare's Sonnets* could be used for a nationalist agenda. In *The Sonnets of Shakspere: A Critical Disquisition*, Bolton Corney (1784-1870) is prepared to admit to the superiority of a foreign writer if it means exonerating Shakespeare of any moral impropriety. Corney claims that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are merely literary exercises and thus that the poet did not enter into either of the relationships hinted at in the poems. Corney's stated aim is to be

> A plain attempt to rectify some grave errors in the history of English literature, and
> a vindication of the moral character of one of its most ADMIRED ORNAMENTS
> – the prince of psychologists – the herald of noble sentiments – the microscopic
> observer of social life – the commensurate master of the world of words.[99]

It is clear that Corney is not only idolising Shakespeare, but is prepared to ensure the preservation of his morality at any cost. It is also evident, albeit on a less explicit level, that the English nation is being elevated above others; Corney's readers are reminded that Shakespeare *is* English literature, and he is then hailed as master of the whole

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[98] Shindler, 'The Stolen Key', 70, 71.

[99] Bolton Corney, *The Sonnets of Shakspere: A Critical Disquisition, Suggested by a Recent Discovery*, (London: Private Impression, 1864), 2.

world. Corney's nationalism is more evident when, for example, he repeatedly calls Shakespeare 'our dramatist.' Despite this, Corney is able to acknowledge the work of Victor Euphemien Philarète Chasles (1798-1873) who, in 1862, as director of the Mazarin Library in Paris, wrote a letter to the *Athenæum* in which he proposed that the dedication of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* was actually written *by* Mr W. H., and not *to* him.[100] Corney praises Philarète Chasles for seeing something

> which has resisted all the efforts of our "homely wits." But what was visible to everyone had been seen by no one!
>
> It was formally a national boast that Samuel Johnson had "beat *forty* French" – but here is a Frenchman who has routed a whole army of English editors, annotators, pamphleteers, etc.[101]

As Corney was evidently pursuing a nationalist agenda, it is surprising that he seems to be championing the theory of a French critic here, but there are a number of reasons for his behaviour. Primarily, Corney is anxious to preserve the unimpeachable nature of Shakespeare; he has already been seen to be critical of Brown's reading of the *Sonnets* which describes Shakespeare having an affair, and he is clearly unhappy with '[t]he writers who treat the sonnets as biographic materials… [and] require our assent to improbabilities, or cast aspersions on the moral character of our admired poet on the

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[100] See *Athenæum* Jan. 25, 116.

[101] Corney, *The Sonnets of Shakspere: A Critical Disquisition, Suggested by a Recent Discovery*, 2.
Corney is quoting from a poem written by David Garrick on the publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755). The poem first appeared in the *Public Advertiser* on 22 April 1755, and then in David Garrick, 'Upon Johnson's Dictionary', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 25 (April 1755):

First Milton and Shakspear, like gods, in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight;
In satyres, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more.

The number of forty French refers to the forty 'Immortals' of the Académie Française, and thus functions as a metonymy for French scholarship and knowledge as a whole.

sole evidence of a theory.'[102] The other effect of Corney's praise of Philarète Chasles is that it acts as a nationalistic rallying-cry for his theory – Corney's use of 'our' in the above quote shows that he is in opposition to French scholarship. It is also interesting to note the occupations that Corney chooses, for he himself was an editor of a number of works, an illustrator, and author of the pamphlet in which these remarks are made.[103] It is possible that Corney was hoping to force agreement with his theory by playing on the fear that the French were surpassing the English in terms of Shakespeare discovery, although the fact that he is portraying the French as winning a victory against the very professions that he himself held ensures that he is aligned in opposition to Philarète Chasles. Ultimately however, a complex strand of nationalism is revealed and it is because Corney does not want to 'cast aspersions on the moral character' of Shakespeare that he agrees with Philarète Chasles. This, in its own way, is a promotion of Shakespeare and Britain because, as Corney clearly feels that Shakespeare is enhanced if the 'improbabilities' about his moral conduct are proved wrong, Philarète Chasles' argument promotes Shakespeare in Corney's eyes. This then, also promotes the nation. What all of this highlights is that, in order to use Shakespeare, as has already been seen in this thesis, a certain type of Shakespeare has to be constructed. In the case of promoting nationalism through Shakespeare and the *Sonnets*, a particular (and in this case it is a moral, or non-promiscuous and non-homosexual) Shakespeare has to be created. This essentially anticipates the sentiments of J. R. Seeley – made some nineteen years later and noted earlier in this thesis (pp. 113-4 and 123-4 above) – that the moral condition of a nation was vital to its position as a civic state. That the moral and national identity of a country were considered to be co-dependent is reinforced by the fact that

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[102] Corney, *The Sonnets of Shakspere: A Critical Disquisition, Suggested by a Recent Discovery*, 11.

[103] For an account of Corney's published works, see Thompson Cooper, (rev. Clare L. Taylor), *Corney, Bolton (1784–1870)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6330, 27 Oct 2005).

the same school of thought is found in writing on *Shakespeare's Sonnets.* Thus, in this example of nineteenth-century writers engaging with just one of Shakespeare's works can be seen the way in which the moral and the national were interdependent – it was only through constructing a particular type of people that the nation could be seen as worth promoting.

The interdependence of moralism and nationalism can also be seen when Massey discusses the theory that Francis Bacon was the real author of Shakespeare's works; he creates a suitably masculine Shakespeare to be the national icon. Having disparaged this theory on the grounds that 'Shakspeare was altogether the manlier and the radically nobler man,' whose 'works reflect the image of supreme manliness,' Massey moves on to use explicitly nationalist sentiments to convince his readers.[104] Stating that Bacon 'left his works to Latin and his name to foreign nations for PERMANENT preservation,' Massey goes on '[o]n the other hand, English was good enough for "our fellow" Shakspeare! He had no fear lest literature might not live and last without his seeking refuge in the ark of a dead language. And he alone is the man who sufficed of himself to *make our English tongue immortal!*'[105] Clearly there is nationalism at work here and Massey is painting Shakespeare as the triumphant Englishman as well as conflating him with the language and thus the psyche of the people themselves. Massey creates a Shakespeare whose morality is suitably English by highlighting the familial stability of the playwright. Massey argues that Shakespeare would, in 'extreme probability,' have moved his family to London with him while he was away from Stratford, because

> He was by nature a family man; true to our most English instincts; his heart must
>
> have had its sweet domesticities of home-feeling nestling very deep in it – our love

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[104] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 398.

[105] Ibid., 398-9.

of privacy and our enjoyment of that "safe, sweet, corner of the household fire,

behind the heads of children."[106]

Massey is here portraying Shakespeare in a certain way because he was English and that is how English people were supposed to act. An insight into the type of reader to whom Massey was writing is given in the quote in the above passage. It comes from the Fifth Book of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 1856 poem *Aurora Leigh*, which suggests that Massey was writing for an audience of like-minded individuals who would be expected to recognise the quote and its origins.[107]

It should also be noted here that Massey's use of *Aurora Leigh* – Browning's verse-novel about a woman's struggle to express herself, her battle against those who would suppress the desire for an independent working life, and eventual success on her own terms – is somewhat incongruous. Massey's attempt to paint a domestic idyll by using a poem which is anything but a representation of familial conformity, suggests that Shakespeare is often used despite his apparent unsuitableness for the particular agenda being promoted. There is such an evident desperation to construct a particular type of image of the nation for his readership that Massey ignores the inconvenient facts of the case. That Massey quotes *Aurora Leigh* at all achieves a Tory historical linking of Massey's Victorian readers with Shakespeare and the idyllic Elizabethan world that is being portrayed. That Shakespeare would have thought in the same way as (indeed he is double-voiced by) a contemporary poem (by a celebrated sonneteer), combined with the frequent use of the possessive pronoun 'our,' links the thought and feelings of the two

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[106] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 506.

[107] Massey is actually misquoting it – Browning wrote 'The sweet safe corner' rather than the 'safe, sweet, corner' – which suggests that he was quoting from memory rather than a book of poetry at hand. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 5.807.

eras and enables Massey's readers to connect with the golden past and the great poet who dwelt there.

Having thus presented to his readers *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Massey evidently feels that they will be able to enjoy the poems more fully than before:

> We are no longer hindered in our enjoyment of the divinely-dainty love-poetry, that could only have been offered to a woman, and which seems to flush the page with the vernal tints of spring and the purple light of love, by the feeling that makes Englishmen 'scunner' to see two men kiss each other, or hear them woo one another in amorous words.[108]

Obviously, Massey has decided that it is impossible to enjoy the *Sonnets* if the reader sees anything morally reprehensible in them and that, once the idea that different sonnets were written for different purposes is accepted, the removal of such objections will allow the general public a more enjoyable access to the poems. Massey sees this attitude as being an innate feeling of the English nation; it is 'Englishmen' who shrink back at suggestions of homosexuality and not just 'men.' Thus if, as is likely, the majority of Massey's readers agreed to some degree with his disapproval of such behaviour, they would find themselves united as a race of Englishmen who all shared this worldview. Not only does this ensure that his readers all feel secure in their opinions – after all, it is part of being English – but also means that they are able to feel superior to other races who, it is intimated by the sole mention of 'English,' may not share this belief.

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[108] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 443. It is interesting that Massey uses the word 'scunner' here when discussing the reaction of his Englishmen as its etymology is Scottish; originating in the sixteenth century and being used by Walter Scott, in *The Surgeon's Daughter* (1827). Thus this is another example of the subtle Anglicisation of the British nation, with Scottish speakers being described as 'Englishmen.'

The relationship between the Poet and the Fair Youth would be the most obvious problem for those seeking to portray a Shakespeare with suitably English morals but Richard Simpson, in *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, argues that the relationship between Shakespeare and another male is, far from being transgressively homosexual, rather part of a long and specifically English tradition. Simpson states that 'some of the earliest English poetry that is left to us consists of addresses to an absent friend, the tone of which reminds one of Shakespeare's sonnets,' and he then goes on to quote some lines from the *Codex Exoniensis* (or the *Exeter Book*), a tenth-century work of Anglo-Saxon poetry.[109] The *Codex* had been republished by the Society of Antiquaries, with translation and notes by Benjamin Thorpe (1782-1870), in 1842 so it was an available work of poetry. Yet it is significant that Simpson chooses to describe the *Codex* as early English poetry rather than Anglo-Saxon – which would have placed it at a remove from his English audience. This ensures that Shakespeare is located within a tradition of male-to-male poetry and, by extension, gives England a tradition which also bestows the authority of antiquity upon the *Sonnets*. Essentially Simpson is utilising Shakespeare and England to promote each other; Shakespeare's relationship is not homosexual – indeed he categorises homosexuality as a 'corruption' – because he is part of an English tradition, and thus English men cannot be homosexual because they are part of the same tradition as Shakespeare.[110]

c) The *Sonnets* and Moralism

When interpreting *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, it is clear that many nineteenth-century critics were deeply concerned with the moral ramifications of the poems. As

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[109] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 19.

[110] Ibid., 18.

John Cuming Walters said about his own work on the *Sonnets*; '[t]he only merit I can claim' is 'that I cast no aspersion upon the character of the poet.'[111] Walters also notes that, if the theory he proposes regarding the *Sonnets* is not convincing it is more important that he has not portrayed Shakespeare in a bad light; '[i]f I have failed, at least I have left the fame of Shakespeare untainted, unbesmirched.'[112] Indeed, the level of selectivity used by these writers in trying to portray Shakespeare in a positive light is evident from the way in which Alexander Dyce, despite having stated the lack of autobiography in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* some forty pages earlier, uses the poems to show that Shakespeare was unhappy with his profession of actor. Dyce feels that

> It is probable that Shakespeare soon conceived a distaste for the profession of a player, and regarded himself as degraded by being obliged to tread the boards. In his CX[th] and CXI[th] *Sonnets* (which have evidently a personal application to the poet) he expresses a regret that he had
>
> "made himself a motley to the view,"
>
> And bids his friend upbraid Fortune,
>
> "That did not better for his life provide
>
> Than public means, which public manners breeds."[113]

As with literary pursuits on more general Shakespearean themes (see pp. 159-67 above), a strong emphasis on social structure and class divisions is revealed in writing on the *Sonnets*. Due to the fact that the profession of player was not considered noble in Elizabethan times, a number of Victorian writers sought to excuse Shakespeare from any imputation of being lower class by portraying him as a man forced into the trade by

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[111] Walters, *The Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Attempted Elucidation*, 3.

[112] Ibid., 4.

[113] Dyce, 'Memoir of Shakespeare', lix.

circumstance and who was never entirely happy with his employment. Sidney Lee, for example, felt that 110Q showed Shakespeare to have been unhappy with acting due to considering the profession beneath him; '[h]is ambitions lay elsewhere, and at an early period of his theatrical career he was dividing his labours as an actor with those of a playwright.'[114] Robert Cartwright too paints a picture of Shakespeare the respectable gentrified man, stating that he became 'a prosperous man, enjoying the best society in London… and finally, spending the latter years of his life beloved and respected in his native town.'[115] Not that all writers chose to use this method of promoting the benefits of class-advancement; while Hannah Lawrence believes that Shakespeare did manage to better his position in life, she does not hold Cartwright's view that he would have mixed with the best society. After claiming that 29Q was prompted by Shakespeare's reminiscences of his family back at Stratford, Lawrence claims:

> Surely the feelings expressed in this [sonnet 29Q] are far more in character with what we really know of the dramatist who, though so young, atchieved [*sic*.], in three or four short years, a high standing among his brethren, and a share in the Blackfriars theatre, and then went on in prosperity and honour, even to his death, and far more so than is the other disgraceful view [that he had an extramarital affair].[116]

However, despite having portrayed Shakespeare as a respectable and successful individual, there is still no way that Shakespeare would be able to rise too far up the social ladder; '[i]ndeed, the notion that Southampton, Pembroke, Lady Rich, and Lady Southampton could be called, under any circumstances, Shakespeare's "private friends,"

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[114] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1294.

[115] Cartwright, *The Sonnets of William Shakspere*, 18.

[116] Lawrence, 'Shakespeare in Domestic Life', 99.

argues an utter ignorance of society in his days.'[117] Lawrence still evidently believes in the importance of class divisions separating the aristocracy from the *nouveaux riches*. Yet another approach is attempted by S. Smith Travers, who feels that Shakespeare could not only have mixed in exclusive circles but that he actually fathered an illegitimate child with 'some woman of high rank.'[118] Using a Whig-historical approach to the Elizabethan period Smith Travers laments the erosion of traditional class values:

> In those days, when blue blood was a reality, – when the belief in rank and caste was more deeply rooted than in religion even – an intrigue between a poor player and some charming, appreciative, clever, great lady, no doubt, happened more often than the immense gulf between them, would at first permit us to believe.[119]

Thus, while Lawrence and Smith Travers are interpreting *Shakespeare's Sonnets* and the period in which they were written in very different ways regarding Shakespeare's relationship with the nobility, they are both able to reinforce the idea that class boundaries exist and implicitly promote the upper classes by portraying them as superior. Similarly, arguments which took place about the identity of Mr W. H. were an opportunity for reinforcing class structures; those put forward by some critics rested on the proposition that William Herbert could never have been addressed as 'Mr' due to the fact that he was a member of the nobility. Sidney Lee, for example, in the *DNB* states the idea that Thomas Thorpe 'should have dubbed the influential Earl of Pembroke (formerly Lord Herbert) "Mr. W. H.," is an inadmissible inference.'[120]

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[117] Ibid. 108.

[118] Travers, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: To Whom were they Addressed?*, 13.

[119] Ibid., 13.

[120] Lee, 'Shakespeare', 1304.

There were then, various different ways in which the *Sonnets* could be construed and there were a number of different approaches to the poems which could be taken. In *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare* (1900), Parke Godwin (1816-1904) states that '[e]very person of culture who reads the Sonnets nowadays is pleased to find in most of them a fertility of thought, beauty of imagery, and mellifluous versification, but having read them he is at a loss to know precisely what they are all about.'[121] There are a number of assertions being made here; primarily Godwin is claiming that those who appreciate the *Sonnets* are people of 'culture' thus ensuring that anyone who does not praise the poems immediately loses that status. This will then lead a reader to want to know what *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are about; '[a]re they, he asks himself, a continuous poem, or so many isolated poems? Are they autobiographical or dramatic; or are they poems at all in the proper sense, and not enigmas, concealing under a poetic garb some deep and occult philosophy?'[122] Given that there are certain moral ambiguities about the *Sonnets* it was necessary for a writer to take a firm stance as to how the poems should be interpreted. As it is generally accepted that sonnets 1Q-126Q are addressed to the Fair Youth and 127Q-52Q to the Dark Lady, a reasonable conclusion would be that Shakespeare, if the poems are based on real-life events, or the 'Poet' if they are works of fiction, either partook in, or is advocating sexual promiscuity with both men and women. Thus, if a critic wishes to advocate a morality that precludes such promiscuity, they must deal with the idea of male/female or male/male love. Often critics will ignore one strand completely, addressing either the homosexual or heterosexual but not both together.

For the most part, writers tend to avoid any insinuation that there was anything homosexual in the relationship between the narrator and the Fair Youth and no critic

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[121] Parke Godwin, *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare*, (London: Knickerbocker Press, 1900), 4-5.

[122] Ibid., 5.

openly mentions homosexuality. As has been stated already (see p. 197 n. 52 above),

'homosexuality' as a term was something with which these writers would have been

unfamiliar and, perhaps more importantly, the physical aspects of homosexuality were

illegal.[123] Despite this, as will be seen, a few critics do imply something more than

friendship between the two men. Having taken a stance as to the sexuality of the

Sonnets, and whether or how they could be justified, there was then the option between

Shakespeare's Sonnets being biographical – and thus strongly suggesting that

Shakespeare himself had been either homosexual, promiscuous, or both – or fictional

exercises with no basis in the life of the poet. As has been seen already, the concept of

poetic voice was one with which Victorian critics were deeply interested. In relation to

Shakespeare's Sonnets the concept of the poetic persona is vitally important as writers

are able to use it to bolster their argument that Shakespeare is writing as himself or

writing in the voice of a 'character' (either real or imagined). There were other ways in

which writers could accept or reject the morality that they inferred in the *Sonnets* and

these relate back to the Idealist or Sensualist theories which were mentioned in Chapter

Two. Ostensibly, a crude description of the two stances would be that a male/male

relationship which existed at a solely intellectual level could be aligned to Idealist

thinking in that it privileged thought above physical experience. Conversely, a

Sensualist viewpoint would see love between two men as allowing for a physical,

sexual, relationship.

There were of course problems to be overcome if the reading of *Shakespeare's*

Sonnets was a biographical one, as John Cuming Walters notes: '[b]elieve the Herbert-

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[123] The practice of sodomy had, since 1533, been illegal and punishable by death in Britain and this was restated again in law by Robert Peel's (1788-1850) government in 1828. The Offences Against the Person Act (1861) abolished the death penalty but the practice remained illegal, and the 'Labouchere Amendment' to the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) made 'Gross indecency' between males punishable by two years imprisonment. The law remained this way until the Sexual Offences Act (1967). See Cocks, *Nameless Offences*; and Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain*, 27 and 85-7.

Fytton story with all its bearings on the poet's life, and you believe that Shakespeare was a vulgar trafficker in woman's shameful favours, and that his morality was at its lowest ebb.'[124] He goes on:

> If the sonnets concerning the unidentifiable "him" were addressed to a real man, the poet was a fatuous fool; if those concerning an equally unidentifiable "her" were addressed to a real woman, the poet was a debased sensualist, and I will believe neither without evidence.[125]

So it is that Frederick Furnivall (1825-1910), Samuel Butler, and others felt that the *Sonnets* represented an account of Shakespeare's life, while Bolton Corney, John Cuming Walters, and Alexander Dyce firmly avowed that the poems were undertaken as literary exercises. Of course, if the poems were considered as non-biographical then Shakespeare could be excused any morally problematic suggestions, but there was still the problem that any ideas seemingly endorsed by the poems, if considered to be repugnant, came from Shakespeare's mind, and could perhaps be conceived as promoting such values to his readers. Bolton Corney was incredulous that Charles Armitage Brown (1786-1842) could have sullied Shakespeare's character by implying that

> with a wife at Stratford, [he] had also a mistress in London; and that he recorded the circumstances for the instruction of posterity! The man who defames another, without a jot of evidence, defames himself. So much for Charles Armitage Brown.[126]

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[124] Walters, *The Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Attempted Elucidation*, 38.
[125] Ibid., 37.
[126] Corney, *The Sonnets of Shakspere: A Critical Disquisition, Suggested by a Recent Discovery*, 15.

Corney evidently believed that Shakespeare's actions were instructional and is as incredulous of the idea that Shakespeare would have left the *Sonnets* to bear posthumous witness to his actions, as to the idea that he committed the extramarital affair in the first place. Similarly, Simpson is adamant that the *Sonnets* (and by implication his book which claims to explain them) are didactic and compares them to 'text-books' which expound philosophy, while Ethan A. Hitchcock (1798-1870) published his *Remarks on the Sonnets of Shakespeare* in 1865, in which he frequently refers to the *Sonnets* as 'exemplars' and their readers as 'students.'[127] There was also disagreement between writers as to whether the *Sonnets* were published with the consent of Shakespeare, with C. Green feeling that they were, while writers such as Robert Shindler stated that the 1609 quarto was 'a literary piracy,' and 'in no way authoritative.'[128]

Richard Simpson clarifies the belief that the *Sonnets* allow unfettered access into Shakespeare's mind in his *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1868) where he notes that 'the student of Shakespeare's philosophy will naturally first turn to his lyrical poems,' when wishing to find out information about what the playwright thought.[129] Not that Simpson felt the *Sonnets* to be autobiographical however, as 'in these sonnets Shakespeare is not telling us what he should be if he were Iago or Othello, and not Shakespeare; but what he should be if, remaining what he was, he were placed in certain imaginary relations with others.'[130] Essentially this argument allows Simpson to read what he likes into the *Sonnets* and claim that this constituted Shakespeare's worldview, while at the same time ensuring that the events to which the

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[127] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 3.
    Ethan Allan Hitchcock, *Remarks on the Sonnets: with the Sonnets, showing that they belong to the hermetic class of writings and explaining their general meaning and purpose*, (New York: James Miller, 1865), 32.

[128] Shindler, 'The Stolen Key' 74, 77.

[129] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 1.

[130] Ibid., 2.

Sonnets seem to allude – the extramarital affair and homosexual relationship – can be classified as merely dramatic. One final option was to be selective about which of the above positions a critic chose to adopt; thus Gerald Massey claims that his 'contention is for *both* Dramatic and Personal Sonnets,' feeling that some of the *Sonnets* were written by Shakespeare to Henry Wriothesley and some were written as though from Wriothesley to Elizabeth Vernon, and others from Vernon to Elizabeth Rich.[131] Other critics like Sidney Lee and William Rolfe (1860-1913) made dramatic shifts in their approach with Lee in particular moving from a position of considering the *Sonnets* as 'the experiences of his [Shakespeare's] own heart,' to claiming that they were 'to a large extent undertaken as literary exercises,' within the space of only a few weeks.[132] Similarly, Frederick Furnivall, who had claimed in 1890 that the Dark Lady was Mary Fitton, reversed this view before the end of the century when he announced, in an article in *Theatre*, that 'there is nothing like proof or good evidence that they [William Herbert and Mary Fitton] are the folk we want, and there is at least much evidence against them.'[133] The fact that such a prominent Shakespeare critic was able to make such a volte-face is perhaps indicative of the ease with which Shakespeare could be, and was, used by these writers, suggesting that opinions were based more on conjecture than fact, allowing them to be radically altered in a short space of time.

The way in which *Shakespeare's Sonnets* were materially presented could also be utilised to pursue a particular agenda, and Gerald Massey and Samuel Butler rearrange the order of the sonnets so as to make them more compatible with the theories they are trying to promote. Similarly, Robert Cartwright, in *The Sonnets of William Shakspere* (1870), claims that it is the 'defective arrangement' of the 1609 quarto which

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[131] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 16.

[132] See *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, vol. 2, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols., (London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1944), 144-5.

[133] Furnivall, 'Shakspere and Mary Fitton', 6.

has led to 'the various theories and hypotheses' which surround the *Sonnets* and it is his rearranging of the sonnets which allows Cartwright to shift the emphasis of the *Sonnets* from homo- to heterosexual.[134] Having arranged the poems according to his own plan, Cartwright announces that

> we make the delightful discovery, that all the Amatory Sonnets have dropped
> through, like little fishes through the meshes of a net, and have no connection
> whatever with our love, *being, in fact, directly and essentially opposed to the whole*
> *spirit of the poem and epistles*. I have, therefore, placed them, twenty-two in
> number, in the Fourth Part, forming the first portion of the Sonnets to a Lady.[135]

In this way he ensures that the sonnets which appear to declare a sexual interest in the Fair Youth are actually moved to the Dark Lady section. Cartwright states that,

> Putting aside idle reports and after-dinner jokes, all evidence, worthy of credit,
> leads to the conclusion that with one single exception, Shakspere's conduct through
> his life was strictly moral and religious; as an atonement for this one error, he
> toiled twenty years in promoting the moral and intellectual development of his
> country and of the world at large...[136]

Cartwright evidently took the view that a Shakespeare who had been sexually active with the Dark Lady was a lesser evil than a Shakespeare who had the same relationship

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[134] Essentially, Cartwright believes that the *Sonnets* 'were published without the consent or knowledge of the author in 1609' and so reorders the poems hoping that 'I may have solved the mystery, or may, at least, have assisted in throwing a little more light on the subject.' (Cartwright, *The Sonnets of William Shakspere*), 3, 21. Cartwright rearranges the sonnets as follows; 1-20Q, *Passionate Pilgrim* VIII ('If music and sweet poetry agree,'), 53-5Q, 100-8Q, 59-60Q, 25-6Q, 29-32Q, 109-12Q, 121Q, 36-9Q, 50-2Q, 48Q, 76Q, 78-80Q, 82-7Q, 49Q, 88-93Q, 67-70Q, 126Q, 77Q, 33-5Q, 40-2Q, 94-6Q, 62-6Q, 81Q, 71-4Q, 116-20Q, 122-5Q, 21-4Q, 27-8Q, 61Q, 43-7Q, 75Q, 56-8Q, 97-9Q, 113-5Q, 153-4Q, 128Q, 145Q, 130Q, 127Q, 131-2Q, 135-6Q, 143Q, 139-40Q, 149Q, 137-8Q, 141-2Q, 147-8Q, 150-2Q, 144Q, 133-4Q, 129Q, 146Q.

[135] Ibid., 21, 18-9.

[136] Ibid., 21.

with a man. That a homosexual encounter may have occurred seems to be no secret –
something perhaps hinted at in the 'after-dinner jokes' – as Cartwright would hardly
have to be so vociferously defensive about moving the sonnets if it were. By giving
ground a little to the idea that there was an exception to Shakespeare's strictly moral
and religious life, Cartwright is able to save Shakespeare from this imputation. The
Shakespeare that Cartwright constructs is a man who toils to promote both the moral
and intellectual improvement of his nation as a way of atoning for his 'one error.' This
willingness to compensate for his mistake in such a zealous way is not only to
Shakespeare's credit, but also shows that he helped to make the nation what it had
become. There is a certain Positive Whiggism here as Cartwright is portraying the
nation as one that had developed since Shakespeare day, and there is a strong suggestion
that readers of this work could do worse than try to improve the nation themselves if
they happened to err from a strictly moral and religious life.

A similar anxiety about Shakespeare's reputation is displayed by Parke
Godwin, when he argues strongly against Sidney Lee's comments on 135Q. Lee, in his
A Life of William Shakespeare (1898), is more concerned with looking at the possible
autobiographical nature of the *Sonnets* and disproving any theories that state that the
Poet's rival was called Will, than any overtly moralistic issues. Thus Lee does not shy
away from the morally problematic readings of the sonnet. In *Shakespeare's Sonnets*
(1977) Stephen Booth, for example, sees 135Q containing 'festivals of verbal
ingenuity,' and notes six distinct meanings of the thirteen uses of the word 'will',
among which there are 'lust, carnal desire' ('Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy
Will'), 'the male sex organ' ('vouchsafe to hide my will in thine'), and 'the female sex

organ.' ('make thy large Will more').[137] In his reading, Lee mentions some of the sexual

meanings of 135Q although he does not go as far as Booth:

> Here the poet Will continues to claim, in punning right of his Christian name, a
>
> place, however small and inconspicuous, among the 'wills,' the varied forms of
>
> will (i.e. lust, stubbornness, and willingness to accept others' attentions), which are
>
> the constituent elements of the lady's being.[138]

Despite the fact that Lee does not say anything too contentious and stops short of the

imagery of the phallus and pudenda which Booth describes, Parke Godwin is strongly

opposed to such a reading and states that 'Mr Sidney Lee's interpretation of this sonnet

[135Q], giving to the word Will, the sense of lust, is so grossly offensive that it is a

disgrace to literature.'[139] The evidence that Godwin finds for his own reading of the

sonnet is the fact that the Shakespeare he portrays would not have done such a thing;

'Shakespeare, "the gentle Willy," or "the sweet Will," of his contemporaries, was not a

blackguard, and could never, under any circumstances, have written to or of any woman

whose acquaintance he had sought, that her sensuality was as insatiable as the sea.'[140]

Although Godwin uses this autobiographic method of countering any claims that the

Sonnets contain immoral sentiments, he also appears to treat the poems as objects to be

preserved for their own sake; '[a]ll these sonnets were meant to be complimentary, not

vituperative or insulting, and they can be so construed without doing any violence to the

text.'[141] Despite this, and the fact that Godwin's preface states it is the *Sonnets* alone

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[137] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Booth, 466-7.

[138] Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, 1898, Sixth edn. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1908), 439.

[139] Godwin, *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare*, 143.

[140] Ibid., 143.

[141] Ibid., 143.

which are being studied – a construction of the *Sonnets*' author is utilised to decide what the poems mean.

An examination of the language used by Godwin in writing about the use of Will in 135Q shows that it is specifically sexuality with which he has a problem. In his prose translation of the *Sonnets*, Godwin frequently uses the word 'desire' to describe what the Poet and Dark Lady feel towards each other and so it is not the idea of the two lovers desiring each other that can be what Godwin sees as 'grossly offensive.'[142] Clearly then it is Sidney Lee's use of 'lust' which is unacceptable. The difference between lust and desire is small, and although lust has a more overtly sexual connotation, the *OED* states that both words could be used to express strong, non-sexual, desire, in the late nineteenth century.[143] This being so, the strength with which Godwin opposes Lee's reading is surprising and, in the absence of any personal motive (Godwin had earlier acknowledged Lee as 'important' in the field of *Sonnets* studies), it is plausible that Godwin is hostile to Lee's theory because of the fragile nature of any reading of the *Sonnets* which can so easily be read as sensual and erotic.[144] That Godwin is so defensive over an apparently minor linguistic difference certainly suggests a desperation to make Shakespeare fit his own particular moral construction and is perhaps a tacit acknowledgement that Shakespeare can only ever tenuously fit into any such agenda.

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[142] 'Whoever has her wish, thou hast thy Will (Shakespeare), and thou hast Will, or his desire, besides,' 'Wilt thou, whose likings are broad and spacious, not vouchsafe to hide my desire in thine,' 'shall the desire of others for thy regards appear agreeable,' etc. see Ibid., 142-3.

[143] The *OED* cites '**1898** *Pall Mall Mag.* June 221 The.. Spaniards lusting for their destruction. **1898** G. W. STEEVENS *With Kitchener* 150 Charging with the cold bayonet, as they lusted to.' and '**1871** R. ELLIS *Catullus* lxii. 50 Many a wistful boy and maidens many desire it. **1875** JOWETT *Plato* (ed. 2) I. 201 Do not all men desire happiness?' See *OED* 'desire, *v.* 1'

[144] Godwin, *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare*, 41.

d) The Dark Lady

Despite the fact that the majority of the *Sonnets* can be read as homoerotic, there were writers who found their moral objections to the *Sonnets* stemming from the possibility of a relationship between the Poet and the Dark Lady. Frederick Furnivall, in *Shakspere's Sweetheart* (1890) makes no mention of homosexuality and appears to feel that the only real problem with the *Sonnets* being autobiographical was that they suggested that Shakespeare had partaken in an extramarital affair. Furnivall feels that such moral ambiguity should not get in the way of the 'obvious and natural meaning of Shakspere's Sonnets' and, unlike 'many Shakspere critics and students... [whose] idealization and idolization of his character have made them resolve to admit no evidence against his marital purity,' he presents what he feels is the truth regardless of the implications it has for Shakespeare's moral character.[145] Yet such apparent desire for the exposition of the case to take precedence over the implications, is undermined by the fact that Furnivall actually uses conjecture in order to seek to absolve Shakespeare of any real moral failing.[146] The facts of the Sonnets are, according to Furnivall, that Shakespeare had a mistress in London, and

> that Shakspere had a romantic affection for the young heir [Herbert]; that he was willing to give up his mistress to him (nos. 40-2); that the young fellow turned wild; that Shakspere broke off their friendship for a time, and that Shakspere then joyfully renewed if after three years.[147]

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[145] Furnivall, 'Shakspere's Sweetheart: Discovery of the Dark Woman of the Sonnets', 1.

[146] Indeed the general view of the New Shakspere Society is that it was obsessed by facts and scientific criticism. See Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 164-7.

[147] Furnivall, 'Shakspere's Sweetheart: Discovery of the Dark Woman of the Sonnets', 1.

This brief mention of the 'romantic affection' is all that Furnivall has to say regarding the relationship between the two men and, while 'romantic' does not necessarily mean 'sexual,' it neither ignores nor excuses any possible homosexuality, instead just mentioning their relationship and moving on. The extramarital affair, however, which might be expected to cause some moral problems, is excused by Furnivall from the outset of his article:

> any reasonable reader who knows what license men allowed themselves in Elizabeth's days, will easily admit that, having left his old, ignorant, country-mannered wife at Stratford, an actor and an author of such an impressionable nature as Shakspere would be sure to be attracted by a bright, clever, well-bred woman of musical attainments and "a coming-on disposition," who admired him and set her cap at him.[148]

Furnivall is absolving Shakespeare of any wrong-doing as far as any extramarital relationship is concerned. Yet, as with many of the literary pursuits examined in this thesis, it is not easy to categorise Furnivall's article as being simply one which excuses Shakespeare of any moral failings. To begin with, although Furnivall is making excuses for Shakespeare, this comes with certain caveats which preclude his readers from feeling that such license would be acceptable in their lives. Primarily, Shakespeare can have a mistress because he lived in 'Elizabeth's days;' this statement very clearly places such activities in a historical context and, while Furnivall's 'reasonable readers' are expected to excuse Shakespeare they are prohibited from acting in a similar fashion. Thus Furnivall can acknowledge the assumption, if the *Sonnets* are autobiographical, that Shakespeare behaved in this way while simultaneously issuing a warning to his readers

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[148] The Herbert-Fitton theory essentially made the claim that Mr W. H. was William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, and that the Dark Lady was Mary Fitton.
Ibid., 1.

that such behaviour is not acceptable. Shakespeare's actions are made more understandable by the way in which Furnivall presents Anne Hathaway; essentially she is not good enough for Shakespeare and the fact that she is 'ignorant' and 'country-mannered' allows her to function as a model for self-improvement. Females should strive to be 'brighter,' 'cleverer,' and 'better-bred' if they are to prove suitable companions for great men. It should also be noted here that the Dark Lady had apparently 'set her cap at' Shakespeare and, in this way, it can be seen that Shakespeare is portrayed as less guilty of straying from his wife as he is seduced by the intellectually superior female. Thus Furnivall's apparent condoning of Shakespeare's extramarital relationship is actually quite complex and involves a number of other factors which serve as a form of moral pedagogy; this highlights ideas about how different social positions related to personal attributes. Anne is almost repulsive due to her status as a country dweller while the Dark Lady is made attractive, in part, due to her breeding and so Furnivall reinforces class stereotypes and induces his readers to be more like the higher-class Dark Lady. That class mobility is possible is shown by Shakespeare's ability to leave his wife behind and mix in the circles that would have introduced him to his mistress. As was seen in the writing of De Quincey, Neil, and Nasmith earlier, there is also a certain amount of misogyny in Furnivall's description of this episode. There is the distinct impression that it is Anne's job to prevent her husband from being unfaithful rather than any responsibility being placed William to love his wife for who she is.

Frederick Furnivall's position regarding Anne Hathaway initially appears to be very different to that taken by Alexander Dyce in a biography attached to *The Poems of Shakespeare* earlier in the second half of the century. Having spoken about Shakespeare's childhood, Dyce announces that he will 'turn from uncertainties to facts,' and these 'facts' amount to the following description of Shakespeare's marriage:

> …in 1582, when he was a little more than eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway,
>
> the daughter of a substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford… Oldys
>
> seems to have learned, by tradition, that she was beautiful; and it is indeed unlikely
>
> that a woman devoid of personal charms should have won the youthful affections
>
> of so imaginative a being as Shakespeare. [149]

The commonality between this 1856 work and Furnivall's comments at the end of the century are striking, although the respective writers are using similar ideas – concerning what extraordinary men want in a woman – as foundations for very different conclusions: either Shakespeare's love for his wife, or Shakespeare's love for a mistress. The idea of a mistress is one that Dyce certainly does not condone and he states emphatically:

> From some of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, it has been supposed that, after he became a
>
> husband, he was by no means remarkable for purity of morals; but… no inference
>
> respecting his conduct should be drawn from compositions, most of which appear
>
> to have been written under an assumed character. [150]

This extract signals Dyce's desire to protect Shakespeare from any suggestion of a lapse in moral character; Dyce states that 'he was by no means remarkable for purity of morals' which seems to hide any charge of moral impropriety behind a suggestion of merely not being morally exemplary. [151] Dyce deals with the birth of Susanna Shakespeare, on this same page, in a tacitly mendacious manner. Despite the fact that, as

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[149] Dyce, 'Memoir of Shakespeare', xvii, xvii-xviii.

[150] Ibid., xviii.

[151] Ibid., xviii.

stated on p. 149 above, Shakespeare's marriage license bond had been found in Worcestershire Records Office in 1836, and had been published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in September of that year, Dyce claims that '[n]either the day, nor the place of the union are known,' simply giving the date as '1582.'[152] This means that when Dyce states that '[i]n May, 1583, his wife bore a daughter, who was called Susanna,' there is no hint whatsoever that the birth occurred less than nine months after the marriage.[153]

While Dyce dismisses the idea of Shakespeare's mistress by denying any biographical nature of the *Sonnets*, other critics sought to make the Dark Lady Shakespeare's wife. In 1872, the Rev. H. W. Hudson announced that '[i]t will take more than has yet appeared to convince me that when the poet wrote these and other similar lines his thoughts were travelling anywhere but home to the bride of his youth and the mother of his children.'[154] Nine years later Dowden was quoting this sentiment in his own edition of the *Sonnets*. Robert Shindler perceptively noted in 1892 that '[t]he vagaries of many of the commentators on the Sonnets are due to their wish to save the memory of Shakespeare from the scandal which these verses disclose.'[155] Not that this was to stop him doing exactly that, and his article 'The Stolen Key' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* attempts to explain why sonnets which, to Shindler, suggest immoral behaviour should not be considered to implicate Shakespeare. Shindler feels that it is implausible that Shakespeare could have wanted the ramifications which would have followed the publication of autobiographical sonnets which detail an extramarital affair; '[w]ould any sensible husband allow so plain a confession of unfaithfulness to appear in his wife's lifetime? And it must be remembered that the blame for this breach of

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[152] Ibid., xvii.

[153] Ibid., xviii.

[154] Hudson, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters with an Historical Sketch of the Origin and Growth of the Drama in England*, 25-6.

[155] Shindler, 'The Stolen Key' 76.

morality is only part of what Shakespeare would have to face.'[156] Although he does not

go on to explain what else Shakespeare would have had to face, it is interesting that

Shindler, by assuming Shakespeare's status as a sensible husband, and by further

assuming that an extramarital relationship is breaching a moral code, clearly

demonstrates that he is transposing his own morality onto the *Sonnets* and assuming that

his readers would do the same. Shindler, for example, is quick to label 151Q – with its

reference to priapism – as 'not only obscene but sickly and nauseous.'[157]

Essentially, Shindler believes that the *Sonnets* are immoral but refuses to believe

that they are autobiographical because Shakespeare would not have acted in such a way

and, even if he had, would not have wanted to publicise such behaviour to the wider

world. Shindler believes that not all of the *Sonnets* were written by Shakespeare and

uses evidence from the plays in order to support this claim; although it rather predictably

turns out to be the ones he finds inferior or obscene which he 'would be very glad to

dissociate… from Shakespeare's name.'[158] The main culprits here are 145Q

(presumably for its rather heavy-handed punning on the name of Shakespeare's wife)

and 151Q with its references to male genitalia; '[t]he few other Sonnets which would

have to be expelled from a Bowdlerised edition are not really repulsive in the same way,

and their double meanings can be matched in the plays.'[159] Hannah Lawrence too uses

the plays of Shakespeare to reinforce her ideas on the *Sonnets*; commenting on the

'disgraceful' story which the *Sonnets* suggest, and it is only the extramarital

heterosexual affair which is hinted at, not the relationship with the Fair Youth.

Lawrence feels that it is unlikely that Shakespeare would have admitted to a relationship

with the Dark Lady because he had portrayed Gloucester in *King Lear* as being 'guilty

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[156] Ibid., 76.

[157] Ibid., 78.

[158] Ibid., 78.

[159] Ibid., 78.

of the same sin,' which Edgar later claims is the cause of Gloucester losing his eyes. Lawrence asks '[c]an we believe that he [Shakespeare] would have dared to point thus to the vengeance of Heaven, had he been the breaker of his marriage vow, even as Glos'ter?'[160]

Similarly, Massey feels that any imputation that Shakespeare had an extra-marital affair with the Dark Lady is disgusting; it paints Shakespeare as a 'blackguard,' and 'an unconscionable debauchee in his life, a hypocrite in his protestations of affection, and a stark fool in his confessions.'[161] Instead, Massey feels that 'the moral obliquity of Shakspeare,' despite being accepted by many critics, is nothing other than people failing to understand the *Sonnets*, either through ignorance, or a desire to 'afford a satisfactory set-off to his splendour – the foil which should render his glory less dazzling to weak eyes.'[162] Massey is able to circumvent any imputation that the Dark Lady sonnets are Shakespeare praising a lady who is not his wife, by claiming that Shakespeare wrote them in the guise of Wriothesley to Wriothesley's mistress, noting that they contain 'the absorbing, absolute, all-containing Love that woman alone engenders in the heart of a man.'[163]. If this theory is accepted, Massey states, 'we see, right through the sonnets… that Shakspeare has most absolutely kept the loftiest moral altitude. He has preserved his own purity and integrity of soul to have the right of speaking to the Earl as he does at times.'[164]

While Massey is quick to deny Furnivall's charge that critics only seek to make the *Sonnets* non-autobiographical because they cast aspersions on Shakespeare's moral character, it seems clear that this is in fact the case. Massey describes the work of

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[160] Lawrence, 'Shakespeare in Domestic Life' 109.

[161] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 188, 189.

[162] Ibid., 190.

[163] Ibid., 153.

[164] Ibid., 194.

Charles Armitage Brown – author of *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems* (1838), criticised by Bolton Corney on p. 217 above – as '[t]he Lues Browniana [the plague or epidemic of Brown].'[165] Massey goes on; '[f]or purity's sake all women ought to stop their ears against this calumny of the would-be polluters of his [Shakespeare's] purity, and all men who have listened to these scandal-mongers should turn sick of them, cast out the poison.'[166] Instead, Massey believes that '[s]o far from being a lecher, Shakspeare shows no toleration for adultery, but is hard and stern as steel in reflecting the evil features of the vice they [the critics who suggest that the *Sonnets* are autobiographical] charge him with.'[167] Massey then states that Shakespeare 'is the very evangelist of marriage and of purity in wedded life; as such *he began the writing of his Sonnets*.'[168] There are, then, different ways of approaching the morality of the *Sonnets* even in terms of the character of the Dark Lady. These range from Shakespeare having had an affair (rendered acceptable due to the Dark Lady's supposed superiority to Anne Hathaway), through to disgust that anyone would suggest infidelity on the part of Shakespeare. What all of these approaches reinforce however, is that the concepts of fidelity, promiscuity, sexual relationships outside marriage, and class position, are widely accepted to define what constituted acceptable morality. This goes to show not only the diversity of ways in which different Shakespeares can be constructed within the broadly uniform attitudes to morality in the nineteenth century, but also that such diversities permeated even this small part of literary pursuits on Shakespeare and his *oeuvre*.

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[165] See Charles Armitage Brown, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems: Being His Sonnets Clearly Developed: with His Character Drawn Chiefly from His Works*, (London: J. Bohn, 1838).
Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 15-23 passim.

[166] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 23.

[167] Ibid., 23.

[168] Ibid., 23.

ii) The Fair Youth

While many critics wrestled with the moral implications of the presence of the Dark Lady in the *Sonnets*, the problems raised by a relationship between the Poet and the Fair Youth were often unavoidable. Although, as has been seen, some writers would ignore any homoerotic implications, others did choose to tackle the issue directly. Sonnet 63Q is usually considered in terms of homosexuality in that it explicitly refers to the Poet's lover as 'he,' but the sonnet is looked at by Gerald Massey as part of Shakespeare's reflection on morality and any possible relationship between Shakespeare and another man is dismissed. It is Massey's contention that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are written to women and that he simply uses the language of maleness because it is necessary to portray the woman as a man sometimes; 'Shakspeare makes a woman a "god" in love, in her power to recreate the lover.'[169] He goes on to criticise the writers who claim that the first 126 sonnets are addressed to a man, '[t]hose who cannot or will not see the impossibility of these expressions being addressed to a man by the manliest of men, but will continue to babble blasphemy against Shakspeare in their blindness, deserve to be hissed from the stage.'[170] Later Massey states that '[i]t is a matter of natural and therefore of Shakspearian necessity that such a Sonnet as No. 48 can only be spoken to a woman by a man. Shakspeare was the manliest of men; not the most effeminate of poets.'[171] Massey does note that some previous critics had considered 20Q as 'erotic' – which is about as close as any of these writers get to openly discussing a homosexual relationship – but he then claims that 'passions' in that sonnet is an Elizabethan word for

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[169] Ibid., 26.

[170] Ibid., 26.

[171] Ibid., 29.

poem, which explains away any difficulty that 20Q might cause.[172] While Massey acknowledges the existence of those who view the *Sonnets* as homosexual – only to dismiss such interpretation by calling the poems literary conceits – a different tactic is used by John Dennis in his 1883 *Studies in English Literature*. Dennis' refusal to admit to a homosexual reading of the *Sonnets* is signalled by the fact that he finds his

> faith in the noble spirit of the great master sustained, by the belief, a reasonable belief under the circumstances, that the large portion of what is repellent in these poems, is due to what Mr Minto terms the "supreme and perhaps fantastic generosity of friendship" which marks the Elizabethan age.[173]

It is presumably the homoerotic elements of the *Sonnets* which Dennis finds 'repellent' as the relationship between the Poet and the Dark Lady is unlikely to have been explained away as a fantastically generous friendship. Similar language was used by Alexander Dyce three decades previously in a biography attached to *The Poems of Shakespeare*. Dyce does not entertain the idea that the poems are in any way homosexual in content but he does note the male addressee and seeks to excuse what might concern his readers by stating that such emotion was in keeping with Elizabethan times. Stating that 'the kind of exaggerated friendship which some of them [the *Sonnets*] profess, can only surprise a reader who is unacquainted with the manners of those days,' Dyce is able to normalise any homophobic reaction to the *Sonnets* as any readers' response can be 'only surprise.'[174] That these two writers disapprove of, and are trying to move Shakespeare away from, a homosexual relationship is clear – there is Dennis' use of 'repellent,' and the formal image employed by Dyce when he explains that 'even

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[172] See Ibid., 39.

[173] Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, 415.

[174] Dyce, 'Memoir of Shakespeare', lxxxiii.

in the epistolary correspondence between two grave and elderly gentlemen, friendship used frequently to borrow the language of love.'[175] In facing the issue directly, rather than ignoring it, Dyce and Dennis seek to refute any hint that Shakespeare may have had a homosexual relationship.

There were other nineteenth-century Shakespeare critics who not only directly addressed issues of homosexuality in the *Sonnets*, but also chose to accept that this was the nature of the relationship between the Poet and the Fair Youth. Samuel Butler is the most explicit of these writers in his acceptance of a homosexual relationship but absolves Shakespeare of committing a severe transgression due to his having been seduced by the youth. In this way he is able to reconcile the idea of a Shakespeare who had a homosexual relationship, with a Shakespeare who could promote a certain moral code. In his 1899 *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Reconsidered and in part Rearranged* Butler asserts that the *Sonnets* were autobiographical but questions the authority of the 1609 quarto: he thus gives himself license to rearrange the order in which the sonnets are printed, claiming that they contain a coherent narrative.[176] The story that Butler sees being played-out in the *Sonnets* however is one which he acknowledges to be 'throughout painful and in parts repulsive.'[177] Towards the end of his introduction, Butler states that the *Sonnets* deal with 'the love that passeth the love of women,' and compares it in this aspect to the work of Homer.[178] He goes on to say 'that whereas the love of Achilles for Patroclus depicted by the Greek poet is purely English, absolutely without taint or alloy of any kind, the love of the English poet for Mr W. H. was, though

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[175] Ibid., lxxxiv.

[176] Butler reorders the sonnets as follows: 1Q-32Q, 121Q, 33-4Q, 36-9Q, 127-8Q, 130-2Q, 137-44Q, 135-6Q, 151Q, 35Q, 40-2Q, 134Q, 133Q, 152Q, 43-118Q, 147-50Q, 119-20Q, and 122-5Q. Following this, he places 126Q as Appendix A, 129Q as Appendix B, 145Q as Appendix C, 146Q as Appendix D, 153Q as Appendix E, and 154Q as Appendix F.

[177] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 84.

[178] Ibid., 122.

only for a short time, more Greek than English.'[179] Exactly what could be meant by the term 'Greek' in this context was open to interpretation (and will be looked at in more detail on pp. 255-7 below), however as Butler describes the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad* as 'English,' and as there is absolutely no suggestion of any physical relationship between the two characters in Homer, it may be assumed that Butler means a non-physical friendship.[180] This being the case, the type of relationship which he places in opposition to this, the 'tainted' relationship between Shakespeare and Mr W. H., would be a physical, homosexual and 'foreign' one. While Butler does not shy away from what he considers to be painful or repulsive in the *Sonnets*, he does seek to excuse Shakespeare's character from being stained by any hint of impropriety.

Having noted that 'what we think of Shakespeare himself must depend not a little on what we think of the Sonnets,' Butler then proceeds to claim that the *Sonnets* were written early in Shakespeare's career.[181] This allows Butler to state that any improper actions carried out by Shakespeare were merely the folly of youth and thus no reflection upon the actual character of the great man:

> If we date them early we suppose a severe wound in youth, but one that was soon healed to perfect wholesomeness. If we date them at any age later than extreme youth, there is no escape from supposing what is morally a malignant cancer. If the evidence points in the direction of the cancer, we must with poignant regret accept it. I submit, however, that it will be found to point with irresistible force in the direction of the mere scar.[182]

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[179] Ibid., 122.

[180] See Homer, *Iliad: Books 13-24*, trans. A. T. Murray and William F. Wyatt, LOEB Classical Library, (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), Books 16, and 23.

[181] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 85.

[182] Ibid., 85.

It is worth noting that Butler obviously knows that there is a possibility of something hidden below the surface of the *Sonnets* which would be outrageous to name openly. Certain writers (such as Dyce and Lee) claim that the *Sonnets* are merely literary exercises and thus absolve Shakespeare from becoming implicated in (at best) a *ménage à trois*, and (at worst) a homosexual relationship with a young boy. It is interesting that, even though this unnamed content is evidently abhorrent to Butler, he makes no attempt to disassociate it from Shakespeare. He feels that the seriousness of the 'malignant cancer' suggested by the *Sonnets* is dependant on the age that Shakespeare was when the events described took place. In this way, Butler is saying that homosexuality in Shakespeare could be condoned if it took place at a young enough age.

Throughout his book, Butler repeatedly refers to the fact that Shakespeare was duped into the act that he refrains from mentioning. It is Butler's contention that his Mr W. H. (who is neither Wriothesley nor Herbert) seduced Shakespeare:

> Mr W. H. must have lured him on – as we have Shakespeare's word for it that he lured him still more disastrously later. It goes without saying that Shakespeare should not have let himself be lured, but the age was what it was, and I shall show that Shakespeare was very young.[183]

There is also clearly no admonishment of Shakespeare; Butler states that to absolve Shakespeare of any wrong-doing is 'a pious act,' and goes on to claim for Shakespeare the status of a divinity.[184] Shakespeare, Butler states, 'is not dead,' rather 'Shakespeare is more living in that life of the world to come by virtue of which he entered after death

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[183] Ibid., 70.

[184] Ibid., 85.

into the lives of millions, than he ever was in that vexed body to which his conscious life was limited.'[185] Shakespeare is not denigrated, and so the 'Greek' relationship recognised by Butler does not appear to be a problem. Indeed, the *Sonnets* are considered by him to be morally virtuous works, which in turn make Shakespeare a morally virtuous man:

> It is one of the common-places of modern schoolmen to say that the man and his art – whether literature, painting, music, or what not – are not to be taken as one, but that the corrupt tree may bring forth good fruit and *vice versa*. There is no truth in this.[186]

Rather, Butler feels that if a work of art is 'wholesome, genial, and robust, whatever faults the worker may have had were superficial, not structural.'[187] Essentially, Butler is claiming that morality and art are inextricably linked and that if art is produced by someone 'corrupt,' then 'a healthy appetite will have none of it.'[188] As Butler is claiming that good art is inherently moral, and as he clearly places the *Sonnets* in the bracket of good art, it may be assumed that he considers them to be morally 'wholesome, genial, and robust.' It is also worth noting here that Butler is implicitly referencing the increasing intellectual professionalisation of artistic and literary criticism in his disagreement with the 'modern schoolmen' and their pedagogy. As was noted in Chapter Two above, the tensions present between the old and new schools of literary pursuit as well as shifts in the social organisation of knowledge would have inflected all of the debates about Shakespeare at this time.

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[185] Ibid., 85.

[186] Ibid., 120-1.

[187] Ibid., 121.

[188] Ibid., 121.

The idea that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit is biblical and there is a strong Christian sensibility in Butler's work – the phrase regarding 'the love that passeth the love of women,' is a reference to *2 Samuel* 1.26.[189] As Christianity generally considers homosexuality to be sinful, and as Butler is evidently playing on a certain amount of Christian knowledge by his readers, it can be assumed that he is trying to promote forgiveness rather than homosexuality. The obvious question then is why Butler would choose to approach the *Sonnets* in a way which accepted and sought to excuse Shakespeare's homosexual activity rather than simply ignoring or dismissing it. The intention of Butler is perhaps signalled in the epigraph which precedes his title page; this quotes lines spoken by Mariana in *Measure For Measure* in which she states that '[t]hey say best men are moulded out of faults, And for the most become much more the better for being a little bad.'[190] It would seem that Butler is taking what might be called a realistic approach to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*; readers are not necessarily going to be oblivious to the homoeroticism in the poems so he is choosing to tackle it directly. Butler is well aware of the fact that a number of Victorian critics espoused the idea that the *Sonnets* were literary exercises and that Shakespeare was simply inventing characters and situations, and he feels that this view is taken by critics 'mainly because they hope by doing so to free Shakespeare from an odious imputation.'[191] He goes on:

> Those who regard the Sonnets as literary exercises would have us believe that in
> the naughtiness of his heart, Shakespeare, with a world of subjects to choose
> from, elected to invent sonnet 23, and to imagine a situation which required the
> writing of sonnets 33-35 of my numbering [these are 23Q, 121Q, 33Q, and 34Q].

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[189] 'In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.' See *Matthew*, 7.17-19. Ibid., 122.

[190] *Measure For Measure*, 5.1.444-6.

[191] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 59.

> This is the most degrading view of all… True, however early the Sonnets are
> dated a scar must remain; but who under the circumstances will heed it whose
> moral support is worth a moment's consideration?[192]

Obviously, Shakespeare writing the *Sonnets* as literary exercises would mean that the implied homosexual love-affair was something that Shakespeare was able to conjure up from his imagination and it becomes clear that Butler feels this to be just as abhorrent as if the poems were autobiographical; '[t]o me it is as unthinkable, and as repulsive, as I believe the reader will also find it when he sets himself to consider what it involves; I therefore dismiss it with no greater display of argument than that adduced by its upholders.'[193] It is interesting that Butler chooses sonnets 23Q, 121Q, 33Q, and 34Q in order to illustrate his point. With the possible exception of 33Q, which may allude to a male object of desire, all of these sonnets are ungendered in terms of their addressee and this allows Butler to draw attention to Shakespeare's feelings of love – 'read what silent love hath writ' (23Q), 'my love no whit disdaineth' (33Q) – while avoiding any of the sonnets which are more explicitly homoerotic such as 20Q or 63Q. Indeed the overwhelming emotion conveyed by Butler's choices is shame and bitterness; 121Q speaks of 'frailties' and the way in which the speaker has been abused by false accusations, while in 23Q the speaker appears to lament the love he feels, or felt, for another. Butler, despite the fact that he is prepared essentially to admit to Shakespeare's homosexuality, is evidently keen that there should be some signs of regret, and even disgust, from the poet, which obviously serves to convey such ideas to his readers.

As with the different approaches to the Dark Lady's role in the *Sonnets*, the Fair Youth and attendant ideas of homosexuality could be tackled in a wide variety of ways.

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[192] Ibid., 86.

[193] Ibid., 59.

There is still a consistent approach to homosexuality as even writers who chose to accept such an implication had to explain or excuse Shakespeare's behaviour. Again it can be seen that Shakespeare was used despite his unsuitability, and this adds to the overall sense of desperation among these writers that Shakespeare should provide a framework upon which they could situate their own particular ideas of national and moral identity. While seemingly more problematic, from a simplistically moral point of view, than the Dark Lady sonnets, many writers chose to deal with the Fair Youth sonnets and, as will be seen in the following section, it is in the idea of homosexuality that the relationship between moralism and nationalism is thrown into stark relief.

d) The *Sonnets* and Ancient Greece

The last twenty-five years have seen a number of scholarly investigations into the way in which nineteenth-century society connected with ancient Greek thought. Frank Turner, Richard Jenkyns and Linda Dowling have all published studies which examine the increased use of Hellenistic or ancient Greek culture within nineteenth-century cultural and intellectual endeavours.[194] Essentially they see intellectual Victorians turning towards ancient Greece as a remedy for what was considered to be the pending dangerous breakdown of society. A number of writers 'sought to reawaken English patriotism and make it noisier still,' believing that moral virtue, civic pride, and artistic creativity could all be encouraged by the emulation of ancient Greece.[195] As Shakespeare has been shown to have been widely utilised in the nineteenth century in order to promote various moralising and nationalist agendas, it is therefore unsurprising

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[194] See Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*,Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, and Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*.

[195] Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, 46.

that there is much Hellenistic imagery in literary pursuits about *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Many writers reference figures and events from ancient Greece: The Fair Youth is frequently compared to Adonis or Ganymede, while Eros and relationships between figures from Greek mythology are often mentioned.[196] Richard Simpson, in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1868), makes connections between ancient Greece and the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare. In claiming that the *Sonnets* present a unified worldview ('Shakespeare is always a philosopher, but in his sonnets he is a philosopher of love'), Simpson notes that such a philosophy would have originated in ancient Greece and then spread elsewhere in Europe; '[f]rom the Platonic schools and books this science passed to Dante and Petrarch… From Italy it radiated throughout Europe and was taken up by Surrey and Spenser.'[197]

While Jenkyns and Turner discuss Greek imagery and its increasing presence in the nineteenth century, both Linda Dowling and Robert Sawyer, in their respective studies of the appropriation of ancient Greek culture in Victorian writing, take this further and suggest that Greece was used as a secret code through which to discuss homosexuality. In *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare* Sawyer makes the claim that Algernon Swinburne's 1880 *A Study of Shakespeare* appropriated the playwright in order to promote a radical agenda of reconsidered sexuality. It is Sawyer's contention that there is a double-voiced rhetoric used by Swinburne in his criticism of *King Lear* and that certain tropes, and certain words – the examples given include 'masculine,' 'androgyny,' 'languid,' and, most importantly, 'Greek' – enabled Swinburne to talk to two audiences at once.[198] In this way, Sawyer sees Swinburne's criticism as being

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[196] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 52.
F. A. White, '"Mr W. H."', *New Century Review,* 7 1900), 240.
Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare, ed. F. T. Palgrave, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), 199.

[197] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 6.

[198] Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare*, 51. In this, Sawyer is following on from Thaïs E. Morgan, 'Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Criticism: Swinburne and Pater', *Victorian Studies,* 36, no. 3 1993).

'intended for two sets of readers: the larger audience who heard it simply as a championing of a new avant-garde movement in literature, and the minority group who heard… allusions to homoerotic desire.'[199] In *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* Linda Dowling describes a 'hidden or "coded" counterdiscourse' through which classical Greece could be used as an apology for homosexual behaviour.[200] Thus, discussion of ancient Greece could be read superficially by the majority of its audience while 'its more radical implications became visible to anyone who knew how to read.'[201] While both Dowling and Sawyer situate their coded discourse within certain nineteenth-century fictional and occasional critical writing, such a hidden dialogue encounters difficulties when mapped onto nineteenth-century literary pursuits of the *Sonnets*. The idea that certain writings on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* functioned as a kind of code – with the references to Hellenism understood by a privileged few while others read such critical writing in a state of blissful ignorance – becomes problematic when one considers the fact that the homosexual possibilities within the *Sonnets* were an open secret. There are, as have been seen, some writers who pass over any mention of homoeroticism and even on occasions expunge 'dangerous' sonnets. However, enough critics make mention of their possible homosexual content – either in order to criticise the *Sonnets* for being morally disgusting, or to excuse Shakespeare of his folly, or perhaps to claim that they are being misread – to ensure that there would have been few, if any, participants on the *Sonnets*-related debate unaware of their homosexual possibilities. Joseph Bristow has noted that 'the charge against the morality of Shakespeare's sonnets was familiar to the Victorians,' and any bowdlerisation of the *Sonnets* implicitly acknowledges these problematic readings through resisting them, and

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[199] Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare*, 50-1.

[200] Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, xv.

[201] Ibid., 92.

reinforces the common attitude towards this aspect of morality among the intellectual elite.[202]

The *Sonnets* functioning as secret homosexual propaganda would be dependent on any homosexual reading being sufficiently obscure to the majority of readers that the code would remain unbroken. Yet in 1839 Henry Hallam had stated that 'it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written them. There is a folly in all excessive and mis-placed affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets.'[203] While Hallam did have genuine critical objections to *Shakespeare's Sonnets* – they were, he felt, monotonous and difficult to understand – it is clear that the overriding fault to be found with them was the mis-*placed* nature of the love they display; a love 'of such rapturous devotedness… as the greatest being whom nature ever produced in the human form pours forth to some unknown youth in the majority of these sonnets.'[204] While Hallam does not explicitly mention homosexuality, there is no sense in which his criticism could be taken other than that he disapproved of the type of love which the *Sonnets* appear to espouse, and the effect it might produce upon their readers; indeed Hallam noted that 'there is now a tendency, especially among young men of poetical tempers, to exaggerate the beauties of these remarkable productions.'[205] Rather than attempt to classify nineteenth-century literary pursuits about *Shakespeare's Sonnets* as being either part of a secret code used to promote what we would today term homosexuality, or as being written in blind ignorance of their homoerotic undertones, the present thesis will examine a number of works on their own merits to highlight the uses to which Shakespeare was put through readings of his *Sonnets*. Instead of viewing the use of ancient Greek imagery in writings

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[202] Bristow, *Effeminate England*, 42.

[203] Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, 504.

[204] Ibid., 502.
[205] Ibid., 501.

on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* from a twenty-first-century perspective – that is, considering language of affection between males to suggest homosexuality – such works need to be looked at on their own terms.

To begin with, as has been seen, the term homosexual is not one with which many of the individuals surveyed in this thesis would have been familiar. Although there were terms for the concept of homosexuality as it might be known today, nineteenth-century nomenclature was different and this can lead to modern critics imposing modern paradigms upon historical moments. Indeed, as Sean Brady has noted, the idea of the homosexual is complex in itself and becomes more so when applied to the nineteenth century. Brady reminds modern historians that '[s]imply labelling individuals such as… Algernon Swinburne, Wilde and others in the period as "sodomites" insufficiently describes the complexities of their lives and certainly contradicts their own perceptions of their sexual desires for other men.'[206] This chapter will utilise the work of Brady in order to suggest that the literary pursuits about Shakespeare during this period display a much more subtle and complex form of male/male relationship than that which some scholars have found elsewhere in nineteenth-century literature. By noting how different writers could see in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* different attitudes to male relationships, and by understanding that this lead to these ideas being disseminated to the wider public, the extent to which Shakespeare's aspectuality enabled his use by writers can be seen.

The most common twentieth- and twenty-first-century way in which to understand references to ancient Greece is, as has been noted, as codified allusions to what would now be termed homosexuality; yet this view is an over-simplification. The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, for example, two figures that appear frequently in these discussions, was represented by different writers in different ways. In

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[206] Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain*, 18.

Homer's *Iliad* the two warriors are simply 'comrades' – albeit ones with an unusually close friendship; Achilles wishes himself dead upon hearing the news that Hector has killed Patroclus.[207] But no mention whatsoever is made of the two being lovers and, although it could be read differently, it is not suggested that the relationship is a physical one.[208] Indeed, Walter Leaf's (1852-1927) *A Companion to the Iliad for English Readers* (1892) makes no mention of there being any sort of relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, while W. E. Gladstone's 1878 work on Homer suggests that the slave girl Briseis is Achilles' most important relationship.[209]

However, in the other major Greek description of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus – Plato's *Symposium* – they are specifically described as 'lovers' and as being 'in love.'[210] Although there are not any nineteenth-century works which specifically describe them as such, and the social and legal climate of the time makes this understandable, Laurel Brake has noted that there was a 'popular association by the 1880s of homosexuality with Plato.'[211] Thus, while Plato's actual nomenclature is possibly open to interpretation, it is widely accepted that Plato is implying a homosexual relationship between the two men. So while the *Iliad* portrays two young soldiers with a mental bond – what might be termed a 'homointellectual' rather than homosexual connection – and whose martial prowess helps the Greeks in their siege of Troy, the *Symposium* shows two men in an intimate relationship and concentrates more on their

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[207] Homer, *Iliad: Books 13-24*, 293.

[208] Thomas K. Hubbard notes that 'There is no clear evidence for homosexuality in the epic poetry of Homer.' (*Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents*, ed. Thomas K. Hubbard, (London: University of California Press, 2003), 14-5).

[209] See Walter Leaf, *A Companion to the Iliad for English Readers*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), and W. E. Gladstone, *Homer*, ed. John Richard Green, Literature Primers, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878).

[210] Plato, 'Symposium', trans. W. R. M. Lamb, in *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, LOEB Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1946), 105, 103.

[211] Laurel Brake, 'The Discourses of Journalism: "Arnold and Pater" Again - and Wilde', in *Pater in the 1990s*, ed. Laurel Brake and Ian Small, (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1991). Similarly, Hubbard recognises the homosexuality in Plato, (*Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*, ed. Hubbard, 17).

personal relationship than the wider military conflict.[212] The problem is that, when a critic talks about Achilles and Patroclus, it is unclear whether they are thinking of Homer or Plato – or even Plato within a heterosexual framework – and thus whether they are promoting a strong, soldierly, nation-saving friendship between males, or are promoting homosexuality.

This ambiguity is noted by Jenkyns and Dowling, both of whom acknowledge that different attitudes to sexuality and male/male relationships existed in the nineteenth century. Dowling describes how there were a number of writers who believed male/male love to be superior to that between men and women while genuinely not considering such behaviour homosexual, and indeed considering it 'as superior to the blind urgencies of a merely animal sexuality.'[213] This relates closely with what was seen in the previous chapter regarding the divergent positions of Idealism and Sensualism. Difficulties arise in delineating which type of male/male relationship is being discussed or promoted. For example, Richard Jenkyns describes passages from two of Benjamin Disraeli's novels which could be taken as being codedly homosexual; yet he decides that, in fact, Disraeli (1804-81) was referring to an intellectual, Idealist, relationship. Jenkyns states that this is because 'a very worldly man was unaware, 130 years ago, of possible implications which are obvious today. Nor was he unusual.'[214] Indeed, Jenkyns goes on to note the distinction between homosexual love and an asexual relationship, commenting that it could often be ambiguous and confusing; 'when the Victorians compared their friendships to those of the Greeks, the result could be ambiguous: a reference to Achilles and Patroclus might be either to Homer or to Plato. Some may

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[212] This thesis will use the term 'homointellectual' in order to denote a non-sexual or romantic bond between two members of the same sex, this is simply for ease of demarcation as the concept will recur throughout the rest of this chapter and is based on the idea that such a relationship is not homo*sexual*. The use of this term seeks to emphasise that the relationship is more to do with a meeting of minds – in keeping with Idealist philosophy – than something to do with community or companionship as the more common 'homosocial' suggests.

[213] Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, 115.

[214] Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 286.

hardly have known themselves what they meant.'[215] However, even the apparent distinction between a writer using Homer and Plato was problematic, as that writer might actually view either Greek author as portraying homosexual or asexual relationships: Plato could be interpreted as promoting both sexual and non-sexual male/male relationships.[216] There is a spectrum of complex attitudes towards male-male desire and each individual writer is functioning in a way that needs to be understood on its own terms rather than seen as part of larger codified discourse. Returning to *the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Richard Simpson, the complexity present in a single work – which negates a simple categorisation – becomes evident.

It has been shown above (p. 252) that Richard Simpson viewed Shakespeare as advocating a philosophy through the *Sonnets* which he had inherited from Plato. While this might at first seem to make Simpson's writing an ideal place to find the double-voiced code modern scholars claim to have found elsewhere in nineteenth-century writing, a closer examination will reveal it to be more complex than this. Despite frequent recourse to ancient Greek imagery and the sort of language that one would associate with a writer using a coded rhetoric of homosexual promotion, Simpson also strongly denigrates homosexuality, making such a reading seem implausible. In keeping with the idea of a transcendent, non-sexual, male/male relationship, Simpson proposes a philosophy whereby there are two forms of love; '[l]ove of the mind only, or intellectual love, is called the good dæmon or genius; love of the body only, or animal love, is the evil dæmon or genius.'[217] In this way he is able to claim that the sonnets which are clearly addressed to men are those which deal with an intellectual, or non-physical love, while those which relate to the Dark Lady are concerned with physical love. On first

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[215] Ibid., 287.

[216] See Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, 128-30.

[217] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 16.

appearance this is reasonably straightforward and Simpson's use of the Idealist and Sensualist philosophies that have already been mentioned in this thesis would appear to remove any hint of homosexuality from poems which Shakespeare apparently wrote to another man on the theme of love. However, the reason why modern critics need to tread carefully around such material is highlighted by the fact that this work uses the same kind of rhetoric that has been considered to be codedly homosexual by other writers. Simpson contends that Shakespeare was influenced by the kind of Platonic thinking which was espoused by the work of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) and Girolamo Benivieni (1453-1542) and that, accordingly, Shakespeare conceived perfect love as being male in form and imperfect love as female. It follows from this that the adherents of this idea would pursue love with 'some young man of generous mind, who enhanced the worth of his virtue by its union with corporeal beauty,' rather than straying 'after herds of loose women, who never raise men to any grade of spiritual perfection.'[218] He describes the impact this intellectual love had on the citizens of ancient Greece; '[w]ith such a chaste love, he [Pico della Mirandola] says, Socrates affected not only Alcibiades, but all the most ingenuous and subtle young Athenians. So Parmenides loved Zeno, Orpheus Musæus, Theophrastus Nicomachus.'[219] All of these named individuals are men. It is easy to see how this could be read by a twenty-first-century audience as promoting homosexuality. Clearly, if one were to look for a coded championing of homosexuality, this privileging of love between males and relating of male/male relationships in ancient Greece, would easily fit such a theory. Yet it is important not to oversimplify, by unsophisticated classification, positions which were subtle and complex.

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[218] Ibid., 17.

[219] Ibid., 17.

Simpson's rhetoric – which is open to misinterpretation – can be found elsewhere in his work, for example when he notes that Shakespeare does not present an idealized portrait of femininity within the *Sonnets*. Simpson states that Shakespeare

> probably resembled Michel Angelo, a man whose life was a dualism, in whom the artist was sharply separated from the house-father and the citizen. Michel Angelo's long correspondence with his nephew turns entirely on domestic matters, without a hint about art or philosophy… If we want the other side of his character, we must turn to his sonnets.[220]

The fact that Simpson brings Michelangelo into the discussion of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is interesting in that it immediately links Shakespeare with a tradition of homoerotic poetry – a link also made by Oscar Wilde during his 1895 trial for gross indecency. Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) composed a vast number of sonnets to different males which have led to the same suspicions of homosexuality levelled at Shakespeare. Michelangelo's grand nephew, Michelangelo the Younger (1568-1646), had republished the sonnets in 1623 with the gender pronouns changed in order to avoid any charge of homosexuality, a change which was not rectified until John Addington Symonds published a translation of the original sonnets in 1893. Despite this, the originals are likely to have been known to the educated community to whom Simpson was writing, as his work includes untranslated quotes in French, Italian and Greek. However, Simpson goes further than just mentioning Michelangelo, in that he overtly equates the two poets. While Simpson is presumably highlighting the Idealist relationships that he sees in both Michelangelo and Shakespeare, the use of the Italian poet in this context is problematic

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[220] Ibid., 23.

and certainly would lend weight to a crude reading of Simpson's work as promotion of homosexual literature.

Simpson goes on, this time using the work of Marsilius Ficinus (1433-99), to state that

> Plato, in the Phædrus, proposes three examples of love: one of woman to man – Alcestis and Admetus; one of man to woman – Orpheus and Eurydice; and the third of man to man – Achilles and Patroclus. In his mind, and, perhaps, in the general Greek notion, the last was the highest love; it was not feminine but masculine beauty that fired the imagination with the glowing sentiment and idealizing passion which was the stimulus of philosophy, and which raised a man above the vulgar and selfish pursuits of life, and even above the fear of death.[221]

The use of Plato might again serve to reinforce any reading of Butler's work as codedly homosexual – as mentioned above, Plato describes Achilles and Patroclus as 'lovers' and is generally accepted as suggesting a homosexual relationship between the two warriors.[222] It is in passages such as this that it begins to become evident that Simpson is not actually promoting what a twenty-first-century reading might see as a homosexual agenda. Primarily, it is made explicit that, despite 'masculine beauty' being the 'idealizing passion,' it is actually being spoken of in terms of Idealist philosophy rather than 'the vulgar and selfish pursuits of life.'[223] The use of 'perhaps' when discussing whether male/male love was the highest love for the Greeks suggests that Simpson was aware of the implications that could arise from an association of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* with Greek culture or Sensualism.

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[221] Ibid., 18.

[222] Plato, 'Symposium', 105, 103.

[223] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 18.

It also becomes clear that Simpson is not using ancient Greek imagery without being aware of the homosexual nature of many Greek relationships when he states that 'the love of man for man can be as ardent as that described in Shakespeare's sonnets, and yet entirely free from Greek corruption.'[224] The fact that he considers the Greek style of love to be corrupt might be enough to show that he is not advocating homosexual relationships, but this also raises the question of why he spends so long discussing the Greeks when, even if it leads to a dismissal of them, it nevertheless associates the *Sonnets* with Greek – that is, homosexual – love. There is further negation of homosexuality when Simpson informs his readers that 'Shakespeare kept his active affections for his wife and children, his home and town, and sought elsewhere for the recipients of his artistic sentiments.'[225] Also, despite numerous illustrations of the fact that there is nothing remotely amiss in Idealised, non-sexual, homointellectual love between two men Simpson further seeks to distance Shakespeare from any imputation of homosexuality by proposing that the *Sonnets* are not actually about a particular individual but are rather Shakespeare's philosophical musings on the idea of love:

> On the first reading of Shakespeare's Sonnets we seem to see only the passionate love for an earthly beauty. The next reading may reveal to us that this love is as much directed to the beauty of the mind as to that of the body. A third reading begins to dim the personal outlines: the object of Shakespeare's love begins to expand into something more general, more universal than the individual friend – something to which immortality and infinity themselves are not strangers.[226]

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[224] Ibid., 18.

[225] Ibid., 24.

[226] Ibid., 35.

Shakespeare, according to Simpson, was exhibiting the way that there can be two different types of love, the Fair Youth representing friendship and the Dark Lady representing carnal desire; '[a]nd Shakespeare tells us that it was his intention to exhibit two such loves.'[227] Not only does this allow Simpson to state that the first 126 sonnets are about the idea of loving love itself rather than about loving a young boy, it also helps him to explain the opening lines of 144Q.[228] While the gender confusion in this sonnet is a frequent problem for any reading of the poems as heterosexual or free from sexual desire altogether, Simpson states that '[t]he two loves answer to friendship and concupiscence, the *amor amicitiæ* and *amor concupiscentice.*'[229]

Simpson notes that there is a certain amount of gender-confusion in intense friendship, this is illustrated when

> In Shakespeare… the lover not only becomes the vassal, as in chivalrous love, but
> he also becomes a woman, he takes a wife's position, the position of one on whom
> all the sacrifices are imposed, whose duty and happiness are self-renunciation, self
> abnegation, perpetual fidelity, and life-long sacrifice.[230]

Again it becomes clear that Simpson is not partaking in a hidden homosexual dialogue because he equates this loss of gender in friendship to the way that religious worshipers are asked to love their god regardless of their gender: 'the Christian man as well as the Christian woman professes himself to be the spouse of the Lord whom he worships.'[231]

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[227] Ibid., 37.

[228]   Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
         Which like to spirits do suggest me still.
         The better angel is a man right fair,
         The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.

    (W. Shakespeare, Sonnet 144Q).

[229] Simpson, *Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 37.

[230] Ibid., 25.

[231] Ibid., 25.

Later he states that 'Mr Gerald Massey's interpretation [of the *Sonnets*] saves Shakespeare's reputation; but these Sonnets are capable of a better vindication. The highest *amor amicitiæ* of which man is capable is directed to God.'[232] Simpson feels that 108Q sees Shakespeare using 'the language of the Lord's Prayer,' while 125Q 'uses the language of an act still more solemn than prayer, the oblation of the Eucharist.' [233] Even to suggest that Shakespeare had an extramarital affair is not acceptable to Simpson and he states that '[i]nterpreted biographically of the poet and his friend, the story is shocking.'[234] Simpson states that such an affair would be 'improbable in the highest degree' because Shakespeare would not have talked about himself in a sonnet, thus leaving himself open to 'vulgar scandal.'[235] He does discuss Gerald Massey's theory that sonnets 40-2Q are written as though by Elizabeth Vernon to Elizabeth Rich but decides that there is no supporting evidence, '[b]ut in our own theory they fall most naturally into place.'[236] The reason why Shakespeare has written sonnets which suggest the sharing of a mistress by the two male protagonists is so that he can explore the theme of love; it is a literary device. It certainly appears that Richard Simpson was not advocating (either overtly or covertly) a homosexual reading of either Shakespeare or the *Sonnets*. Further to this, Simpson was a pious Roman Catholic and, while obviously not conclusive evidence of anything on its own, this does lend weight to his theory being genuinely one of a homointellectual connection rather than rhetoric which was intended to be read in two ways by two different audiences. [237]

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[232] Ibid., 58.

[233] Ibid., 68.

[234] Ibid., 57.

[235] Ibid., 57.

[236] Ibid., 57.

[237] There is some confusion regarding the exact nature of Simpson's Catholicism: Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells refer to him as 'a Roman Catholic priest' (Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 173), although it appears that he had married some years prior to his conversion to Catholicism, and was thus unable to join the clergy. Richard's younger brother, Robert, seems to have been the only priest in the family. See, Josef L.

It seems clear, then, that the dual code which Dowling and Sawyer highlight elsewhere in Victorian literature is not evident in Simpson's writing and he does not seem to be an alone among those writing about the *Sonnets* at this time. A return to Gerald Massey – with whom Simpson takes issue – reinforces this point. It would certainly be possible for a modern critic to read Gerald Massey's *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted* as a text with a double meaning. In talking about the relationship between the Poet and the Fair Youth, Massey notes that, '[t]hey [the Elizabethans] make it possible to our hard national nature that the love of man to man may be at times "passing the love of woman."'[238] The use of this kind of language could be seen to suggest that Massey is pursuing a homosexual agenda if the reader were not open to the complexities of nineteenth-century sexual thought. Certainly a passage such as the one claiming that Mr W. H. is Henry Wriothesley, could easily be accepted as providing an undisguised endorsement of sexual attraction between two males; '[t]he youth whom the poet first saw in all his semi-feminine freshness of the proverbial "sweet seventeen" and afterwards celebrated as a "sweet boy," "lovely boy," "a beauteous and lovely youth," a pattern for rather than a copy of Adonis, corresponds perfectly with Southampton in his seventeenth year.'[239] Similarly, a twenty-first-century reader might take it to be homosexuality which is on Massey's mind when he states that 115Q illustrates how 'Shakspeare had before said he loved his friend so much it was impossible for him to love the Earl more dearly. Because, at the time of saying so, he could neither see nor foresee reason why that flame of his love should afterwards burn

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Altholz, *Simpson, Richard (1820–1876)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25590, 7 Jan 2006), and Damian McElrath, *Richard Simpson, 1820-1876: a Study in XIXth Century English Liberal Catholicism*, (Louvain: Bureau de la R.H.E. Bibliothèque de l'Université, Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1972), 2, 30.

[238] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 98.

[239] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 52.

clearer, or soar up more strongly.'[240] Later however, Southampton's imprisonment by Queen Elizabeth 'serves to make him [Shakspeare] pour forth his love in a larger measure, and he now sees why he ought not to have said he could not love him more.'[241] As with Simpson, the coded discourse that some modern scholars have claimed is operating elsewhere in the nineteenth century is not at work here.

Massey feels that such uninhibited displays of emotion were what afforded a writer such as Shakespeare the materials from which to craft his characters; '[t]he Elizabethans had more naked nature for Shakespeare to draw; he was as fortunate in the habits of his time as the Greek sculptors were in the freedom of Greek dress.'[242] Massey mentions relationships between men, laments that emotion and feeling are not given as free a reign in his own time, and cites ancient Greece as a positive example of the benefits of sensitivity. Yet Massey's biography suggests that the views being espoused here are more of the Idealist than Sensualist school. Born into extreme poverty, and working in a mill from the age of eight, Massey was a deeply religious man and a vociferous champion of Christian Socialism. After the death of his first wife, with whom he fathered four children, Massey remarried and this marriage produced a further five children.[243] These biographical details do not necessarily signify that Massey was not homosexual (and nor does his sexuality dictate the agenda of his work), yet it seems that his writing is heterosexual in tone. Indeed, when Massey claims that the early sonnets' apparent urging for the Fair Youth to marry 'is no mere sonneteering trick, or playing with the shadows of things,' it is because Shakespeare 'knows well that there is nothing

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[240] Ibid., 212.

[241] Ibid., 212.

[242] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 96.

[243] See Sidney Lee and Sayoni Basu, *Massey, (Thomas) Gerald (1828–1907)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34920, 1 Feb 2006).

like true marriage, a worthy wife, the love of children, and a happy home, to bring the exuberant life into the keeping of the highest, holiest law.'[244]

Other parts of Massey's book on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* further suggest that he would not have supported a reading of the poems as showing anything other than a homointellectual friendship between the Poet and the Fair Youth. On the subject of the disparity in social status between the two men, which could be said to preclude any friendship between them, Massey states that the Fair Youth 'would be more likely to think of the Scripture text, that reminds us not to be forgetful of entertaining strangers, for they may be the angels of God in disguise, rather than be troubled with thoughts and suggestions of his being only a poor player.'[245] Later Massey comes to openly refute any suggestion of a homosexual connection between the pair, although he is careful not to describe any such relationship explicitly. In attempting to show that the affiliation between the Poet and the Fair Youth must have been a close one, Massey announces that all critics of the *Sonnet*s must share the same view; those who believe 'that Shakspeare and his young friend both shared one mistress must assume that the intimacy was one of great nearness.'[246] Similarly, '[t]hose who accept the coarsest reading of the 20th sonnet must admit that the poet was on very familiar terms with the earl to address him in the low loose language which they have attributed to him by their modern rather than Elizabethian [*sic*.] reading.'[247] It is interesting here that Massey mentions two theories he evidently disagrees with in order to back up his own. This is a clear example of Massey's desperation to present Shakespeare in a certain way. Having dismissed the idea that Shakespeare would have had a mistress or that he would have partaken in a coarse (and this must mean sexual) relationship with Wriothesley, Massey continues:

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[244] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 108.

[245] Ibid., 98.

[246] Ibid., 103.

[247] Ibid., 103.

> My interpretation supposes a nearness equally great, a personal intimacy equally
> secret, but as pure as theirs [the other critics'] is gross, as noble as theirs is ignoble,
> as natural as theirs is unnatural. An intimacy which does not strain all probability in
> assuming it to have been close enough for Shakspeare to write dramatic sonnets on
> his friend's love and courtship, as it does to suppose the poet wrote sonnets to
> proclaim their mutual disgrace, and perpetuate his own sin and shame.[248]

It is clear that describing a physical relationship between the two men as gross, ignoble, and unnatural is not supportive of such a reading and Massey later calls the possible homosexuality 'a criminal relationship.'[249]

When discussing sonnet 51Q Massey forcefully states that '[i]t is only intellectual eunuchs who could imagine that men ever dream of one another in the night-season, and fear lest their mate may be stolen, and write of their jealousy by day in this fashion!'[250] The fact that Massey equates the proponents of a homosexual Shakespeare to neutered men is interesting, as is the possible reading of his later labelling of such writers as originating from ancient Greece. In a slightly less scathing attack Massey concedes that '[m]en may do such things as have been surmised of Shakspeare and his friend, but only Cretins assume that he would have put them into Sonnets to "please these curious days."'[251] It is likely that Massey meant nothing other than that only the truly obtuse would disagree with his own view of the *Sonnets* – and the term cretin has a confused etymology that possibly has no connection at all with the Greek island, rather originating from the Alpine French 'chretien' meaning simple. However, the acknowledgement of 'personal intimacy' between men and the allusions to ancient

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[248] Ibid., 103-4.

[249] Ibid., 330.

[250] Massey, *The Secret Drama of Shakspeare's Sonnets*, 146.

[251] Ibid., 114 (the quotation, uncited by Massey, is from 38Q).

Greece in Massey's work show that such devices do not necessarily signal that a piece is homoerotic or part of a homosexual discourse (coded or otherwise). Instead it can be seen that the debates about Shakespeare and *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in the nineteenth century were nuanced and that the moral beliefs which were presented in these works were similarly complex. Rather than seek to find easy categorisations for such literary pursuits, a more sophisticated understanding is called for.

The comment by Massey that the Elizabethans allowed for the possibility 'that the love of man to man may be at times "passing the love of woman,"' was echoed in a work published thirty-three years later, in 1899.[252] Towards the end of his introduction to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Samuel Butler, (as seen on p. 245 above) makes the following statement:

> One word more. Fresh from the study of the other great work in which the love that passeth the love of women is portrayed as nowhere else save in the Sonnets [Butler had published his first book *The Authoress of the Odyssey* in 1897], I cannot but be struck by the fact that it is in the two greatest of all poets that we find this subject treated with the greatest intensity of feeling. The marvel however, is this, that whereas the love of Achilles for Patroclus depicted by the Greek poet is purely English, absolutely without taint or alloy of any kind, the love of the English poet for Mr W. H. was, though only for a short time, more Greek than English. I cannot explain this.[253]

His description of the 'the love that passeth the love of women' is starkly reminiscent of the way Oscar Wilde described the 'love that dare not speak its name' during his trial

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[252] Massey, *Shakspeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*, 98.

[253] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 122.

for gross indecency in 1895.[254] As Butler is writing four years after Wilde was convicted of sodomy, and using very similar language, it might be claimed by some modern scholars as a codified reference to homosexuality. The depiction of a love that passes the love of women is an allusion to *2 Samuel* 1.26 in which David mourns the loss of Jonathan, whose love he describes in these terms. The relationship between David and Jonathan is, like the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, open to interpretation as to whether or not it is homosexual. There are certainly incidents of what could be interpreted as innuendo – such as the initial meeting between the two at *1 Samuel* 18.1-5 where the Bible states that 'the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul' – although there is no explicit statement of homosexuality. As with the ancient Greek imagery then, the use of *Samuel* in this context allows for Butler's work to be read by modern scholars in ways he may not have intended.

Butler's work has been seen as being a championing of homosexuality, and Elinor Shaffer feels that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* 'was undoubtedly a gesture of solidarity with Oscar Wilde… There were a number of such gestures at the time, more or less explicit.'[255] Butler's work was indeed similar to Oscar Wilde's 1889 article 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' in that both suggested a contender for the Fair Youth of the poems who was identified by the surname Hughes. Wilde's 'theory' – and how seriously it was intended is impossible to tell – could be read as a codified homosexual discourse, with its references to Hughes' 'golden hair, his tender flower-like grace, his dreamy deep-sunken eyes, his delicate mobile limbs, and his white lily hands.'[256] There are numerous comments about the effeminacy of the protagonists and it would be easy to read much

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[254] *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Hyde, 236.

[255] Elinor Shaffer, *Butler, Samuel (1835–1902)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32217, 25 Oct 2005).

[256] Oscar Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 146 (July 1889), 15.

into the description of 'a particular young man whose personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with a terrible joy and no less terrible despair.'[257] Yet Horst Schroeder has convincingly demonstrated that the vast majority of Wilde's readers 'saw no harm in the story and discussed it not from the point of view of morality, or rather immorality, but in the first place from the point of view of Shakespearean criticism.'[258] This being the case, it is far from certain that the readers of Butler's work would necessarily have treated it any differently to Wilde's. Even taking into account the intervening six years, Wilde's arrest, and the similarity of language between Butler's work and Wilde's court appearance, modern scholarship needs to be open to the idea that Butler's theory would also have been considered as a straightforward piece of Shakespeare scholarship.

One issue that is interesting in Butler's use of ancient Greece, is the fact that he describes the love between Achilles and Patroclus in *The Iliad* as being 'purely English,' while the love he sees as depicted in the autobiography within *Shakespeare's Sonnets* between the Poet and the Fair Youth is 'though only for a short time, more Greek than English.'[259] There are a number of possibilities as to why Butler phrases his description in this way and the ambiguity concerning the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus has already been noted in this chapter (see pp. 255-7 above). Yet, as has been seen earlier in this thesis, while Butler appears to acknowledge that there was a homosexual relationship between the Poet and Fair Youth he also describes such a relationship as 'a malignant cancer' which is clearly not promoting homosexuality and also states that the story played-out in the *Sonnets* is 'throughout painful and in parts

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[257] Ibid.
      See also Russell Jackson, 'Oscar Wilde and Shakespeare's Secrets', in *In the Footsteps of Queen Victoria*, ed. Christa Jansohn, (London: LIT Verlag, 2003).

[258] Schroeder, *Composition, Publication and Reception*, 15.

[259] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 122.

repulsive,' calling the incident 'Shakespeare's grave indiscretion.'[260] Butler, despite the fact that he is prepared to admit to Shakespeare's homosexuality, is evidently keen that there should be regret, and even disgust, from the poet. He asks whether it is

> likely that there was ever afterwards a day in his life in which the remembrance of that "night of woe" did not at some time or another rise up before him and stab? Nay, is it not quite likely that this great shock may in the end have brought him prematurely to the grave?[261]

Clearly, while it would be possible for some modern scholars to view Butler's apparent acceptance of a relationship between the Poet and the Fair Youth as a promotion of homosexuality, the fact that he suggests that a homosexual relationship was the cause of Shakespeare's death – combined with the language of 'taint,' 'alloy,' and 'cancer' – certainly implies that Butler is not advocating such behaviour. Butler's willingness to accept the possibility of homosexuality in the *Sonnets*, and his desire to show that it was only just excusable if occurring to a young Shakespeare, who even then was haunted by it for the rest of his life, provides an explanation as to why Butler describes the relationship as more Greek than English. It would seem that Butler, rather than promoting homosexuality is, in reality, condemning it while also promoting the idea of the English nation. Thus the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad* is described as English because it is Idealised and non-sexual while the 'repulsive' Sensualist relationship in the *Sonnets* is Greek. [262] By assigning nationalities to the respective relationships and then mixing them up, Butler can separate the idea of strong homosexuality from the National poet, and is able to create sufficient distance between

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[260] Ibid., 84, 87.

[261] Ibid., 87.

[262] Ibid., 84.

Shakespeare and this subject matter for it to become less threatening. Shakespeare is rescued from anything other than a brief, regretted, homosexual liaison – by one of the few writers willing not to ignore the possibility – and England is promoted as something manly and honourable, while a foreign nation is denigrated.

In the examples of Simpson, Massey and Butler it can be seen that, despite the temptation to read them in a twenty-first-century manner as delivering a codified promotion of alternative sexuality, the use of ancient Greek imagery actually betrays a more complex relationship with the *Sonnets*. The linking of nationalism with morality is clear as these writers seek to make a national icon with a suitably heterosexual (and homointellectual) persona. The confusion here betrays a certain anxiety about the best way to achieve this and a desperation to make Shakespeare fit. Nineteenth-century readings of the *Sonnets* have not only been thought of as utilising the poems for a counter-discourse however; other writers have been criticised for attempting to sanitise the *Sonnets* despite displaying a similar reliance on ancient Greece. F. T. Palgrave's (1824-97) *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare* uses a number of ancient Greek and Latin epigraphs to the *Sonnets*: 107Q, for example, is 'Amor contra mundum' [Love Against the World], and another is 'De Profundis' [Out of the Depths]. One feature of Palgrave's edition is that none of the sonnets are numbered but rather have explanatory titles; so for example, 1Q is labelled 'To his friend that he should marry,' and 11Q is 'A man's duty.' There are, however, a number of odd features about Palgrave's edition which do appear contradictory. It would seem that Palgrave's intention is to obscure any morally unsettling elements of the *Sonnets* by the fact that he removes four of the most problematic; 20Q, 151Q, 153Q, and 154Q. The reason for these omissions is presumably because 20Q is ambiguous in its mention of the Poet's 'master mistress' and so can be read as homoerotic, while 151Q is fairly explicit in its evocation of physical

love triumphing over the soul and uses imagery which can easily be seen to represent an erect and thrusting phallus. 153Q and 154Q both appear to play on an ancient Greek epigram written by Marianus Scholasticus (printed in the *Planudean Anthology*, Florence, 1494), which tells of the spread of venereal disease among Eros' nymphs.[263] Palgrave would almost certainly have been in a position to understand the innuendo of the first two sonnets he ignores, and his knowledge of ancient Greece, as well as any reading he would have carried out of contemporary *Sonnets*-based literary pursuits, would have made known to him the unsavoury basis for the final two sonnets. Yet, what at first looks like a simple case of censorship – Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, in their 2004 *Shakespeare's Sonnets* claim that Palgrave had 'bowdlerized' the *Sonnets* – becomes more complex as Palgrave's edition also contains the sort of language and features that might be expected in a work which actually celebrated a homosexual reading of the *Sonnets*.[264]

As already noted, Palgrave makes frequent recourse to ancient Greece in his edition, so he must have assumed that his readership would be similarly able to read ancient Greek. Yet such an audience would be far more likely to have knowledge of the dubious nature of 153Q and 154Q than a less educated readership. Similarly, Palgrave appears to embrace the Greek culture out of which many of the moral problems of the *Sonnets* originate. Sonnet 144Q, for example, is titled 'Eros and Anteros' by Palgrave.[265] As already noted on p. 263 above, Sonnet 144Q is one of the more problematic of

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[263] This had been announced by Wilhelm Hertzberg (1813-79) in 1878, and was sufficiently well known for John Churton Collins (1848-1908) to state, in 1903, that a source 'so obvious was not likely to have waited till 1878 for a German scholar to discover. It had… often been pointed out, and indeed, was so notorious that Dr. Wellesley in his *Anthologia Polyglotta* (1849), 63, printed sonnet CLIV, without any remark, underneath the Greek original, as one of the versions.' (J. Churton Collins, 'Had Shakespeare Read The Greek Tragedies?' *Fortnightly Review,* 73 N.S. (May 1903), 848 n.). Admittedly, as Rollins notes, there had been some confusion as to the exact origin of the original quote, but the connection with the epigram and the connotation of venereal disease was not in dispute. See *The Sonnets*, ed. Rollins, 392-3.

[264] Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 121.

[265] *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, ed. Palgrave, 199.

Shakespeare's Sonnets in that it appears to acknowledge a bisexual relationship between the Poet, Fair Youth, and Dark Lady ('Two loves I have… | The better angel is a man right fair, | The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.'). While any autobiographical reading of the *Sonnets* would obviously take these lines as a factual representation of the relationship, it is possible to read them as metaphorical, and it would appear that this is what Palgrave is doing in citing the two figures from ancient Greek mythology. By placing Eros (or Love), and Anteros (a more obscure figure who is represented as Eros' brother, and 'Mutual Love,' or 'Love Returned') as the title of the Sonnet, Palgrave makes the poem an allegory where the 'Two loves' are representations of emotion rather than specific individuals.[266]

However, the illustrations that Palgrave has chosen are problematic if his intention was to censor or avoid any insinuation of homosexuality. The stories of Eros and Anteros are suffused with homoerotic imagery: for example in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* he notes that an altar was erected in the Academy at Athens in dedication to Anteros. The reason for this was

> because Meles, an Athenian, scorning a foreign resident Timagoras, who loved
> him, bade him go up to the top of the rock and throw himself down. Timagoras,
> reckless of his life, and wishing to gratify the lad in everything, went and threw
> himself down. But when Meles saw Timagoras dead, he was seized with such
> remorse that he leaped from the same rock and perished.[267]

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[266] Aelian, *On The Characteristics of Animals*, vol. 3, trans. A. F. Scholfield, LOEB Classical Library, 3 vols., (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1959), 195.

[267] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vol. 1, trans. J. G. Frazer 6 vols., (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1913), 47, The alters of Eros and Anteros are also mentioned in Nonos, *Dionysiaca: Books 36-48*, vol. 3, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, LOEB Classical Library, 3 vols., (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1942), 397.

So the Anteros myth has its origins in the homosexual desire that existed between two men. Later in Pausanias, part of the Academy at Elis is described: 'in one of the wrestling-schools is a relief showing Love [Eros] and Love Returned [Anteros] as he is called. Love holds a palm-branch, and Love Returned is trying to take the palm-branch from him.'[268] Unlike the tale of Meles and Timagoras, there is no suggestion of love between Eros and Anteros but the idea of two young Greeks grappling is, certainly from a twenty-first-century perspective, open to homosexual interpretation. Indeed, Michael Grant and John Hazel have noted that, in the classical period, Anteros was 'often regarded as the protector of homosexual love between men and youths.'[269] At the very least these problems are enough to raise the question of why Palgrave chose to use such imagery for his supposedly 'bowdlerized' *Sonnets*.

The linking of Shakespeare with the culture of ancient Greece is strengthened when Palgrave explicitly associates Shakespeare with the writers of classical Greece and Rome; stating that 'we know little more of Shakespeare himself than we do of Homer. Like several of the greatest men, – Lucretius, Virgil, Tacitus, Dante, – a mystery never to be dispelled hangs over his life.'[270] Palgrave also does not shy away from the fact that the majority of the poems were addressed to a male friend and his quite impartial and well-researched notes on the *Sonnets*, appended to the volume, further complicate the idea that he was presenting a sanitised version of the poems. Having stated that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are in essence autobiographical, Palgrave comments that 'we cannot understand how our great and gentle Shakespeare could have submitted himself to such passions; we have hardly courage to think that he really endured them. Yet

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[268] Pausanias, *Description of Greece: Books 6-8*, vol. 3, trans. W. H. S. Jones, LOEB Classical Library, 4 vols., (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1954), 145.

[269] *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*, ed. Michael Grant and John Hazel, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), 165.

[270] *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, ed. Palgrave, 238.

reality appears stamped on the Sonnets…'[271] The 'passions' that Palgrave talks of here do not necessarily indicate that he saw a homosexual relationship within the poems; as has already been seen, a number of other commentators also appear to lament the strong feelings or passions which the Poet apparently has for the Dark Lady, but this does not easily fit with the idea of Palgrave's edition as being censored. Palgrave further uses Shakespeare's greater sensitivity and difference to other men to explain the strength of the emotion displayed in the *Sonnets*: it is simply that Shakespeare feels emotions more strongly than most people. So '[a] sensitiveness unexperienced by lesser men exalts every feeling to a range beyond ordinary sympathies. Friendship blazes into passion. The furnace of love is seven times heated.'[272] Not that Palgrave necessarily wants to construct a Shakespeare who was permanently subject to the lack of control hinted at here, rather 'there is a pleasure also in the belief, that this phase of feeling was transient, and that the sanity which, not less than ecstasy, is an especial attribute of the great poet, returned to [Shakespeare].'[273]

The details of Palgrave's own life cast doubt upon the straightforwardness of classifying his work as censorial for, while there are elements which appear to support his character as being morally strict, he also mixed in circles which were irreverent. J. W. Mackail, in the *DNB* (1901) described Palgrave's childhood as taking place 'amid an atmosphere of high artistic culture and strenuous thought,' leading to a 'gravity and sensibility beyond his years [which] was further reinforced by the fervid anglo-catholicism of his family.'[274] Palgrave was evidently affected by this and a slightly

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[271] Ibid., 241.

[272] Ibid., 242.

[273] Ibid., 243.

[274] J. W. Mackail, *Palgrave, Francis Turner (1824–1897)*, Dictionary of National Biography, 1901, (Oxford University Press 2004–5, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21157/21157?back=,21158, 9 Nov 2005). Further to this, an 1899 memoir of Palgrave, by his daughter, noted that he was 'Always imbued with strictly church principles,' and

virtuous streak appears to have stayed with him; Megan Nelson Otton notes how 'when Tennyson died in 1892, Palgrave immediately offered to help his widow, Emily, and their son, Hallam, to "edit" Tennyson's papers. Appointing himself one of the guardians of Tennyson's reputation, he helped burn nearly 30,000 letters, including all those to Tennyson from Arthur Hallam.'[275] This act of Palgrave's has an interesting bearing in his behaviour regarding the *Sonnets* despite the fact that *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare* had originally been published some twenty-seven years previously. Although it is now generally accepted that there was no overt homosexual relationship between Tennyson and Hallam, it seems likely to have been the suggestion of a morally ambiguous relationship which led Palgrave to destroy Tennyson's correspondence.

Yet Otton also records 'Palgrave's friendships with artists, particularly the Pre-Raphaelites' and this shows him to have been among the turning tide of Victorian moralists (see p. 198 n. 56 above).[276] It is interesting that Palgrave was closely associated with a group of artists who perhaps fifty years previously would have been condemned for their overt sensuality; this fact, even if seen as indicative of a shift in the attitudes of society as a whole, undoubtedly problematises the idea of Palgrave's edition as being simply bowdlerised. Certainly there seemed to be some confusion about Palgrave's edition among some of his contemporaries; S. Smith Travers, in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: To Whom were they Addressed?* (1881), notes the bowdlerisation of certain editions of the *Sonnets* and expresses his 'sorrow for the mutilated reproductions of our Shakespeare,' he then goes on to single out F. T. Palgrave's 1865 edition, which is 'to be regretted,' due to the fact that 'when examined,

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'much influenced by the Tractarian movement.' Gwenllian F. Palgrave, *Francis Turner Palgrave: His Journals and Memories of His Life*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 2.

[275] Megan Nelson Otton, *Palgrave, Francis Turner (1824–1897)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, (Oxford University Press, Last Update Available: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21158, 9 Nov 2005).

[276] Ibid., Last Update.

there is a manipulation throughout that must be painful to every lover of Shakespeare.'[277] This would appear to be a straightforward example of Palgrave's peers seeing his work as censorial. However, the reason for Travers' dismay is not entirely clear; despite seeming to baulk at the moralistic reasons behind Palgrave's omissions, claiming that '[t]here is Jesuitry about his [Palgrave's] edition of the songs and sonnets' it would seem that it is precisely the hints of homosexuality, that have already been seen, which is really what bothers Travers.[278] Indignantly asking '[h]ow dare he, or any man, thus injure our Shakespeare?' Travers continues:

> shall I sit by and let such imputations as are conveyed with much skilfulness, by Mr Palgrave, pass unnoticed, and not hurl one stone of reproach at him? We Englishmen owe Shakespeare a debt of gratitude too incalculably great for any one who has read him, and has the courage of his opinions, to acquiesce indifferently in those oblique aspersions.[279]

It is unclear exactly to what Travers is alluding here as he just talks about 'imputations' and 'oblique aspersions,' but it seems that he takes from Palgrave's edition the parts which suggest Shakespeare may have had a homosexual relationship. Travers is evidently not concerned by the fact that Shakespeare had a heterosexual extra-marital affair, as is clear from his own theory regarding to whom *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are addressed:

> The secret of the sonnets, of the one hundred and twenty-six in question, is simple.
> They were addressed to his son. Not a son by Anne Hathaway, but to an

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[277] Travers, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: To Whom were they Addressed?*, 8.

[278] Ibid., 8.

[279] Ibid., 8-9, 9.

illegitimate one by some other woman – the evidence would go to show, by some

woman of high rank.[280]

Thus, if he is unconcerned by extramarital sex, the only other 'imputations' or 'aspersions' which Travers can be finding fault with in the *Sonnets* are hints of a homosexual relationship. It seems as though Travers is unable to decide whether the edition by Palgrave is puritanically bowdlerised, or transgressively suggestive. The likely answer, as with Simpson and Butler earlier, is that Palgrave was being neither, but was advocating a relationship between males which is open to being misread and oversimplified – this explains the ancient Greek references as well as the desire to move away from homoeroticism. Palgrave was a close friend of a number of notable figures of the time including Matthew Arnold, Arthur Clough (1819-61), Alfred Tennyson, and Benjamin Jowett (with whom he travelled to Paris 1848 to witness the revolution), and he followed Arnold and John Campbell Shairp (1819-85) as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1885. Four years after his death the *DNB* described him as 'one of those men whose distinction and influence consist less in creative power than in that appreciation of the best things which is the highest kind of criticism, and in the habit of living, in all matters of both art and life, at the highest standard.'[281] Palgrave's proximity to figures such as Arnold and Jowett links him to the late nineteenth century resurgence of Hellenism and Idealism that viewed male/male relationships as homointellectual rather than homosexual and it is this, rather than a reading of either moral rigidity or subversion, which best explains the apparent paradoxes in his work.

A final example of the use of ancient Greek imagery in order to promote the homointellectual in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* will serve to show that such activity was not

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[280] Ibid., 13.

[281] Mackail, *Palgrave, Francis Turner (1824–1897)*, Last Update.

restricted to the upper strata of nineteenth-century literary pursuits. Ancient Greek allusions and seemingly homoerotic promotion can also be found in the bizarre theory of F. A. White, who felt that Mr W. H. was William Hathaway Jr., the son of Anne's brother, who got Anne to entrap Shakespeare so that he would be free to court Susannah [*sic*.] Hamnet – Susannah being Shakespeare's first love. As he watched this child – to whom Shakespeare was made godfather – grow into an adolescent resembling the mother he had at one time desired, Shakespeare wrote the *Sonnets*, and it was during a visit to see his uncle William Shakespeare in London that William Hathaway Jr. was seduced by the Dark Lady. This is all fairly fantastical and it is not entirely clear whether White intended the theory to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, there are similarities with what has already been seen in this chapter; for example, White alludes to the Greek myth of Cænis and Cæneus, stating that

> In Shakespeare's time boys acted the women's parts. As playwright, actor, and manager then, it was perfectly natural in Shakespeare to regard the boy as merely acting the part of Cænis and addressing him as a Romeo would address a boy-Juliet, or an Orlando a boy-Rosalind, although never for a moment forgetting that he *was* a boy.[282]

This blurs the lines of gender definition, and the reference to Cænis is also interesting. The story is related in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*: Poseidon raped Cænis and offered her anything that she wanted in return, whereupon Cænis wished to be transformed into an invincible male warrior so that she 'may never again be able to suffer so.'[283] Poseidon duly granted the wish and Cænis became Cæneus. White goes on:

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[282] *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, ed. Palgrave, 234.

[283] Ovid, *Metamorphosis: Books 9-15*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, ed. T. E. Page, LOEB Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1946), 195.

> The curious conception of Orlando's sham love-making with Ganymede whom he
> *believes* to be a boy yet *feels* to be a girl can only have been begotten from our
> poet's idyllic love making with the Cænis-Cæneus, from fifteen to eighteen, the
> period between which the sonnets range.[284]

Not only does White introduce the idea of gender confusion through the Greek myth, but he openly states that the inspiration for *As You Like It* would have come from Shakespeare's 'idyllic love making' with the adolescent boy/girl. Thus he presents a story of love which transgresses heterosexual gender norms and seems to promote homosexual love. White describes how '[a]t seventeen he [William Hathaway Jr.] seemed just as Ganymedeanly "ever ageless" as at fifteen.'[285] It seems that White has moved away from the Ganymede of *As You Like It*, and into Greek mythology as, in Homer's *Iliad*, Ganymedes – the son of Tros, King of Troy – was considered the 'fairest of mortal men; and the gods caught him up on high to be the cupbearer to Zeus because of his beauty, so that he might dwell with the immortals.'[286] This can certainly be read by modern critics as homosexual and M. C. Howatson and Ian Chilvers note that the Latin form of Ganymede is Catamitus, from which the pejorative noun 'Catamite' derives.[287]

While the idea of a beautiful boy who is abducted by the gods, combined with the Caeneus/Caenis imagery, might, from a twenty-first-century viewpoint, suggest a homosexual agenda, White's work can also be seen to have a strong homointellectual element. Howatson and Chilvers also note that in 'the Middle Ages he [Ganymede]

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[284] White, "'Mr W. H.'", 234.

[285] Ibid. 240.

[286] Homer, *Iliad: Books 13-24*, 383.

[287] M. C. Howatson and Ian Chilvers, *Oxford Concise Companion to Classical Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 'Ganymede'.

typified homosexual love, but during the Renaissance his ascent to Zeus symbolized for some the soul's ascent to the absolute.'[288] The fact that Ganymede could be seen as a representation of spiritual love suggests that White's agenda was not necessarily to promote homosexuality. White further asserts that an angel would be able to see that the male sex is 'as naturally superior to the other in beauty as the lion is to the lioness, the antlered buck to the doe, the peacock to the peahen, and the male to the female glow-worm.'[289] Essentially White is here extolling the virtues and beauty of males over females. When talking about Idealised beauty, White notes that 'the poet that is incapable of this conception of absolute beauty in all its shapes, whether woman, boy, child, flower, or butterfly, is no poet at all, and the reader that is incapable of it should put Shakespeare's Sonnets back on the shelf.'[290]

White is portraying a Shakespeare who partakes in heterosexual relationships with some gusto, which suggests that this is not as straightforward as a homosexual reading of the *Sonnets*. Clearly there are no qualms about portraying Shakespeare as an individual who is sexual and who has an extramarital affair – he mentions Shakespeare's 'conjugal infidelity' to Anne Hathaway.[291] White also speaks of 'vilest two-fold adultery' and the 'loathsome sin' which attended Shakespeare's extramarital relationship with the Dark Lady.[292] He mentions the 'worthless siren' who is the Dark Lady, and the 'utter scorn' which she deserves.[293] Indeed the Idealised homointellectual ideal of love is signalled when White explains the relationship between Shakespeare and his nephew:

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[288] Ibid., 234.

[289] White, '"Mr W. H."', 234.

[290] Ibid., 235.

[291] Ibid. 241.

[292] Ibid. 241.

[293] Ibid. 241.

The next lines are accordingly addressed not to his lover but to his friend, using the words in the sense of the day ; lover, one that loves, not bound to do so by ties of affinity (not kindred); friend, that loves being so bound. Thus young Hathaway was Shakespeare's love, and Shakespeare his lover, as being the Cæneus-Cænis, the perfect image of the beloved of his youth; he was Shakespeare's friend, as being his godchild, his namesake, his nephew by marriage, and the child he had half-adopted in the place of his dead Hamnet. He was not his kinsman at all, for then he could not have been his "lover."[294]

The reader is presented with a love that is more familial and intellectual than erotic or sensual. Far from being easily classified as fully Idealist or Sensualist, White's work contains elements of both but appears ultimately to subscribe to a rather misogynist Idealised homointellectualism. As has been seen throughout this thesis there is a strong trend of denigrating the female and this is certainly present in the language White uses to discuss Anne Hathaway and the Dark Lady. To be sure, as a piece of serious scholarly research, White's "'Mr W. H.'" is not of a particularly high standard; proving that *Troilus and Cressida* was written to depict part of what White sees as occurring in the *Sonnets*, White states '[o]f the connection between Troilus and Cressida and the visit of young Hathaway and his mother to London, we have two further proofs. The Sonnets and the Troilus were both published in the same year (1609) and they were both written in the same key.'[295] Yet, despite the difference in standard of scholarship between

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[294] Ibid., 239.

[295] Ibid., 238.
However, when considering how seriously F. A. White may have intended his article to be taken, and the fact that he seems to have conjectured a story that is quite bizarre concerning Shakespeare and those around him, it is only fair to note that highly respected scholars such as Frederick Fleay, who is perhaps the most commonly cited example of dry scholarship in the nineteenth century were also guilty of conjectural readings of the Sonnets. In 'On the Motive of Shakspere's Sonnets (1-125): a Defence of his Morality,' for example, Fleay makes statements such as 'At the date 1596 (when I suppose these Sonnets to have been written), Shakspere had certainly been an actor some years,' when there is no evidence to back-up either of these claims. See F. G. Fleay,

White's work and that of Palgrave, Butler, or Simpson, it can be seen that there was a commonality of ancient Greek imagery and promotion of homointellectualism between works with such widely differing approaches. It is interesting that *Troilus and Cressida* is again referenced here as it is the only play of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* to present the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. The play evidently had a particular resonance for the later Victorians as it witnessed something of a resurgence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Despite there being only one edition in the previous century – J. Tonson's 1734 edition – there were five editions published in the 1800s; and all were in the second half of the century, in 1850, 1863, 1868, 1886 and 1889 (see Appendix One). It would seem that the growing interest in ancient Greece, the Achilles and Patroclus relationship, and Shakespeare's handling of these literary histories extended beyond the *Sonnets* and into the plays.

That literary pursuits on the *Sonnets* do not conform to the codified sexual subversion or 'Victorian' censorship seen by modern scholars elsewhere in literature of the period suggests that reading the *Sonnets* from a twenty-first-century perspective can obscure the complexities which are really at work. This also supports Brady's view of the nineteenth century as a time of overlooked sophistication in terms of male sexuality. Similarly the recourse to ancient Greek imagery in writings about the *Sonnets* allowed for the discussion of notions of male/male intellectual relationships and confirms the prominence of anxieties about the state of the nation and the moral condition of its people at this time. Again it has been seen in this chapter that overriding, homogenous, attitudes towards nationalism and moralism are manifested in the nineteenth-century literary pursuits which focus on Shakespeare. The fact that such concerns are also present within writings about one single section of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* shows that

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'On the Motive of Shakspere's Sonnets (1-125): a Defence of his Morality', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 31 (March 1875), 436.

these were major issues for the nineteenth-century educated readerships of these works. The variety of approaches to the broad themes of nationalism and moralism shows that, rather than such concepts being simply fixed and promoted through Shakespeare, the Shakespeare phenomenon functioned as a site within which ideas and perspectives could be presented and debated. The *Sonnets* appear to have represented a useful part of the Shakespeare phenomenon, for those wishing to deploy it, because they were just as malleable as the rest of his works. Indeed, the uncertainty surrounding Shakespeare and the *Sonnets* encapsulates the freedom which allowed writers to construct their own version of Shakespeare. This is because the poems' lyric nature provides a tantalising insight into Shakespeare's life, while providing enough malleability to enable a writer to construct a Shakespeare which would support their particular argument. Moreover it is certainly construction that is happening: these literary pursuits may include a wide variety of different theories, philosophies and agendas but the one thing that they all share is the fact that a particular Shakespeare needs to be created in order to reinforce any arguments that are being presented. Indeed, the upturn in writing about the *Sonnets* may in part be explained by their tempting proximity to Shakespeare and the attendant opportunity for writers to try and legitimise their own particular construction of the poet. In tandem with this freedom, however, the poems throw up their own complexities and difficulties. In reality the *Sonnets* reveal very little about Shakespeare and even create their own mysteries surrounding their actual purpose and the identity of their addressee. Thus, rather than Shakespeare being used as an arena for intellectual debate because of the ease with which he could be employed, it becomes increasingly evident that Shakespeare was chosen despite the evidence that problematised certain readings. That the writers of these literary pursuits had to deal with concepts of homosexuality underscores the fact that Shakespeare was not always the most suitable candidate for the

promotion of the agendas for which he was employed. Indeed, the overriding sense of anxiety and desperation which accompanies many of the attempts to construct a suitably heterosexual Shakespeare highlights the desire of these writers to make Shakespeare fit their moral and national agenda regardless of his suitability.

Conclusion

> Some extreme sceptics we know, doubt whether it is possible to deduce
>
> anything as to an author's character from his works.
>
> Yet surely people do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their books.

- W. Bagehot, *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, (1858)[1]

As this thesis has shown, throughout the literary pursuits of the second half of the nineteenth century Shakespeare featured prominently. Moreover, it can clearly be seen that the literature produced about Shakespeare at this time was complex and sophisticated and that the writers concerned were actually using Shakespeare in order to partake in a dialogue about other issues. In order to articulate the pressing concerns of the day, various agendas were imposed upon texts which ostensibly focused on Shakespeare's life and works. The most common anxieties of those using Shakespeare appear to have been about the identity of the nation and the moral state of its people. It seems that the general desire among these writers was for the unification, improvement, and promotion of Britain and its population. In these respects then, it can be argued that nineteenth-century interactions with Shakespeare – which have for so long been neglected – are, in fact, worthy of closer scrutiny and capable of revealing much about the cultural climate within which they were written. Although the common perception of the period has been one of stereotypes and of a linear progression in approaches to Shakespeare, this thesis has demonstrated that the era is characterised by diversity of opinion and complexity of methodology rather than hegemony or coherence. It thus

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[1] Bagehot, *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, 222.

allows for a better understanding of the various ideological debates that were occurring in the nineteenth century.

In a broad range of literary pursuits, located in several different formats, a wide variety of writers and readers took part in a debate that, ostensibly, was about Shakespeare, but which also reveals the anxieties and concerns that preoccupied the communities and individuals who produced these texts. Far from the clichéd view of the Victorians as fervently jingoistic and morally staid, the diversity of opinion within these literary pursuits reveals a rich and complex society that strongly resists crude categorisation. The fact that so much of this writing revolved around the two themes of moralism and nationalism suggests that they were among the primary concerns of the British educated elite in the nineteenth century. However, despite the apparent coherence in the agendas which were being addressed through writing about Shakespeare, it has been shown that there was a fascinating amount of diversity in the ways in which these agendas could be approached. This thesis argues that the way in which different writers could use the same literary phenomenon in order to address the same issue but reach different conclusions is testament to the aspectual nature of Shakespeare.

While the diversity of opinion and approach to common anxieties in this period underpins the idea that educated nineteenth-century readers were a broad community, the malleability of Shakespeare also reveals much about the use of this particular cultural icon. At first glance it would appear that Shakespeare was used because he represented a kind of blank canvas. These writers could claim that Shakespeare's life or works were 'really' about almost anything and thus find a convenient ally in him as a totemic figure. However, as this thesis has shown, the very freedom which allows a writer to construct a particular Shakespeare also points to his unsuitability as a

foundation for any argument. The perceived lack of definite information about Shakespeare, as well as the fact that an opposing idea could be supported by reference to the playwright, means that a truly convincing case simply cannot be made. Moreover, the few facts which do appear incontrovertible in relation to Shakespeare suggest that he was a far from suitable figure upon which to base any of these concepts of nationalism or moralism. Indeed, it is often the very unsuitability of Shakespeare – such as his questionable moral conduct, or lack of overt patriotism – which is the most noticeable facet of these nineteenth-century literary pursuits. Indeed this 'inappropriateness' of Shakespeare serves to highlight two issues. First, the fact that concerns about national and moral identity were being rehearsed within an arena that was not entirely suitable shows that these concerns were deeply important to the nineteenth-century educated elite, as they were unable to avoid noting them in relation to Shakespeare. Second, these writers were evidently desperate to make Shakespeare fit into their own moral and national frameworks which suggests that the use of Shakespeare was as important as the agenda for which he was being used.

One possible explanation for the use of Shakespeare despite his evident unsuitability is that, as Shakespeare was, in many ways, a canonical writer prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, it was simply impossible to ignore him. While the widespread study of English Literature in universities did not come about until the early twentieth century, the subject was beginning to be institutionalised during the period covered by this thesis. Indeed, the increasing presence of Shakespeare within the university is signalled by the clearly nervous tone of an article by one of the nineteenth-century's leading actors. In 'Shakespeare on the Stage and in the Study,' Henry Irving laments the way in which the institutionalised study of Shakespeare is not the best way to appreciate the plays: '[t]o discuss Shakespeare with University students is a useful

and interesting pursuit; but the apt pupil may chance to learn quite as much in a single evening at the theatre as he will learn from a whole course of lectures.'[2] This anticipates Samuel Butler's criticism of the 'modern schoolmen' (seen on p. 248 above) and the professionalisation of pedagogy which was beginning to replace amateur scholarship by the end of the century.[3] Although not necessarily officially canonised – in the sense of being part of a recognized national school or university curricula – by the time many of the works in this thesis were produced, Shakespeare was still a significant literary influence, in that he had been referenced or written about by nearly every major critic for the previous two centuries. Thus, few writers who wished to promote an agenda would not want to enlist Shakespeare's support.

A similar reason why Shakespeare was so useful to these writers, despite the problems that certain aspects of the phenomenon posed, is that Shakespeare was not entirely subordinate to the promotion of these social ideals. Although concerns about nationalism and moralism were evidently important facets of the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century, it could be argued that Shakespeare's status benefited from these agendas just as much as they benefited from using him. In other words, while the use of a semi-canonical figure such as Shakespeare allowed a writer to add strength and authority to their discussion of a particular strand of moralism or nationalism, the presence of Shakespeare in such polemic also served to reinforce Shakespeare's significance, ensuring that he became normalised within the intellectual discourse of the day. Thus Shakespeare's canonical status is reinforced, and any problematic features of the Shakespeare phenomenon (such as his ambivalent nationalism, or questionable morality) have either to be excused or flatly refuted. Essentially, this thesis argues, in

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[2] Henry Irving, 'Shakespeare on the Stage and in the Study', *Good Words,* (January 1883), 33.

[3] Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 120-1.

the literary pursuits of the nineteenth century can be witnessed the painful desperation to make Shakespeare fit within the canon.

Not only does the present thesis illuminate nineteenth-century literary pursuits and the way in which the use of a literary figure may relate to canon formation, but it also sheds light on the pressing concerns of nineteenth-century society. As with approaches towards Shakespeare, attitudes to nationalism and moralism are characterised by a combination of coherence and divergence. Within discussions about nationalism there were definite commonalities in terms of how the nation and its people could be described. More specifically, the idea of the nation was defined through its geography, its sense of past, and its relationship with other countries; while the nation's people could be characterised by their genealogy, language, and literary taste. Different writers, however, approached these homogenous strands of thought in different ways, meaning that Shakespeare did not operate as a concrete signifier which writers could use to disseminate a fixed, hegemonic concept about the nation. Instead the different ways in which Shakespeare could be used meant that he functioned as a site within which diverse approaches to larger common concerns could be debated. Thus, while two different writers may, for example, agree that the appreciation of Shakespeare in foreign nations is important in terms of both promoting Shakespeare and, by association, the nation, there can be disagreement as to whether Shakespeare is globally acknowledged as superior, or whether foreign people are unable to understand his brilliance. Essentially Shakespeare could be moulded into different 'Shakespeares.'

The way in which moralism was approached was more complicated than nationalism, in that there were disagreements about the degree to which moral precepts should be adhered to, although there were still fairly uniform concepts or definitions. These included ideas of self help, hard work, sexual restraint, social position, and

financial accumulation. The ease with which different Shakespeares could be created meant that writers could use this fragmentation in order to rehearse various attitudes towards morality. Exactly how much license may be given to an unfaithful husband, for example, can be answered differently through the construction of numerous Shakespeares. Biographical narratives apportion the blame for Shakespeare's perceived marital infidelity to different parties, while other writers proclaim Shakespeare's faithfulness. These multifarious approaches are made possible by the paucity of biographical detail available about Shakespeare, as well as the willingness to read his plays and poems as being declarations of his own beliefs. This dearth of information allows writers to be selective about which bits of documentary evidence they choose to believe or to even acknowledge, and thus engenders a certain amount of freedom. The importance of moralist and nationalist debates is further reinforced by their presence within the smaller sphere of *Sonnets*-related literary pursuits, which in turn indicates that the use of Shakespeare as a site for the rehearsal and formation of approaches to contemporary issues was not anomalous. The dismissal of foreign critics, for example, or the focus on financial accumulation and class status, suggests that the attitudes taken by the numerous writers surveyed in this thesis were widespread. The use of the *Sonnets* also further illuminates the unsuitability of Shakespeare. The Shakespeare constructed through use of the *Sonnets* is, both morally and in terms of nationalism, far from ideal support for these various agendas. The most obvious example is in the association of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* with the culture of ancient Greece. There is such a desperation to present a fitting Shakespeare that discussions of the *Sonnets* and ancient Greece become confused and even more fragmented. Although it is possible to read these texts as being covert allusions to homosexuality, it rather seems as though writers are either oblivious

to any homosexual reading of the *Sonnets*, or are seeking to normalise a Shakespeare whom they suspect may not be entirely suitable.
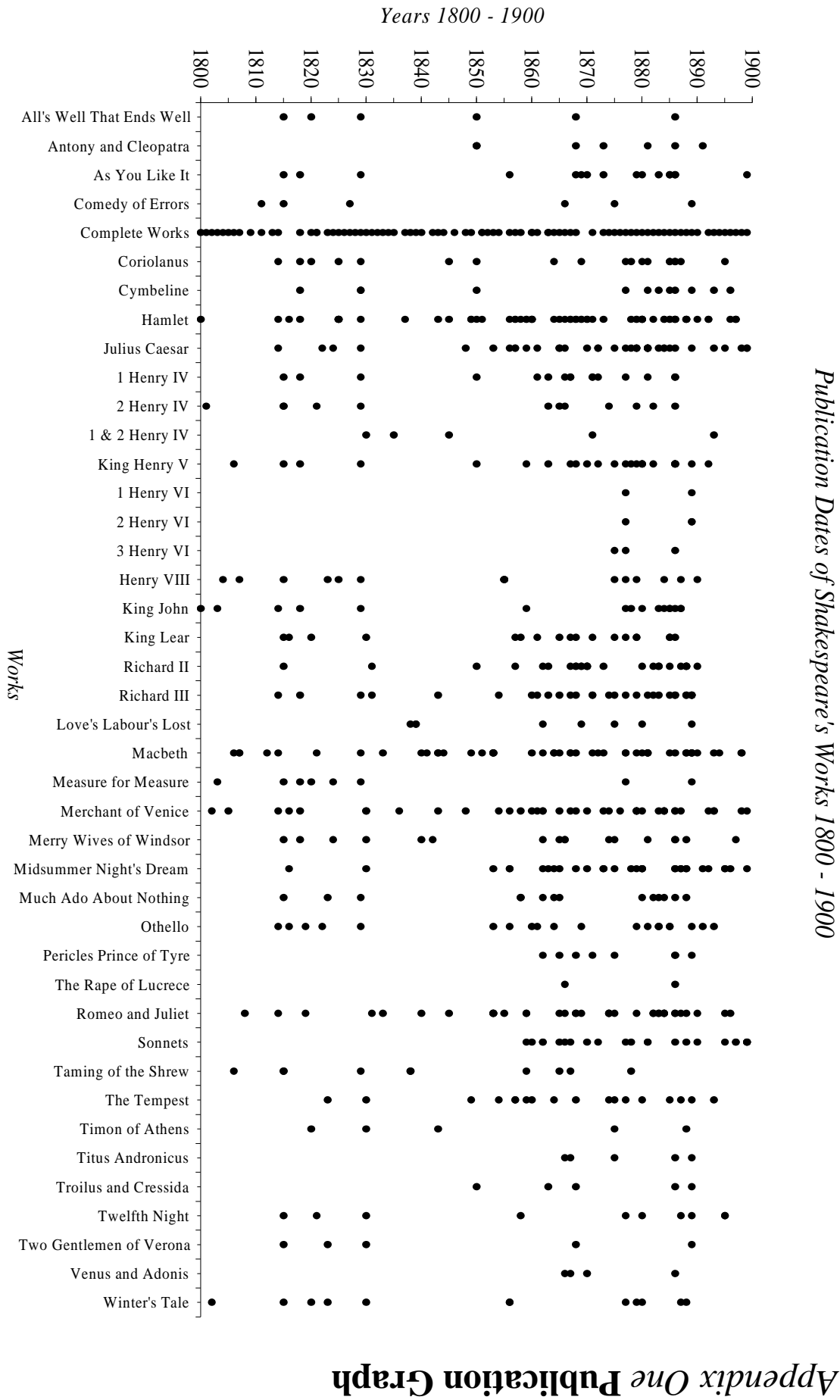
This thesis has shown that an investigation of nineteenth-century writings on Shakespeare affords an insight into the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century as well as Shakespeare's afterlife and the dynamics which underpin canon formation. It is thus surprising that more research has not been carried out in this area and hopefully this project can lead to additional exploration in this under-developed field. Overall it becomes clear that the widespread disregard or dismissal of nineteenth-century Shakespearean literary pursuits cannot be legitimised as simply arising from a lack of complexity or sophistication in nineteenth-century writing. Gary Taylor and others have shown that the way in which Shakespeare has functioned as a cultural barometer throughout history has implications for the way in which modern society engages with him in the twenty-first century. Thus a deeper understanding of how Shakespeare was considered in the nineteenth century is useful to anyone interested in either Shakespeare or the Victorian period today. Despite this, the material surveyed in this thesis had not been previously considered as being indicative of nineteenth-century interactions with Shakespeare and there has been no work carried out on how the Victorians engaged with *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. As was noted at the beginning of this thesis, the Shakespearean literary pursuits of the nineteenth century were given little credit by the scholarship that followed them, and the precise reasons for this lacuna are difficult to pinpoint. One possibility resides in the very complexities highlighted by this thesis. As the majority of works in the field of Shakespeare's afterlife have been wide in their scope they have necessarily been unable fully to explore the diversity which exists within the broader issues for which Shakespeare was used. As the first study to focus on the variety of late

nineteenth-century Shakespearean literary pursuits, this thesis opens the door for further enquiry into how the Victorians related to, and reconstructed, Shakespeare.

For reasons which were made clear in the Introduction, this thesis has solely concerned itself with the textual incarnations of nineteenth-century Shakespeare rather than the Shakespeare which inhabited the Victorian stage. A study of the incidences of Shakespearean performances to complement Appendix One would enable a better understanding of how the page and stage Shakespeares of the nineteenth century interacted with, and influenced, each other. This in turn would allow for a richer understanding of the cultural debates that were being rehearsed through the medium of Shakespeare as they are likely to have been present in theatrical manifestations of Shakespeare. Another possible direction for further exploration would be to investigate other Shakespearean works. Due to the limitations inherent in a study of this size, it was not feasible to give sufficient space to Shakespeare's works other than the *Sonnets* but closer scrutiny of how literary pursuits used his plays or other poems would add further depth to an understanding of this topic. Not only does Appendix One suggest that there were interesting publishing trends in relation to, for example, *As You Like It*, *Henry V* and *The Tempest*, but there are also plays which seem to recur in general discussions about Shakespeare. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida* are works which preoccupy writers in the later nineteenth century and a more detailed consideration of the publishing and performance histories of these plays would, no doubt, help to add further texture to the present project.

Overall, the material surveyed in this thesis represents a relatively small section of the many nineteenth-century writings about Shakespeare and a further examination of this period can only shed more light on what has been revealed to be a complex and significant subject. Shakespeare has been shown to function as a site within which the

concerns of the day could be rehearsed, and the possible implications of this use of Shakespeare on his canonical status have been suggested. Ultimately, the Victorian desire to use Shakespeare, and to make Shakespeare appropriate, means that it is anomalous to talk about the Victorian Shakespeare and far more accurate to describe nineteenth-century Shakespeares.

Years axis: 1800 1810 1820 1830 1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900

Publication Dates of Shakespeare's Works 1800 - 1900

Works

- All's Well That Ends Well
- Antony and Cleopatra
- As You Like It
- Comedy of Errors
- Complete Works
- Coriolanus
- Cymbeline
- Hamlet
- Julius Caesar
- 1 Henry IV
- 2 Henry IV
- 1 & 2 Henry IV
- King Henry V
- 1 Henry VI
- 2 Henry VI
- 3 Henry VI
- Henry VIII
- King John
- King Lear
- Richard II
- Richard III
- Love's Labour's Lost
- Macbeth
- Measure for Measure
- Merchant of Venice
- Merry Wives of Windsor
- Midsummer Night's Dream
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Othello
- Pericles Prince of Tyre
- The Rape of Lucrece
- Romeo and Juliet
- Sonnets
- Taming of the Shrew
- The Tempest
- Timon of Athens
- Titus Andronicus
- Troilus and Cressida
- Twelfth Night
- Two Gentlemen of Verona
- Venus and Adonis
- Winter's Tale

Appendix One **Publication Graph**

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