

INTRODUCTION

The premise of this book is simple and direct: Shakespeare makes modern culture and modern culture makes Shakespeare. I could perhaps put the second “Shakespeare” in quotation marks, so as to indicate that what I have in mind is our idea of Shakespeare and of what is Shakespearean. But in fact it will be my claim that Shakespeare and “Shakespeare” are perceptually and conceptually the same from the viewpoint of any modern observer.

Characters like Romeo, Hamlet, or Lady Macbeth have become cultural types, instantly recognizable when their names are invoked. As will become clear, the modern versions of these figures often differ significantly from their Shakespearean “originals”: a “Romeo” is a persistent romancer and philanderer rather than a lover faithful unto death, a “Hamlet” is an indecisive overthinker, and a “Lady Macbeth,” in the public press, is an ambitious female politician who will stop at nothing to gain her own ends. But the very changes marked by these appropriations tell a revealing story about modern culture and modern life.

The idea that Shakespeare is modern is, of course, hardly a modern idea. Indeed, it is one of the fascinating effects of Shakespeare’s plays that they have almost always seemed to coincide with the times in which they are read, published, produced, and discussed. But the idea that Shakespeare writes us—as if we were Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, constantly encountering our own prescribed identities, proclivities, beliefs, and behaviors—is, if taken seriously, both exciting and disconcerting.

I will suggest in what follows that Shakespeare has scripted many of the ideas that we think of as “naturally” our own and even as “naturally” true: ideas about human character, about individuality and selfhood, about government, about men and women, youth and age, about the qualities that make a strong leader. Such ideas are not necessarily first encountered today in the realm of literature—or even of drama and theater. Psychology, sociology, political theory, business, medicine, and law have all welcomed and recognized Shakespeare as the founder, authorizer, and forerunner of important categories and practices in their fields. Case studies based on Shakespearean characters and events form an important part of education and theory in leadership institutes and business schools as well as in the history of psychoanalysis. In this sense Shakespeare has made modern culture, and modern culture returns the favor.

The word “Shakespearean” today has taken on its own set of connotations, often quite distinct from any reference to Shakespeare or his plays. A cartoon by Bruce Eric Kaplan in *The New Yorker* shows a man and a woman walking down a city street, perhaps headed for a theater or a movie house. The caption

reads, “I don’t mind if something’s Shakespearean, just as long as it’s not Shakespeare.”¹ “Shakespearean” is now an all- purpose adjective, meaning great, tragic, or resonant: it’s applied to events, people, and emotions, whether or not they have any real relevance to Shakespeare.

Journalists routinely describe the disgrace of a public leader as a “downfall of Shakespearean proportions”²—as for example in the case of Canadian financier Conrad Black, whose plight was also called a “fall from grace of Shakespearean proportions,”³ and who was described as the victim of a “betrayal of almost Shakespearean proportion.”⁴ In a book on the U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, a former CIA officer describes the results as “self- imposed tragedies of unplanned- for length and Shakespearean proportions.”⁵ Here the word “tragedies” makes the link between military misadventures and Shakespearean drama. The effect of a series of Danish cartoons that gave offense to Muslims was “Shakespearean in proportions”;⁶ the final episodes of *The Sopranos* were “a bloodbath of Shakespearean proportions”;⁷ and the steroid scandal in professional baseball was a plot that had “thickened to Shakespearean proportions.”⁸

Vivid personalities like Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and William Randolph Hearst have likewise been described as figures of “Shakespearean proportions” or “Shakespearean dimensions.”⁹ Nor is it only national or inter national news that now makes the Shakespeare grade: a headline in the *Daily Telegraph* of London declared that “throwing a children’s party can be a drama of Shakespearean proportions.” And an article in the tabloid *New York Post* began, “A Shakespearean tragedy played out on a Long Island street where a boozed- up young woman unknowingly dragged her boyfriend under her car for more than a block as he tried to stop her from driving drunk.”¹⁰ “Shakespearean” in these contexts means something like “ironic” or “astonishing” or “uncannily well plotted.” Over time the adjectival form of the playwright’s name has become an intensifier, indicating a degree of magnitude, a scale of effect.

Why should this be the case? And what does it say about the interrelationship between Shakespeare and modern culture?

“Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how,” says one earnest young man in a Jane Austen novel to another. “It is a part of an Englishman’s constitution,” his companion is quick to concur. “No doubt one is familiar with Shakespeare in a degree,” he says, “from one’s earliest years. His celebrated passages are quoted by every body; they are in half the books we open and we all talk Shakespeare, use his similes, and describe with his descriptions.”¹¹ This was modern culture, circa 1814. In the view of these disarmingly ordinary, not very bookish observers, Shakespeare was the author of their common language, the poet and playwright who inspired and shaped their thought.

In 1828 Sir Walter Scott, already a celebrated novelist, “visited the tomb of

the mighty wizard,” as he wrote. He had a plaster cast made of the Shakespeare portrait bust in Holy Trinity Church, and he designed “a proper shrine for the Bard of Avon” in the library of his home at Abbotsford, making sure that the bust was “fitted with an altar worthy of himself.” Scott noticed that the two of them—Scott and Shakespeare—shared the same initials, W.S. He had their head sizes measured and compared by a German phrenologist. A bust of Scott was designed to resemble that of the other Bard, and after Scott’s death the bust of his head replaced that of Shakespeare in the library. Admiration here became identification—or perhaps a kind of rivalry.¹²

Shakespeare’s modernity would also be proclaimed in nineteenth-century America. In 1850 Ralph Waldo Emerson announced that, after centuries in which Shakespeare had been inadequately understood, the time was finally right for him: “It was not possible to write the history of Shakespeare till now,” Emerson wrote. The word “now” in his argument becomes the marker of that shifting category of the modern, and it is repeated for emphasis a few lines later. “Now, literature, philosophy, and thought, are Shakespearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm.”¹³ Thus Emerson could say of Shakespeare, simply and resoundingly, “he wrote the text of modern life.”¹⁴ We live today in a new “now,” a century and a half removed from Emerson’s, but this sentiment—“he wrote the text of modern life”—seems as accurate as it did then.

Nor—as we have already noted—is this view the special province of literary authors. The frequency with which practitioners and theorists of many of the “new” modern sciences and social sciences—anthropology, psychology, sociology—have turned to Shakespeare for inspiration is striking, but not surprising. Ernest Jones, Freud’s friend and biographer, the first Englishlanguage practitioner of psychoanalysis, declared straightforwardly (in an essay he began in 1910, revised in 1923, and expanded in the 1940s) that “Shakespeare was the first modern.” Why? Because he understood so well the issues of psychology. “The essential difference between prehistoric and civilized man,” Jones argued, was that “the difficulties with which the former had to contend came from without,” while “those with which the latter have to contend really come from within,”

This inner conflict modern psychologists know as neurosis, and it is only by study of neurosis that one can learn the fundamental motives and instincts that move men. Here, as in so many other respects, Shakespeare was the first modern.¹⁵

Thus for Jones, Shakespeare’s use of the soliloquy, the onstage, interior questioning of a character’s conflicted thoughts and motives, anticipated the new science of psychoanalysis and Freud’s “talking cure.”

The “text of modern life” these days is embedded in a network of text messaging, Internet connections, video clips, and file sharing. Shakespeare in our culture is already disseminated, scattered, appropriated, part of the cultural

language, high and low. An advertisement for rugged outdoors types advertised a sale: "Now Is the Winter of Our Discount Tents." This turned out also to be the name of a rock compilation by the label Twisted Nerve. At the same time, in London, the White Cube Gallery presented an exhibition of work by British artist Neal Tait, titled "Now Is the Discount of Our Winter Tents." Manifestly, none of these tweaked or inverted phrases would offer much in the way of wit or appeal if the cultural consumer did not recognize, or half recognize, the phrase on which each is based: the opening soliloquy of Richard III, in which the envious and aspiring Gloucester observes, in a classic of double-meaning enjambment, that "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this son of York" (1.1.1-2). So we might say that Shakespeare is already not only modern but postmodern: a simulacrum, a replicant, a montage, a bricolage. A collection of found objects, repurposed as art.

Our Shakespeare is often "sampled" and "texted" in forms from advertising to cartoon captions. Lady Macbeth's exclamation in the sleepwalking scene, "Out, damned spot!" (Macbeth 4.1.33), is so well-known that it has been used to describe stain removers, acne medicine, and cleaning technologies for semiconductors. An ad for Hard Candy cosmetics extends the literary allusion, offering not only the "Out Damn Spot" concealer pencil to cover up blemishes, but also a coordinated line of makeup called "Macbare" and "Macbuff."¹⁶ I call this a "literary allusion," but it is a quite different kind from those of an earlier period. Although the writers of copy here assume a recognition of Macbeth as the source, there is no extended expectation of familiarity with the text. The wit inheres in the dislocation from context ("Lay on, Macbuff"?).

Popular culture examples of this kind are virtually ubiquitous. Hamlet's phrase "The undiscover'd country from whose bourn / No traveller returns" (Hamlet 3.1.79-80) has been used as the subtitle of Star Trek VI, the title of an art exhibition on representational painting at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and the brand name of a company offering bicycle tours in California.¹⁷ The bionic skeleton used for decades by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to demonstrate artificial body parts was named Yorick, after "the exhumed skull in Shakespeare's Hamlet."¹⁸ Sometimes the Shakespeare quotation has moved so far into the mainstream that there is little or no acknowledgment of any connection with the source. Economist Greg Mankiw chose the phrase "Strange Bedfellows" as the headline of a short piece on Al Gore and supply-side economists of the 1980s.¹⁹ Although there may have been some tacit comparison between these figures and Shakespeare's Caliban and Trinculo, there's no evidence of it in the piece—and really no necessity. Shakespeare sampled, Shakespeare quoted without quotation marks, has become a lingua franca of modern cultural exchange.

The cultural "Q" value of something often goes up when its familiarity and utility go down. An antique shop that specializes in folk art will display objects like churns, crocks, quilts, and spinning wheels—once valued for their use and now many times more valuable, in sheer dollar terms, despite being useless.²⁰

And the further we get as a society from intimate knowledge of the language and characters of the plays, the more “love” of Shakespeare begins to be expressed as a cultural value. Shakespeare’s plays are probably read and studied more, these days, before and after college—in high school and in reading groups, extension courses, lifelong learning and leadership institutes, and in the preparation of audiences attending play productions—than during the four years of traditional undergraduate college education. Preprofessional training starts earlier, college majors are more specialized than once they were, and there is less expectation of a broad general education or liberal arts foundation than was the case a generation or two ago. Shakespeare becomes the treat, as well as the all-purpose cultural upgrade, for which time is found later in life, after more basic, pragmatic skills and knowledge are acquired.

Thus it is not perhaps a surprise to discover that some of the most avid and interested students of Shakespeare today are businesspeople, CEOs and CFOs of major national and international companies. Shakespeare’s plays are now being used, regularly and with success, to teach corporate executives lessons about business.²¹ A few of the analogies the CEOs and their facilitators make may seem facile (the appearance of the ghost of old Hamlet is like the reminder that executives are accountable to their shareholders; CEOs, like the kings and queens in the plays, have to face the necessity of betraying—or firing—their friends). But the business of teaching Shakespeare—in-business has become popular and lucrative as a sideline for both government officials no longer in power and Shakespeare companies struggling to make a living.²² The play that has most galvanized business leaders has been Henry V, whose protagonist, the leader of a “band of brothers,” produced unit cohesion and triumphed against apparently insurmountable odds; I use some of the discussions among what might be called “business Shakespeareans” as examples in my chapter on that play.

In these encounters, “Shakespeare” often becomes a standardized plot, a stereotypical character, and, especially, a moral or ethical choice—not to mention the ubiquitous favorite, “a voice of authority,” as if it were possible to locate “his” voice among the mix of Hamlet, Macbeth, Falstaff, Rosalind, Portia, Iago, the Ghost, and the Fool. (The CEOs are not often asked to see the play through the lens of a minor character, an old man, a young woman, an attendant lord, or a common soldier; they are kings and queens, generals, Machiavels, decision makers all.) What may sometimes drop out here, crucially, is the complexity of language and of plotting, the ultimate undecidability or overdetermination of phrases, words, and actions. Reading against the grain—trying to gather a multiplicity of sometimes conflicting meanings from any staged scene or passage—itself cuts against the grain of CEO management and decision-making. Perhaps the key phrase here ought to be, not “Falstaff, c’est moi”—as one executive was quoted as saying—but instead Iago’s “I am not what I am.”²³

Politics, and politicians, often seem to be implicated, one way or another, in these cultural transactions. One September, during the presidency of George W. Bush, I was contacted by the New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd, who wanted to talk about Bush’s summer reading list and the ways in

which the Shakespeare plays he was then said to be reading might influence his political thought. I had written op-ed pieces for the Times on Shakespeare and culture on previous occasions, and Dowd thought I might have something to say about the present situation.

On President Bush's reading list—recommended, it was said, by his wife, Laura, who had been actively engaged in an NEA program called Shakespeare in American Communities—were a number of works of popular fiction, some books of American history (Nathaniel Philbrick's *Mayflower*; a study of the manhunt for Abraham Lincoln's killer; a book on naval battles that shaped American history), and biographies of Lincoln, Babe Ruth, and Roberto Clemente. Down at the bottom of the list, as provided by the White House Press Office, were two plays by Shakespeare: *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*.

That both plays were about usurpation, about the question of just election to high office, and about father-son or mentor-mentee tensions and conflicts, was not—necessarily—why these books had been chosen for the president's summer reading. Nor were they chosen (I imagine) because *Hamlet* was famous for having difficulty being a "Decider," or for *Macbeth's* battlefield comeback as commander in chief. I'd guess they were instead chosen because of their "greatness"—their cultural fame, their quotability, their ubiquity in American political and cultural discourse. In terms of their cultural power, these were American plays—plays that had shaped, and would continue to shape, the language of politicians, speech writers, motivational speakers, journalists—and us. *Macbeth*, I might note, was Abraham Lincoln's favorite play: a play about treason, "domestic malice," civil strife, moral courage, and resignation.

When I spoke with Maureen Dowd, I mentioned the fact that President Bush seemed not to have studied Shakespeare at Yale. Dowd asked how I knew this, and I told her that I had looked up his college transcript on the Web (it was available from both Republican and Democratic Web sites, with appropriate, or inappropriate, commentary). I started my teaching career at Yale, so I was able to decode the course names and numbers on the transcript to see that "Mr. George Walker Bush" had studied a great deal of history and taken some courses in philosophy, economics, and sociology, but only one English course, the basic entry-level introduction for non majors. No Shakespeare course, or indeed any other course in English lit.

What might the president have hoped to learn from these two famous plays—if he did find time to read them? Internet commentators and bloggers drew their own analogies between President Bush and both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*: *Macbeth* weary of endless struggle after the deed that would define his legacy—tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow; *Lady Macbeth* trying, without success, to wash blood from her hands. In this case George W. Bush was being read through Shakespeare, rather than reading him.

Other modern politicians have been more clearly conscious of the resonances of Shakespeare in their own politics and lives. One obvious example here is Winston Churchill, but both John and Robert Kennedy also quoted

Shakespeare frequently in their public speeches to underscore the politics, and the ironies, of modern life.²⁴ In contemporary American political debates Shakespeare is often cited by lawmakers, though sometimes with scant attention to the context of the lines being quoted, and thus with occasional (and unintended) comic results.²⁵

When the plays are quoted, they are sometimes misquoted, whether by accident or design. An inscription on the National Archives building in Washington, D.C., the repository of important historical documents, cites Shakespeare as a way of underscoring the value of the enterprise. But the inscription, “What Is Past Is Prologue,” is also a “correction”—expanding Shakespeare’s grammatical contraction in *The Tempest* (“what’s past is prologue” [2.1.248]) into a more sedate and formal utterance, one perhaps thought better suited for engraving on a public building.

Or, to compare small things with great, consider the tattoo on the shoulder of a movie actress popular with young audiences—a tattoo described, in many Web and tabloid citations, as a quotation from *King Lear*. An obliging photo displays the quotation, in black letter print, which reads: “We will all laugh at gilded butterflies.” The implication is of a joyous celebration of nature and serendipity. But this “Shakespearean” phrase is not (quite) in Shakespeare. What *King Lear* says to his daughter Cordelia, in extremis, in the fifth act of that dark play, is this:

Come, let’s away to prison.
We two alone will sing like birds i’ the cage.
.....
 . . . So we’ll live
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies

5.3.8-13

There’s no “all” in the passage. Lear’s desperate appeal to his daughter is an invitation to solitude in prison, now imagined as a kind of sanctuary against the world. There are only two people in this scene, no collective audience. The invitation is also, of course, an unrealizable fantasy—in the next scenes, Cordelia will be hanged offstage, and the aged and distraught Lear will enter carrying her body.

Nonetheless, the tattoo on the shoulder of Megan Fox testifies to a desire to quote Shakespeare, and to take inspiration from him, or from his cited, and slightly altered, phrases. Shakespeare in this case is, once again, a kind of inspirational sound bite, aphoristic, provocative, disseminated, and scattered far from its source. We should note, though, that both inscriptions—the one on the actress’s shoulder and the one on the public building—are proudly “Shakespearean.” Shakespeare here lends cultural credence, and cultural capital, whether the bearer of the message is an institutional monument or a performer of the moment.

But Shakespeare's effect upon modernity, and modernity's effect upon Shakespeare, should not be confused or conflated with the idea of media or popular culture. Quite the opposite is the case, as we have already seen in the case of psychoanalyst Ernest Jones—and indeed with Jones's friend and mentor, Sigmund Freud. Some of the most engaged and passionate readers, quoters, and rewriters of Shakespeare have been philosophers and theorists, from Karl Marx to Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jacques Derrida, as well as innovative novelists and playwrights from James Joyce and Samuel Beckett to Tom Stoppard, Barbara Garson (the author of the 1964 play *MacBird*), and Edward Bond, the author of a very dark play from 1971 called *Lear*. Individually and collectively in a wide range of genres, the body of work produced in dialogue with Shakespeare's plays, language, and characters has redefined and repositioned both the playwright and the modern world.

For philosophers and artists, thinking through Shakespeare has been a mode of intellectual engagement as well as a kind of productive rivalry. To see how this works, it may be useful to have recourse to the category of thinkers whom the philosopher Michel Foucault described as “initiators of discursive practices”—a distinct kind of author that emerged to prominence in nineteenth-century Europe. These were figures like Freud, Marx, Georges Cuvier, and Ferdinand de Saussure, figures who “not only made possible a certain number of analogies that could be adopted by future texts,” but also “cleared a space for the introduction of elements other than their own, which, nevertheless, remain within the field of discourse they initiated.”²⁶ These writers, in essence, invented a way of thinking, about mankind, about language, about consciousness, about the world. Such writers, Foucault explained in his essay on authorship, “should not be confused with ‘great’ literary authors, or the authors of canonical religious texts, and the founders of sciences”:

The distinctive contribution of these authors is that they produced not only their own work, but the possibility and the rules of formulation of other texts. . . . Freud is not simply the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams* or of *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, and Marx is not simply the author of *The Communist Manifesto* or *Capital*: they both established the endless possibility of discourse.²⁷

Shakespeare too, I would suggest, has been just such an “initiator of discursive practices,” at the same time that no one would disallow his right to be called a “great literary author.” It is precisely this uncommon and perhaps uncanny double role, as both “great literary author” and “initiator of discursive practices,” that marks Shakespeare's peculiar and remarkable modernity.

The chapters that follow will present extended evidence of this phenomenon with respect to one or another of the plays. But in order to clarify the point, an essential one for my general argument, I want here to mention in brief some symptomatic examples.

Shakespeare's plays were so well-known to Karl Marx that he alluded to

them regularly in his writings, often with the assumption that his readers were as familiar with the plays as he was. Marx's early writings, from the period 1835 to 1843, include references to the following Shakespearean characters: Doll Tearsheet, Falstaff, Gloucester, Gratiano, Lear, Pistol, Portia, Mistress Quickly, Richard III, and Shylock. He quotes Hamlet all the time, but his most frequent and pointed references are to Timon of Athens, whose noble hero is appalled by the obsession with gold and money he finds in the society around him.

At the same time, Marx also often cites what we might consider unexpected Shakespearean moments and passages. Thus, for example, in a famous moment in *Capital* where he is talking about the "fetishism of commodities" and the question of use value versus exchange value, he free-associates, not, as one might expect, to *The Merchant of Venice*, but rather to the bumbling watchman of *Much Ado About Nothing*: "Who fails here to call to mind our good friend, Dogberry," Marx asks, "who informs his neighbor Seacoal that, 'To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune, but reading and writing comes by Nature.'" ²⁸

I would guess that most people today might fail to call Dogberry to mind in this connection—or perhaps any other. But to Marx the association was crystal clear. In another casual allusion that assumes that all readers know their Shakespeare by heart, he combines the figure of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (here called by his folk name, Robin Goodfellow) with a reference to the ghost tunneling underground in *Hamlet* ("Well said, old mole. Canst work i'th' earth so fast?" [1.5.164]): "In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy and the poor prophets of regression, we do recognize our brave friend Robin Goodfellow, the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer—the Revolution." ²⁹ Notice "we do recognize"—as with "who fails here to call to mind," Marx is assuming, and creating, a public sphere in which everyone talks and knows Shakespeare—knows it well enough to allude, glancingly but tellingly, to incidents and characters as proofs of a theoretical argument.

For a third example, consider this, from Marx's "Debates on the Freedom of the Press":

what an illogical paradox to regard the censorship as a basis for improving our press!

The greatest orator of the French revolution, whose *voix toujours tonnante* still echoes in our day; the lion whose roar one must have heard oneself in order to join with the people in calling out to him, "Well roared, lion!"—Mirabeau—developed his talent in prison. Are prisons on that account schools of eloquence? ³⁰

"Well roared, lion!" is the jokingly appreciative response of the onstage audience in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the performance of the actor playing the lion in the "Pyramus and Thisbe" play. Marx does not, presumably, intend a real comparison between Mirabeau and Snug the Joiner; rather, his quotation is a gesture of inclusiveness to his own audience—or perhaps just the irresistible impulse to speak in and through Shakespeare.

“Again and again in Shakespeare,” observed the German critic and theorist Walter Benjamin,

battles fill the last act, and kings, princes, attendants and followers “enter, fleeing.” The moment in which they become visible to spectators brings them to a standstill. The flight of the dramatis personae is arrested by the stage. Their entry into the visual field of nonparticipating and truly impartial persons allows the harassed to draw breath, bathes them in new air. The appearance onstage of those who enter “fleeing” takes from this its hidden meaning. Our reading of this formula is imbued with expectation of a place, a light, a footlight glare, in which our flight through life may be likewise sheltered in the presence of onlooking strangers.³¹

The stage direction “enter, fleeing” contains, as Benjamin implies, a certain built-in contradiction: characters appear onstage only so that they may be seen to disappear. The idea that the theater audience constitutes a group of “nonparticipating and truly impartial persons” describes a convention, rather than a belief; it would be Benjamin who gave the fullest early articulation to the theory of the “epic theater” that we associate with Bertolt Brecht. Benjamin wrote this passage in the 1920s, in a collection of extended aphorisms, dreams, and prose epigrams called “One-Way Street.”³²

But there is also, needless to say, a powerful historical irony operating here. Benjamin died in 1940, after trying to cross the border from France to Spain with a group of other refugees and being denied permission to enter the country. His ultimate goal was the United States. His death on the night of September 26, 1940, has been called a suicide; the others in his party were permitted to cross on the following day. As Hannah Arendt describes this tragic coincidence of events: “One day earlier Benjamin would have got through without any trouble; one day later the people in Marseilles would have known that for the time being it was impossible to pass through Spain. Only on that particular day was the catastrophe possible.”³³ Thus in his “last act” Walter Benjamin himself entered, “fleeing,” and was not rescued by the “nonparticipating and truly impartial persons” who made up the cultural field. His “flight through life” was, at the end, unsheltered by onlooking strangers.

To read Benjamin this way is to see Shakespeare as uncannily prognosticator—or emplotter—of the twentieth century. Indeed that is how Benjamin himself read Shakespeare. Consider these comments from his admiring essay on the Austrian satirist, essayist, and journalist (and quondam actor) Karl Kraus:

“Shakespeare had foreknowledge of everything”—yes. But above all of Kraus. Shakespeare portrays inhuman figures—and Timon as the most inhuman of them—and says: Nature would produce such a creature if she wished to create something befitting the world as your kind have fashioned it, something worthy of it. Such a creature is Timon; such is Kraus. Neither has, or wants, anything in common with men. . . . A fool, a Caliban, a Timon—no more thoughtful, no more dignified or better—but, nevertheless, his own Shakespeare. All the figures thronging about him should be seen as originating in

Shakespeare. Always he is the model.³⁴

And again, discussing Kraus's assertion, "In me a capacity for psychology is united with the greater capacity to ignore the psychological" (itself a brilliant description of Shakespeare's dramatic technique), Benjamin draws a comparison between the twentieth-century satirist and his Renaissance precursor:

"In Shakespeare's baroque tirades—when the cannibal is unmasked as the better man, the hero as an actor, when Timon plays the rich man, Hamlet the madman—it is as if his lips dripped blood. So Kraus, following Shakespeare's example, wrote himself parts that let him taste blood."³⁵

This is not just another invocation of Shakespeare as a monumental figure of the past; it is a strong assertion of his anticipatory modernity. It might perhaps be suggested that Kraus (or Benjamin, for that matter) is a throwback to the early modern period, or to the baroque, rather than heralding Shakespeare as a protomodern. But Benjamin will always see these things in double time. Thus in a discussion of the way the advent of the new medium of film would produce not only a mass art form of immense social significance, but also a "liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage" he cited the French director Abel Gance, who had written "enthusiastically" in 1927: "Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven, will make films." Benjamin's mordant comment was that Gance, without intending to, had "issued an invitation to a far-reaching liquidation."³⁶ "The angel of history," in Benjamin's famous description, "is propelled by the storm of progress into the future, while his face is turned toward the past."³⁷

Shakespeare as journalist-aphorist-satirist. Shakespeare as filmmaker. These are only some of the avatars in which Shakespeare has reappeared upon the modern scene.

Writers as different as Nietzsche, Brecht, and Wittgenstein, each in his own way, claimed that Shakespeare's work led to an upheaval in the understanding of human character, feeling, and expression. Each of these thinkers rejected the mimetic, imitative idea about Shakespearean characters and Shakespearean actions, in favor of a view of disruption, of rupture. Nietzsche quotes approvingly the aphorism of the Austrian playwright Franz Grillparzer: "Shakespeare has ruined all of us moderns."³⁸

Brecht asserted that Shakespeare's "great plays . . . are no longer effective" and need to be performed in the mode of his epic theater, to "destroy" the "old aesthetics" rather than to satisfy it.³⁹ That was in 1927. Two decades later, in 1949, Brecht would tell an interviewer that Shakespeare's works were among those most responsive to his theory of epic theater—a kind of theater that offers opposing sides of an argument, that always makes the audience aware that it is watching a play, and that resists the engendering of illusion.⁴⁰

In the same year, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote his own "remarks" about Shakespeare, and Shakespeare's greatness, in his notebook:

Shakespeare and dreams. A dream is all wrong, absurd, composite, and yet at

the same time it is completely right: put together in this strange way it makes an impression. Why? I don't know. And if Shakespeare is great, as he is said to be, then it must be possible to say of him: it's all wrong, things aren't like that—and yet at the same time it's quite right according to a law of its own.

It is not as though Shakespeare portrayed human types well and were in that respect true to life. He is not true to life.⁴¹

The year was 1949. A cold war year. The year the first VW Beetle arrived in the United States. The first year of the Emmy awards. The year the NATO treaty was signed. The year the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb. That year the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford opened with Macbeth, and went on to productions of Much Ado About Nothing (with John Gielgud), Othello, and Henry VIII. Meantime, on Broadway in New York City, there was an opening of another show, this one of the musical Kiss Me, Kate, based on Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter. The play won the first Tony Award for Best Musical in 1949, and it suggested another use for Shakespeare: not Brechtian alienation or defamiliarization, but—as the witty choruses of “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” amply show—plain old sexual seduction:⁴²

Brush up your Shakespeare.
Start quoting him now.
Brush up your Shakespeare
And the women you will wow.
Just declaim a few lines from “Othella”
And they'll think you're a helluva fella.
If your blonde won't respond when you flatter 'er,
Tell her what Tony told Cleopaterer.
If she fights when her clothes you are mussing,
What are clothes? “Much Ado About Nussing.”
Brush up your Shakespeare
And they'll all kowtow.

Porter's lyrics were so risqué that they were censored by the movie industry when the film version came out in 1953. Family values. But here, clearly, was an ode to quoting Shakespeare—who says literature is useless?

In recent years scholars and theorists of modernity have often taken Shakespeare as a prescient example of ideas they themselves propose, in areas as diverse as science, social science, and the law. Anthropologist Victor Turner found Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth in *The Tempest* a useful example of *communitas*, a concept he also linked to the philosopher Martin Buber.⁴³ In his discussion of second-order observation and “the paradox of observing systems”—who observes the observer? how can an observer be both implicated and impartial?—the social systems theorist Niklas Luhmann cited as an instructive early example “Shakespeare's theater with its elaborate use of paradoxes and frames within frames.”⁴⁴ And sociobiologist E. O. Wilson invoked Shakespeare's *Iago* in his account of “Group Selection and Altruism”: “Selection will discriminate against the individual if cheating has later adverse effects on his life and reproduction that outweigh the momentary advantage gained. *Iago*

stated the essence in Othello: 'Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls.'"⁴⁵ As we will see below in the chapter on Othello, this bromide about "good name," often taken out of context, has had a long and curious history of citation, as if it represented either Iago's views or Shakespeare's, rather than a disingenuous strategic maneuver by Iago. The ethical cliché may be appealing, but its use within the play is ironic. To make his point about the biological roots of human behavior, Wilson, a scientist well versed in classic literature, chose to ignore Iago's hypocrisy (as well as his "cheating" and its "later adverse effects on his life"). It was the expressed "Shakespearean" sentiment, not its sincerity or dramatic context, that Wilson remembered and found useful in adumbrating his own theory.

A memorable demonstration of the mutability of Shakespearean meaning across cultures was offered by an American anthropologist, Laura Bohannan, whose 1966 article "Shakespeare in the Bush," published in the general interest magazine of the American Museum of Natural History, has become a favorite of Shakespeare instructors.⁴⁶ Invited by members of the Tiv tribe in West Africa to tell "a story of her own country," she told them the plot of Hamlet. Bohannan's droll account purports to show her own attempt to "prove Hamlet universally intelligible," only to find that her hearers commended Claudius's marriage to Gertrude (marrying the brother's widow, the wife of the deceased chief, was a good act; had Gertrude delayed in remarrying, the crops would suffer). Hamlet's failure to woo and win Ophelia was put down to insufficient gift giving, his upbraiding of his mother for her conduct was deemed unseemly (a son should never criticize his mother), the Ghost was seen as a demonic figure, and various other elements of the story were likewise interpreted by the Tiv according to their own beliefs and customs. The last word in the article is given to an honored old man among the Tiv, who kindly invites her to tell more stories of her people, so that "we, who are your elders," can "instruct you in their true meaning."

The real butt of the joke, however, is neither the dignified Tiv elder nor the amused and amusing Bohannan herself (whose article in *Natural History* is written in the deadpan voice of the anthropologist as naïve observer), but rather the Oxford acquaintance with whom Bohannan begins her narrative—an acquaintance who has greeted her interest in Shakespeare with kindly, but proprietary, condescension. "You Americans," he said to her as she was leaving Oxford for her stay with the Tiv, "often have difficulty with Shakespeare. He was, after all, a very English poet, and one can easily misinterpret the universal by misunderstanding the particular." The putative lesson here, however airily delivered—"one can easily misinterpret the universal by misunderstanding the particular"—is given a stringent double reading in Bohannan's apparently artless confessional tale, for all of the readers (the Oxford scholar, the American anthropologist, the Tiv) are both "right" and "wrong." This story could serve as an allegory of the process of anthropological investigation—or indeed as an allegory of the reading of "Shakespeare," who emerges from the narrative as at once very English, very American, (perhaps) very Tiv, and (in any case) very modern.

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote powerfully about the ways in which myths were able to take on the power of objectified thought. His goal was to show, he wrote, “not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact.”⁴⁷ We might substitute “Shakespeare” for Lévi-Strauss’s “myth”: exploring “not how men think in Shakespeare, but how Shakespeare operates in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact.” This, too, is a commutative equation, a trajectory that goes both ways; we think in Shakespeare, as Shakespeare thinks in us.

Each of the plays interacts with our culture as if it were what psychoanalysis calls a *sujet supposé savoir*, the “subject supposed to know”—as if the play (not the historical Shakespeare, but the imminent, all-pervasive, numinous play) knew and knows something about us—something we can turn to it to discover.⁴⁸ The play itself is the source of uncanny knowledge. It knows, but it does not know it knows. Through our encounters and conversations with the Shakespearean text, meanings are disclosed, debated, and assessed. The play comes to stand for, to intercede on behalf of, to bear the weight of, our most profound hopes, fears, identifications, and desires. Shakespeare has become the “other scene” (the unconscious) of modern life.

The sequence in which Shakespeare’s plays are discussed in this book was imagined, initially, to follow a rough chronology of the intersection between each play and a significant moment, or set of moments, in modern culture. As the book expanded, however, and as I began to see the enormously wide range of contacts between the plays and various manifestations of modernity, it became increasingly clear to me that such a controlling structure was both a fiction and a functional impossibility. Historical and cultural events are reliably unruly, and do not fit neatly into a single focused moment. A case could be made for every year, and every interaction, as a turning point for the plays in question, since their effect—and their relationship with emerging themes, politics, and human events—has been both continuous and ongoing. As the reader will see, the moment of the “modern” has necessitated, from time to time, a glimpse of Romantic Shakespeare criticism, or of Victorian costuming and casting, as well as of the classic literary works and contemporary political events of more recent years. Furthermore, as one play led to the next, and as particular historical, coincidental, or contiguous links between them emerged, I began to see these reflections, as I hope the reader will as well, as both adjacent to one another and freestanding. This is not the story of a development, or of a progress or a progression, but rather, as I have been at some pains to insist throughout, the story of a set of mutual crossings and recrossings across genres, times, and modes.

One of my objectives has been to pair each play with a different modern genre, insofar as that is possible: a novel, a poem, a play, a detective story, a

ballet, a dialogue, a rehearsal, a Broadway musical, a cartoon, a set of case studies for business executives. In many cases, perhaps most, there is more than one such genre, more than one cultural interlocutor, but the range itself has been both intriguing and instructive.

Throughout this book I will be suggesting a set of keywords, one for each of the Shakespeare plays under discussion—words that have seemed to me to be evoked by the criticism, performance, debate, and dissemination of that play in modern culture and that have been pivotal in the analysis of texts and contexts, behaviors and beliefs in the period from 1900 to the present—what might be called “the long twentieth century.” This list of keywords provides an armature or spine for the book. Taken together, they exemplify my argument about Shakespeare’s centrality to modern thinking and modern habits of thought. The list, I contend, names the central concepts and topics of literary and cultural investigation for the past hundred– plus years. In this sense, in setting the table for the ways in which we discuss, classify, and value substantive ideas, Shakespeare has shaped not only the reception and reconception of his own (and other) artworks, but also the very possibility of social analysis and cultural conversation in the present day.

I offer these keywords as part of each chapter’s title, but it may be useful to look at them here in the form of a collective list of terms:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| The Tempest | Man |
| Romeo and Juliet | Youth |
| Coriolanus | Estrangement |
| Macbeth | Interpretation |
| Richard III | Fact |
| The Merchant of Venice | Intention |
| Othello | Difference |
| Henry V | Exemplarity |
| Hamlet | Character |
| King Lear | Sublimity |

Man, youth, estrangement, interpretation, fact, intention, difference, exemplarity, character, and sublimity. These are terms that have come to mark and ordain the questions we ask about ourselves and about our engagement with the mind and the world.

It is perhaps important to say that I did not begin with a preestablished list of terms, but rather with a desire, as much pedagogical as heuristic (and as much heuristic as pedagogical), to see if I could locate, isolate, and then analyze such a key term for each play.

I had chosen my group of plays because each seemed to have had a particular effect, or set of effects, in and for modernity. The question then became, Did the critical terms that emerged from these plays themselves add up to a story about modernity, and, indeed, about modern literary criticism and theory? As the reader will discover, that is my claim.

Each of the keywords I derive from the plays and what is said about them, whether in criticism, adaptation, rewriting, or staging, introduces, in a similar way, a central concept, or issue, for modern critical thinking. This was, as I say, the wager I made with myself at the beginning of the project. What I discovered, or uncovered, was not only how these plays changed the way modern culture (or modern cultures) dealt with issues from difference to sublimity to the idea of a “fact” or a “truth,” but also how the plays themselves changed as modernity and postmodernity have overtaken them.

For example, I was interested to notice the ways in which the very notion of “character” and of certain inherently “human” qualities as they emerged in the early twentieth century seemed to be based upon readings of Hamlet (the play and the dramatic character). It’s not surprising that Sigmund Freud’s theories of character, personality, and neurosis should appear at the same time as does the emergence of “character criticism” in Shakespeare studies, and notably in the influential—and controversial—work of A. C. Bradley, the Oxford professor of poetry who was the younger brother of the philosopher F. H. Bradley. Both focused on Hamlet as a distinct personality type, indeed a “modern” type. It was Freud who remarked, trenchantly, that Hamlet’s interior debates were an example, indeed perhaps the best example, of “the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind.”⁴⁹

It is probably difficult for most people today to think about a mode of Shakespeare criticism that does not involve the question of character, and characters. But this category of analysis was hotly contested when it emerged, and it has been coolly dismissed by many critics and schools of criticism since. The primacy of “character” and the reign of Hamlet as the most canonical, the most famous, the “best” of Shakespeare’s plays, began with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Hazlitt, and reached its peak of fame, arguably, with Bradley. “The centre of the tragedy,” he maintained, speaking not only of Hamlet but by extension of all Shakespearean tragedy, “may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action.”⁵⁰ Our contemporary use of “character” to denote moral strength or weakness—as in the so-called character issue for politicians and their suitability for office—and related questions of character building (or character assassination) are developments of this conviction that individuals in the world, like dramatic and literary characters, have what both Freud (from the vantage point of psychoanalysis) and Margaret Mead (from the vantage point of anthropology) called “character structures”—a system of traits that define and describe human motivation and action.

The keywords proposed in this book are arbitrary in that I have selected them myself, at my own discretion and for my own pleasure. But while they may be arbitrary, they are not random. A different set of keywords could certainly be offered, and generated, by other readers—and indeed I hope they might and will be, since this seems to me an interpretative activity of significant value. But what I have had in mind in proposing this list of terms, individually and in relationship to one another, is a kind of map, or rebus, of modern thinking. If we were to make a sentence of the words collected here (I think there may be a parlor game that sets the player such a task) the sentence would tell us something about current circumstances, current hopes and

dreams, and who, or what, we think we are today.

The phrase “Shakespeare makes modern culture; modern culture makes Shakespeare” takes the form of a chiasmus, or crossing of words—a rhetorical structure that depends upon internal parallelism and reversal to underscore its logic. This is a common device in rhetoric and political discourse, as well as in poetry. Perhaps the most famous chiasmus in modern American history was John F. Kennedy’s “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.”⁵¹ The balanced clauses are satisfying, and they add up to more than the sum of their parts. It was a structure Kennedy liked, and one that he—or his speechwriters—used to good effect. “Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate,” he declared in the same inaugural address. Again the phrases work together to create a persuasive connection.

Shakespeare’s own use of this inverted parallelism is powerfully effective in play after play. “I wasted time, and now doth time waste me,” laments Richard II (5.5.49). “God send the prince a better companion,” says the Lord Chief Justice in Henry IV, Part 2, and Falstaff replies, “God send the companion a better prince” (1.2.181–3). “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / That he should weep for her?” Hamlet asks himself, reflecting upon the real tears in the eyes of an actor playing a part (2.2.536–7). “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” he advises the players (3.2.16–17). “Fair is foul, and foul is fair,” proclaim the weird sisters in Macbeth (1.1.10). The device is never perfunctory and never trivial. In each of these instances—and in many others we could cite—the doubling effect is a doubling back that also becomes a double take.

The crossing pattern, the structure of an X, functions in the plays both at the level of language and at the level of plot (tragic figures like Richard II and King Lear actually grow in stature as they lose their power in the world, while both Macbeth and Richard III follow the reverse pattern, losing effectiveness once they have become kings). But what I want to note here is that the structure of thinking exemplified by chiasmus works both structurally and symbolically: the productive confusion between art and life, inside and outside, container and contained was essential to both the stability and the destabilization of Shakespearean theater. This structure, like a mirror facing a mirror, is closely related, in formal terms, to the play- within- the- play—like the “Mousetrap” (or “The Murder of Gonzago”) in Hamlet, which both presents what has happened in the past and predicts and precipitates what will happen in the future. At the end of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Puck teases the audience with the thought that the play they have watched may be only a dream, and a similar confusion is wrought upon the drunken tinker Christopher Sly in the introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*. The effect can be dizzying, a kind of infinite regress: the *mise en abyme*, the *enfilade*, Freud’s “navel of the dream.” Chiasmus, the language of crossing, suspends for a moment the grounded logic of priority and reference: what we thought was solid ground (for example, the fact that Shakespeare’s plays were written long ago, whereas “modern

culture” is new and now) can be imaginatively put in question, even reversed. What we know of Shakespeare is inevitably colored and shaped by the times in which we live. Crucial to this structure, though, is its balance, which tips both ways. Hence the dizziness: how can something that is made by something else in fact make that something? The logic is itself Shakespearean and is found all over the sonnets, as well as in this perfect line from *Pericles*: “Thou that begett’st him that did thee beget” (21.182).

The same fascination with inversions and reversals—which is the inside and which is the outside? which the frame and which the framed?—was a consistent topic for modern, and “modernist,” artists and writers.

Perhaps my favorite images in this connection are a series of linked works by René Magritte, each entitled *The Human Condition*. A painting perched on an easel in front of a window merges indistinguishably with the “real” scene outside. The painting depicted on the easel is no more fictive than the scene outside the window—and the scene outside the window no more real than the painting on the easel. (Both are part of Magritte’s *Human Condition*.)

Like the famous lithograph by M. C. Escher, *Drawing Hands*, in which two hands are in the process of drawing one another into existence, modern culture writes the plays of Shakespeare in works that range from fiction to film to plays to the daily news—while, at the same time, Shakespeare writes the modern culture in which we think we live.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Bruce Eric Kaplan, “I don’t mind if something’s Shakespearean, just as long as it’s not Shakespeare.” (A man talks to his wife while walking.) *The New Yorker* (January 29, 2001).
2. Diane Francis, “Black Failed to Grasp the U.S. Way: A Downfall of Shakespearean Proportions,” *Financial Post* (July 14, 2007).
3. E.g., “In a fall from grace of Shakespearean proportions, [Conrad] Black will trade his tailored suits and over-the-top extravagance for an orange prison jumpsuit.” Stephanie Balogh, “Conrad Black Jailed for Fraud,” *Daily Telegraph* (December 11, 2007).
4. Ross Todd, “Small-Firm Stars Set to Defend Conrad Black,” *American Lawyer* (March 15, 2007).
5. Michael Scheuer, *Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2008). Passage cited by Michiko Kakutani in “Fighting the Wrong Foe With the Wrong Weapons.” *New York Times* (March 14, 2008), Section E, 31.
6. Riad Saloojee, “Muslim Anger Over Danish Cartoon Displays Global Disconnect,” *Edmonton Journal* (February 5, 2006).
7. Victor Dwyer, Elizabeth Renzetti, and Johanna Schneller, “Out With a Bang,” *Toronto Globe and Mail* (June 9, 2007).
8. “It started out as a full-court media press to clear Roger Clemens of the taint of the George Mitchell steroid investigation, but now the plot has thickened to Shakespearean proportions. With apologies to the Queen in Act 3 (Scene 2) of *Hamlet*, methinks Roger might have protested too much.” Peter Schmuck, “No Closer to Truth: Pitcher’s Denials on ‘60 Minutes’ Leave Us Hanging,” *Baltimore Sun* (January 7, 2008), 2Z.
9. Randall Balmer, professor of religion, in a lecture, “God in the White House: Faith and

- the Presidency from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush,” quoted in Aimee Lin, “Dartmouth Professor Looks at Religion, Presidents,” *The Dartmouth* (February 7, 2008). Eric Hamburg, ed., *Nixon: An Oliver Stone Film* (New York: Hyperion, 1995); Ben Procter, *William Randolph Hearst: The Later Years, 1911–1951* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
10. Selim Algar and Leonard Greene, “ ‘DWI’ Drag Death: ‘Woman Kills Beau,’ ” *New York Post* (July 23, 2007).
 11. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814; New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 335.
 12. Jane Martineau, *Shakespeare in Art* (London and New York: Merrell, 2003), 210.
 13. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Shakespeare; Or, The Poet,” in *Representative Men: Nature Addresses, and Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883), 194–95.
 14. *Ibid.*, 201.
 15. Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949; New York: Norton, 1976), 151.
 16. *Reader’s Digest Asia* (November 2005); *TimesOnLine UK*, November 24, 2007; *Chip Scale Review* (November–December 2006); Wilson D. St.Pierre, “Out, Damned Spot!” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2006); www.hardcandy.com.
 17. *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991); “The Undiscovered Country,” Hammer Museum, October 3, 2004–January 16, 2005; *Undiscovered Country Tours*, Palo Alto, CA.
 18. Carol Rador, “Alas, Poor Yorick De– Parts,” *FDA Consumer Magazine* (November–December 2003).
 19. Greg Mankiw’s blog, October 13, 2007, <http://gregmankiw.blogspot.com/2007/10/strange-bedfellows.html>.
 20. Marjorie Garber, “Roman Numerals,” in *Symptoms of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 179–98; reprinted in *Garber, Profiling Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 151–66. For more on this question, see below, in the chapter on King Lear.
 21. E.g., *Movers and Shakespeares*, based in Washington, D.C., and run by Ken and Carole Adelman. “Will Power,” *People* (March 11, 2003); “Chairman of the Board,” *Fortune* (April 1, 2002); Bruce Weber, “Friends, Generals, and Captains of Industry, Lend Me Your Ears,” *New York Times* (January 31, 2005), etc.
 22. Harriet Rubin, “Lessons in Shakespeare, From Stage to Boardroom,” *New York Times* (November 10, 2007), B4.
 23. A version of this disquieting sentiment appears in play after play, not always in the voice of a schemer or a Machiavel. It is the *mise en abyme*, the black hole, Freud’s navel of the dream—the lost point of origin, which is at the core of acting, and of literariness—and of Shakespeare.
 24. Evan Thomas notes in his biography of Robert Kennedy that RFK had a special fondness for quoting Shakespeare’s English history plays. On a family camping trip, when the group encountered dauntingly hot weather and rough terrain, he recited some lines from the St. Crispin’s Day speech in *Henry V* (“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers”). When the poet Robert Lowell, on another occasion, teased Kennedy for comparing himself to Henry V, RFK responded by “pulling down a volume of Shakespeare’s *Histories* and reading from Henry IV’s deathbed scene. (‘For what in me was purchased, / Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort. . . .’) ‘Henry the Fourth,’ said Kennedy, without apparent irony, ‘that’s my father.’ ” Thomas, *Robert Kennedy: His Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 18, 22.
 25. Marjorie Garber, “Bartlett’s Familiar Shakespeare,” in *Profiling Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 278–301.
 26. Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?,” in *Language, Counter– Memory, and Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 132.
 27. *Ibid.*, 131.
 28. Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 1: 87.
 29. Karl Marx, “Speech at the Anniversary of the People’s Paper,” published in the *People’s Paper* (April 19, 1856), reprinted in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, trans. Samuel Moore (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 1: 500.
 30. Karl Marx, “Debates on the Freedom of the Press,” in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*,

Collected Works, vol. 1, Marx: 1835–1843, trans. Richard Dixon et al. (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 139.

31. Walter Benjamin, “One– Way Street,” in Reflections, ed. and trans. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 91.

32. A one– way street as a mode of traffic control was itself a “modern” development; the first one– way streets in Paris were designated in 1909.

33. Hannah Arendt, Introduction to Illuminations, by Walter Benjamin, ed. and trans. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 18. 34. Benjamin, “Karl Kraus,” in Reflections, 263.

35. Ibid., 264. Benjamin’s friend Theodor Adorno used the same theme of “blood” in his own comparison of Kraus with a Shakespearean character: “Kraus is a Shylock who pours forth his own heart’s blood, where Shakespeare’s Shylock wanted to cut the guarantor’s heart out.” Theodor W. Adorno, “Morals and Criminality,” in Notes to Literature, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 2: 43–44.

36. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations, 221–22.

37. Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in Illuminations, 257–58.

38. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in Untimely Meditations, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1894; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 81.

39. Bertolt Brecht, “Shouldn’t We Abolish Aesthetics?,” in Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 20.

40. Bertolt Brecht, “Does Use of the Model Restrict the Artist’s Freedom?” interview with E. A. Winds, 1949. In Willett, ed., Brecht on Theatre, 225.

41. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, ed. G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).

42. The girls today in society

Go for classical poetry.

So to win their hearts one must quote with ease

Aeschylus and Euripides.

.....

But the poet of them all

Who will start ’em simply ravin’

Is the poet people call

The bard of Stratford– on– Avon.

Brush up your Shakespeare.

Start quoting him now.

Brush up your Shakespeare

And the women you will wow.

Just declaim a few lines from “Othella”

And they’ll think you’re a helluva fella.

If your blonde won’t respond when you flatter ’er,

Tell her what Tony told Cleopaterer.

If she fights when her clothes you are mussing,

What are clothes? “Much Ado About Nussing!”

Brush up your Shakespeare

And they’ll all kowtow.

.....

Brush up your Shakespeare.

Start quoting him now.

Brush up your Shakespeare

And the women you will wow.

If your goil is a Washington Heights dream

Treat the kid to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

If she then wants an all– by– herself night

Let her rest ev’ry ’leventh or “Twelfth Night.”

If because of your heat she gets huffy

Simply play on and “Lay on, Macduffy!”

Brush up your Shakespeare
And they'll all kowtow.

- Cole Porter, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," in *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, ed. Robert Kimball (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 395-96.
43. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 134-36; Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. R. G. Smith (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958).
44. Niklas Luhmann, "Paradox of Observing Systems," in *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, ed. William Rasch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 81 (original text in English). Luhmann was a major—and controversial—theorist of modernity, a concept he described as related to the distinction between the problem of truth and the problem of reference—and, further, to "the distinction between the distinction true / untrue and the distinction self- reference / external reference." Niklas Luhmann, "The Modernity of Science," trans. Kerstin Behnke, in *Theories of Distinction*, 65.
45. E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 58.
46. Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush," *Natural History* 75 (1966): 28-33, reprinted in David Scott Kastan, *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Hamlet* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1995), 9-18. When Bohannon's narrative was retold in Pierre Bayard's *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, Jay McInerney singled it out as "the funniest section in the book." See Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlmann (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), and Jay McInerney, "Faking It," *New York Times* (November 11, 2007).
47. Claude Lévi- Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology: I*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 12, 13.
48. Jacques Lacan, "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis," in *The Seminar, Book 11*, 1964; trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), 232.
49. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho- Analysis, 1961), 4: 264.
50. A. C. Bradley, "The Substance of Tragedy," in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 12.
51. Inaugural Address, Kennedy Draft, 01/17/1961; *Papers of John F. Kennedy: President's Office Files*, 01/20/1961-11/22/1963; John F. Kennedy Library, National Archives and Records Administration.