

Editorial

Rosy Colombo, Nadia Fusini

1. *Myriad-minded Shakespeare*

(Nadia Fusini)

It is not our intention in this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare* to reopen the old quarrel, already ancient for Socrates, concerning the relationship between literature and philosophy. Neither do we, friends and lovers of Shakespeare, want to come to his defence and proclaim his superiority. Nor do we want to excite the hidden rivalry between disciplines. Behind the question there isn't some kind of professional jealousy; we Shakespeareans have no wish to assert the supremacy of the artist over the philosopher, as if we were prey to a competitive impulse, possessed by a will-to-power over philosophy. Not at all. This is certainly not the case: we have come to terms with the old rivalry between poetry and philosophy, we have 'overcome' Plato.

The question we pose is not of the commonplace kind: "Is Shakespeare your favourite writer?" Rather, we ask some of our friends, philosophers by profession: "How central is drama, and particularly Shakespearean drama, to your thinking?" Or, more insistently: "Is or is not Shakespeare the potent force that has made our world the way it is?" – something of which Harold Bloom assures us when he states that "Shakespeare invented us"¹. Or, more sympathetically: "How deeply Shakespearean do you feel you are, or think you are? Is Shakespeare an ally of yours in your thinking?". In other words, we ask our philosopher friends if, in order to think, they *must* go

¹ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, London, Fourth Estate, 1999, pp. xvii-xviii.

to Shakespeare. Or whether they *can* think without Shakespeare. Because we Shakespeareans cannot...

This does not mean that we Shakespeareans know *what* Shakespeare thought of this or that; the man is elusive, has left us no ideological or moral legacy. But we *know* that he thought: through his characters he has articulated a complex system of values and counter-values, of beliefs and disbeliefs, of ideas, meditations, reflections... Even more, it seems to us that Shakespeare has the gift of posing fundamental questions, questions of capital interest for his as for our age. What interests Shakespeare is the theatre of the mind, which is incredibly alive, informed by his keen interest in subjectivity as shown in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth*, who are first of all heroes of the mind.

Shakespeare has undoubtedly created at least two icons of thought, Hamlet and Macbeth. Not that other heroes of his do not think: Brutus thinks, Iago and Othello think, Lear and his Fool think. But with Macbeth and Hamlet thinking is shown as a dramatic act, a tragic one indeed. And it is not by chance that in both thought explodes, destroys them. And you know why? Because in order to think one needs courage, if thinking means, as it does for Macbeth, finding in himself the instinct for regicide, or for Hamlet a parricidal, incestuous desire.

In different ways Shakespeare questions the nature of man. "What's a man?" is a question that does not resonate only in Hamlet's most famous monologue. In different registers Shakespeare meditates on the mystery and wonder of thinking. Nor does he shun the most difficult question: *unde malum?* while exploring the individual microcosm and the interior space of human subjectivity – there discovering another New World, with its own shadowy recesses and obscure areas, where something lies unknown, unacknowledged – an extraneity found in the uncanny intimacy of an 'I' that discovers itself in the 'other'. Before its assumption by Rimbaud, "Je est un autre" is Viola's line in *Twelfth Night* (III.i.143²) and Iago's cue in *Othello* (I.i.64³). In their respective plays, with their negations ("I am not what I am" is their mode), both of them open the doors of a

² William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, eds J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare, London-New York, Routledge, 1988.

³ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare, Walton-on-Thames, Nelson, 1997.

philosophical meditation that introduces us to our modernity. The ego's unity is already a chimera in Shakespeare, whom Freud reads with an unsurpassed intensity, finding in him a source of inspiration. "Freud is deeply Shakespearean" David Hillman comments, even if "Freud's Shakespeare is hardly Shakespeare at all"⁴.

Undoubtedly our world has been "Shakespearized", to quote Emerson, certain as he was that "Shakespeare wrote the text of modern life", that "[a] good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence; but not in Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors. For executive faculty, for creation, Shakespeare is unique"⁵. An assertion that anticipates the brilliant intuition of Wittgenstein when he defines Shakespeare not as "poet", but as "creator of language": "Sprachschöpfer", not "Dichter". Shakespeare cannot be compared to any other poet, Wittgenstein insists; he has "the supple hand that created new natural linguistic forms"⁶. Like nobody else he can play the language-game.

It is as though with Shakespeare we return to the idea of poetry as *ainigma* – which is precisely what poetry was for the ancient men of wisdom, the Greek masters, long before the philosophers by profession came into existence; an *ainigma*, an obscure illogical dark saying, which withholds its meaning, refuses itself, resists exegesis and forces us to the allegorical posture of speaking on its behalf.

That is what we Shakespeareans do: confronting the *ainigma*, which in the Shakespearean text thickens, darkens, grows denser as readings and interpretations accumulate through the centuries, we, his devoted readers, go on reading, repeating, learning by heart, paraphrasing, commenting his words with our words in a kind of "interminable entertainment"⁷, knowing very well that there is nothing to explain. Nothing to illuminate, except our fascination. Our task is not to interpret Shakespeare; we Shakespeareans know too well that the

⁴ David Hillman, "Freud's Shakespeare", in *Great Shakespeareans: Marx and Freud*, eds Crystal Bartolovich et al., London-New York, Continuum, 2012, pp. 104-35; p. 103.

⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Shakespeare; or, the Poet", in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Richard Poirier, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 329-42.

⁶ I comment on these crucial assertions by Wittgenstein in *Di vita si muore. Lo spettacolo delle passioni nel teatro di Shakespeare*, Milano, Mondadori, 2010, pp. 6ff. See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, in collaboration with Heikki Nymann, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, p. 84.

⁷ Maurice Blanchot speaks of *L'Entretien infini*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.

Shakespearean text will resist any conceptual framework in which we try to confine it so as to make sense of it... It lives off our defeat and subjects us to a kind of dialectical reversal, where we the readers are the ones being read... In this sense reading Shakespeare is like the encounter with the Other, it's like the exposure to the Other. And therefore an adventure of knowledge, and therefore a philosophical experience: a hermeneutical experience.

This is precisely what happens with *Hamlet*, when Freud, Goethe, Nietzsche, Lacan, Levinas, Derrida read it. Or with *Othello*, when Cavell reads it. It is a kind of exposition from which the philosopher by profession, and the literary critic too, should they so wish, protect themselves through learning – with recourse, that is, to a technique of appropriation and domestication. Although, I repeat, the kind of exposure Shakespeare invites us to is not one of learning; on the contrary, if truly accepted, if deeply thought, *that* exposition is an experience of the 'real'. And if anything it requires us to forgo 'knowing'.

T. S. Eliot is absolutely right in his *Four Quartets*: "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality"⁸. But we don't forget that, in the very act of reminding us of our frailty vis-à-vis the ultimate meaning, he offers us his poem, and with it a 'poetic way' to reality, to truth, to life and its representation.

Much in the same mood, but in his own philosophical way, Heidegger teaches us that "thinking may be the same as wandering"⁹, as moving along paths that are interrupted, broken, opening us into clearings not knowing where they lead, exposing us to the most varied dangers. May Shakespeare's theatre be one of those paths? We Shakespeareans wonder, ready to swear that it is (it's our strong belief).

We Shakespeareans know perfectly well, of course, that Shakespeare *is not* a philosopher. Nor was he a systematic thinker. Shakespeare is an actor, stage manager, poet, and *playwright* – a term which in itself must be dissected. Shakespeare was all that, but *not* a philosopher. We don't go to Shakespeare for his philosophy, of course; we refuse the very idea of a Shakespearean philosophy – in the sense that we

⁸ T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", in *Four Quartets*, London, Faber & Faber, 2009, ll. 44-45.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, Engl. transl. by Peter D. Hertz, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, pp. 71-72.

talk of a Cartesian or Kantian philosophy. We see the difficulty poetry poses for philosophy. Still, we believe that poetry (literature, drama, and generally speaking the imagination implied in the creative act) is an exercise in thinking. And if this is true, at this sport Shakespeare excels, and his plays are “exercises at the edge of human possibility”¹⁰. But it remains true for us that Shakespeare is above all a *playwright*.

This is Shakespeare for us Shakespeareans: a writer for the theatre, one who writes and stages what he writes – and produces it in the mode of ‘play’. Shakespeare is an *homo ludens* as characterized in Huizinga’s fine book¹¹, which among many other things helps us understand the suffix *play* in the word *playwright*. There is a *Spieltrieb*, an impulse to play, Huizinga explains; where ‘play’ – one sees this with children – is carried out in all seriousness. And it is characterized by order, tension, solemnity, fervour; so much so that a sense of a sacred act slowly insinuates itself into the idea itself of play.

Playwright is the definition most appropriate for Shakespeare. It translates into a more common, vulgar linguistic register, the time-honoured profession of the dramaturg, or dramatist – the creator of dramatic texts, be they comedies or tragedies. The *playwright* produces stage-plays: *produces*, not *writes*; because *wright* does not allude to the act of writing, has nothing to do with *writer*, despite the similar sound, which is pure coincidence. The word *wright* refers us instead to the verb *to work*, and thus to the action of the person intent on forging some kind of matter; it alludes to a craftsman or builder, so that we say *wheelwright* or *cartwright*, for example, to refer to the person who makes wheels or carts. In short, the term *wright*, like the more archaic *wrytha*, is used to refer to someone who makes things, objects which exist in the world because man has made them. In this minimal, microcosmic way, yes, man is a *creator* and Shakespeare one who *makes* plays.

Shakespeare is not Milton. He is not Dante. He is one who works for the theatre. He is a poet in the same sense in which are *poietes*

¹⁰ A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 382.

¹¹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, London, Paladin Books, 1970, p. 33. See also Nadia Fusini, “Shakespeare: Playwright or ‘Sprachschöpfer’?”, in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 *On Authorship*, eds Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna (2012), pp. 95-118.

the very first playwrights in Western literature whose works survive: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides. For them too the term *poietes* was used with a connotation that put the accent on *making*. And so it is with the term *playwright*, that in fact translates *poietes*, as referring to the person who performs that special act of *poiesis* – that consists of producing a spectacle, which in a broader sense may include forms of entertainment, such as acrobatic games, leaps and somersaults, flawless exhibitions; in short, the kind of things that in Elizabethan times were done at fairs – precisely what was imagined by poor Sly, duped by his hosts, when he is promised a pleasant entertainment in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

‘Comediographer’, ‘tragediographer’, ‘dramatist’ are terms which in their etymologies evoke a noble loftiness which the ‘vulgar’ term ‘playwright’ does not. But this term certainly comes closer to defining more exactly the trade of Shakespeare working for the theatre.

The word *play* is an interesting one. Reflecting on Old English, Huizinga notes that within the semantic area of *play*, alongside *lâc* and *plega*, there is the word *spelian*, which has the precise meaning of ‘doing something for another’, ‘to be in the place of another’; thus, to represent someone, to act on his behalf – and here the semantic field of ritual and acting opens up. Someone ‘playing’ another. The cross-dresser, someone in disguise, ‘plays’ another being. He *is* actually another being. And what is being represented is a *drama* – that is, an action performed as representation.

At its most ancient stage, the mood of drama is Dionysian ecstasy, festive excitement, dithyrambic enthusiasm, in which the actor is transported into the extraneous I, which he does not represent but embodies, drawing the spectators along with him into the metamorphosis. Which is just what happened at the end of the sixteenth century to those who went to ‘see’ Shakespeare.

Huizinga explains that ancient tragedy and comedy were born within the spheres of play and competition. The ancient poets indeed created their works for the Dionysian contests. In the broad sense of the original word, *poiesis*, poetry arises within the domain of play and this consciousness of its ludic nature is preserved especially in the theatre, where the *drama*, the action, is *play*. And there is weeping and laughing, just as with Shakespeare, because the true poet – we have Socrates’ word for it – is at once comic and tragic. The same person, affirms Socrates in the *Symposium*, “should be

able to write both comedy and tragedy"¹². For all of life is at once a tragedy and a comedy, is it not? The upshot of the matter, Socrates explains to Protarchus, is that in tragedies and in comedies, and not only on stage but "in all of life's tragedies and comedies, pleasures are mixed with pains"¹³.

This no doubt is how it is with Shakespeare, who plays in all seriousness, conveys onto the stage of his theatre the great anxiety of knowledge about existence typical of his age. For we do well to remember that in that special, late Renaissance of the Elizabethan age it is not only an élite, conscious of itself, that forces life into a play of imagined perfection, but an entire people who seeks to grasp the emotion of existence in the theatrical game/play. Humanity is disturbed by its own existence: experience is given first of all as emotion, the emotion of existing, of being in the world, of having a destiny. In the theatre, Shakespeare represents, imitates, reflects with a spiritual attitude that is play – not frivolous, but intensely ludic.

Shakespeare comments many times on the mystery and marvel of the theatre; in his plays and through his characters he *thinks* fundamentally. He has a natural gift for that. His thought is never still. There is a Protean quality that makes all the difference. In Nuttall's words, he has "a knack of asking fundamental questions"¹⁴. His thinking adapts wonderfully to the most different realities and the most varied cases, and attunes to endless desire and mobile energy in such a fantasmagoric way, that his medium favours and facilitates, because theatre, especially Shakespearean theatre, does in fact multiply and complicate identifications, bringing out into the open the way the internal world of the human subject is inhabited by a multitude, as Pessoa would say. It is in this sense that Cavell speaks of "the immense intelligence of the Shakespearean corpus"¹⁵. The creative dimension makes the difference here: the very richness of the plays, the very impossibility, due to their richness, of imposing a final meaning upon them is precisely what makes them philosophical quarries.

¹² Plato, *Symposium*, 223D.

¹³ Plato, *Filebo*, 50B.

¹⁴ Nuttall, p. 378.

¹⁵ Stanley Cavell, "Foreword", in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. John J. Joughin, London, Routledge, 2000, p. xiii.

Not by chance, trying to define the poetical character, Keats refers to Shakespeare as the supreme model of the “Man of Achievement”. What is precisely his achievement? A kind of superhuman humanity? Clearly, Keats is very impressed by a sort of immeasurable magnitude of his achievement, he is shocked by the vast extent of his creative capacity, how his wit rages freely – he considers him a master of imaginative and emotional effects: so intelligent! so rich in tones and nuances!¹⁶ It is *unheimlich*, the way Shakespeare can catch thinking as a process; it looks as though thinking were for him directly a dimension of the form and the movement of language. His thinking is open and mysterious at the same time.

In this ‘poetic’ sense – the sense of Keats’s ‘poetical’ understanding – Shakespeare’s plays are philosophical dramas, and retain an ethical dimension. They immediately articulate questions of high metaphysical matter. He has such a feeling for language, he is so finely attuned to the languageness of language, that his plays lay open to us questions otherwise opaque. And help us to come to terms, somehow, with our ‘otherness within’. With the effect of making all other thoughts appear ‘poor’. Or too elaborate. Or too logical. Or systematic.

In writing about Shakespeare our philosophical friends demonstrate – *verba volant, scripta manent* – that reading Shakespeare is an exercise of the mind and a training of the soul, moving us towards a kind of thinking which transcends conventional philosophical categories and provides access to the very conditions of philosophical questioning itself. So much so that we might say that we come to thought precisely when, in the act of thinking radical questions, we find ourselves, as Hamlet does, in front of an impossibility: “Ay, there’s the rub” (III.i.64¹⁷) – a rub which reveals us to ourselves as “*gedanken-arm*”. As Heidegger says in his *Gelassenheit*, he who must think, because it is his job, may find himself *gedanken-arm*, thought-poor.

It is precisely then, when we find ourselves disarmed, speechless, struck dumb by the poverty and penury of language, when logic defeats us, when reason stumbles and falls in the absence of thought, precisely then, we Shakespeareans suggest, Shakespeare may help.

¹⁶ Letter to George and Tom Keats, December 21, 1817, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 43 (see also the Italian edition: John Keats, *Lettere sulla poesia*, ed. Nadia Fusini, Milano, Mondadori, 2005, p. 38).

¹⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006.

2. A scene of mourning

(Rosy Colombo)

The relevance of Shakespeare's language for philosophical thinking, which Nadia Fusini has just asked us to consider – and which has rarely been considered in Italy¹⁸ – has led in the course of time to a discourse that clearly shows how the early modern universe is a decidedly 'post-Renaissance' world. And taking up with her Harold Bloom's thought-provoking argument, it is in such a world that Shakespeare's invention of the human took shape, inhabiting the landscape of modernity as an experience of mourning – mourning for the loss of reason, of faith, of desire. "All passion spent": the final chord in *Samson Agonistes* indicates the unease of an experience that is shared both by the tragic shadows of Shakespeare and the burnt-out ones of Samuel Beckett, with their passion for silence.

Enter Hamlet, of course. Unmanned by the loss of his father, horrified at the discovery of his mother's lust, shattered by the apparition

¹⁸ Benedetto Croce's impassioned appeal ("Shakespeare", 1919, in *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille*, Bari, Laterza, 1961) to consider Shakespeare as a "shared cultural heritage" has been largely ignored. Apart from Massimo Cacciari (e.g. *Hamletica*, Milano, Adelphi, 2009), Remo Bodei (*Piramidi di tempo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006) and a few others (for the plays, we might mention Franco Ricordi's recent study, *Shakespeare filosofo dell'essere*, Milano, Mimesis, 2011), a discussion of the relations between Shakespeare and philosophical thought has tended to be marginal in Italy, alien to the academic world (where we should in any case distinguish between philosophers and lecturers in philosophy). It has been even more marginal, and still is, in criticism of Shakespeare, apart from a few scholars with epistemological interests, like Nadia Fusini (in her recent, compelling study *Di vita si muore*), Alessandra Marzola (who has contributed to this issue), or Silvia Bigliuzzi (*Nel prisma del nulla*, Napoli, Liguori, 2005). It was Luigi Trenti, an Italianist, who responded to the invitation of one of Italy's greatest experts in English literature, Agostino Lombardo, to heed Croce's words on Shakespeare: see Luigi Trenti, "'I Know You What You Are': Croce e Shakespeare", in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 6 *Shakespeare e l'Italia*, ed. Rosy Colombo (2008), pp. 121-34. The situation in the last thirty years has been very different in the English-speaking world, particularly in the U.S.A.; this first digital issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* has given that world our attention, and we have received support and collaboration in return. There have been valuable studies, among others, by Tzachi Zamir (*Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2007), Paul A. Kottman (*Philosophers on Shakespeare*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), Stanley Stewart (*Shakespeare and Philosophy*, New York, Routledge, 2010). A recent seminar on "Shakespeare and Philosophy", convened by Paul A. Kottman and Philip Lorenz for the 40th annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, Boston, 5-7 April 2012, has also produced important results. For other studies see the citations in this editorial. Stanley Cavell's contribution has, of course, been fundamental: for this, see note 20.

tion of a ghost, whose eternal suffering of the moment of death – “in the blossoms of [his] sins / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled” (I.v.76-77¹⁹) – embodies the Lutheran denial of redemption. The student prince engages in a passionate discussion of reality and illusion with his friend Horatio – a friendship that, significantly, developed in the intellectual climate of Wittenberg; as the ghost appears and disappears the tension grows, until Hamlet asks Horatio to accept the exposure to Otherness as a measure of the impotence of human reason.

Fatherless by destiny and, having repudiated the substitute father, by choice, Hamlet withdraws into the solitude of a consciousness that is already wholly modern, irreparably split: he elaborates his melancholy in this fault line, attuned to the reformation theology that was agitating traditional dogma. Indeed, one of the first symptoms is precisely the crisis of a strong sense of identity based on the name of the father, a crisis which is dramatized in the young Hamlet’s inability to know what to call the ghost. “I’ll call thee Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane” (I.iv.44-45) he says to the shadow, whose appearance is similar to but not identical with the image of his father, a paradoxical hybrid of presence/absence. The original ontologically stable and certain identity of the name is now displaced into a “questionable shape” (I.iv.43), a spectral alterity that evades all meaning. Which makes these the lines that have come to mark indelibly the style of modernity: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (I.v.165-66).

While it grafts onto the body of reformation theology the doubt about knowledge once cultivated by stoics and skeptics, and later cancelled by the metaphysical claims of humanism, this memorable line is actually in mourning for philosophy; not of a particular philosophy, of course, but of all philosophy and its statutory vocation to find an explanation of the foundations of reality. The loss of the primacy of the *logos* is inscribed in the play, then, as a great drama of mourning and loss; in fact, it is the driving force of Shakespearean tragic form, which Stanley Cavell has related to skepticism – Emerson’s and Wittgenstein’s in particular –, stoic morality, and the very idea of tragedy, “the story and study of the failure of acknowledg-

¹⁹ All quotations from *Hamlet* are taken from the Arden edition (cf. note 17).

ment" and therefore of the knowability of the self²⁰. Like the ghost in *Hamlet*, who, "throbbing between two lives"²¹, introduces a fracture in the knowable, modern reason continues to inhabit – and haunt – artistic forms although it no longer resides in them, and no longer belongs to them. It is at once *here* yet evanescent, as in the spectral meeting at dawn in *Little Gidding*, in humanity's renewed experience of bereavement, which was then the war: "'What! are you / here?' Although we were not"²².

3. Legacy

(Rosy Colombo)

Following Derrida, today we tend to read Shakespeare's presence in modern culture as a spectral presence²³: Shakespeare is a *revenant* both in the field of creative writing and in philosophy (an issue which is highlighted in the current debate on his legacy). The normal demarcation of branches of knowledge does not hold in Shakespeare, who has them converse with each other. As we know, Shakespeare haunts all artistic forms, modulating himself in them without residing in any; but he also plays a disturbing role in philosophical thought: he challenges the truths of the father, he empties of sense absolutes and ontological demarcations – in short, he undermines the traditional codes of knowledge.

A recent example of this is Andrew Cutrofello's *Continental Philosophy*²⁴ – a search, starting from Kant, for an alternative to the age-old academic rivalry between the logical-analytical tradition of English and American philosophy on the one hand, and the so-called 'philosophi-

²⁰ I refer to his challenging *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, as well as the later and better-known *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, updated ed. 2003, in which Cavell recognizes his longstanding indebtedness to Wittgenstein, and relates it to his choice of Shakespeare as an indispensable companion.

²¹ See T. S. Eliot, "The Fire Sermon", in *The Waste Land*, London, Faber & Faber, 1999, l. 218.

²² T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding", in *Four Quartets*, ll. 45-46.

²³ See, among others, Maurizio Calbi's recent study of present-day media adaptations of Shakespeare: *Spectral Shakespeares*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

²⁴ Andrew Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy*, New York-London, Routledge, 2010.

cal humanism' of Europe on the other. The book develops through a sequence of Shakespearean quotations, placed as epigraphs to each chapter, and that function both as constant dialectics in the history of thought and as a dramatization of some 'winters of discontent' in the very heart of philosophy. Cutrofello's study offers a 'Shakespearized' perspective, as Nadia Fusini highlights in these pages with reference to Emerson. This perspective, in the wake of the later Wittgenstein, is where Stanley Cavell fashioned his linguistic skepticism, which leans on Emerson's conception of philosophy as deconstruction of knowledge: "truly speaking it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul" is the epigraph that sets the tone for *The Claim of Reason*. In this tonality emotion – which is paradigmatic of the language of poetry – is not only accepted, but sought after as a necessary moment for extending the rational basis of philosophy, and sets off a desire for 'thinking with Shakespeare', which we want to examine here. With Shakespeare philosophy equips itself to look outside itself; in art, in language, in history, and in life. It comes close to music, a language where intensity of pathos combines with the utmost mathematical rigor.

Throughout *Continental Philosophy* fragments of the Shakespearean corpus show his immanence in crucial questions such as the self, time and death. Evidence of this immanence can be found in some of the contributions to this journal: it is to be found in the philosophical canon of the nineteenth century (Herder, Hegel, Nietzsche), but still more in certain philosophers of the twentieth century, when the crisis of the foundations disowned the ontology of origin and turned in the direction of linguistic difference, causing a dramatic swerve in the very essence nature of the thought process: one example is the deconstructionist landscape of Levinas, Derrida and Lacan, in which the real is constitutionally resistant to being fully symbolized. To proceed with Nadia Fusini's argument, as the perception of crisis becomes stronger, so does the relevance of Shakespeare for philosophical reason. A dialogue proves to be necessary: in Hannah Arendt's *Life of the Mind*, for example; or in Heidegger's and Adorno's abandonment of metaphysics. Intuitive knowledge and rational knowledge are clasped in a dialectic knot. Art and philosophy may remain two distinct forms of thought, but they are no longer set against each other. Yet again *Hamlet* is a case in point: in the play, alongside the Wittenberg community there is a community of players, and both are equally inadequate to 'catch' the real.

Shakespeare has become an essential part of the process by which culture has been emancipated from the constraints of authority and the claims of teleological patterns. Did he anticipate all this? Emmanuel Levinas, often referred to in this issue, puts it this way:

Il me semble parfois que toute la philosophie n'est qu'une méditation de Shakespeare²⁵.

Similarly, Terry Eagleton, quoted by the editors of the Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*:

Though conclusive evidence is hard to come by, it is difficult to read Shakespeare without feeling that he was almost certainly familiar with the writings of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein and Derrida²⁶.

Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor themselves in turn object:

Is it because in so many ways Shakespeare got in first, anticipating many of the major concerns of later writers, or is it because they were themselves overwhelmingly influenced by him? *Hamlet* has certainly featured in some of the key texts in modern philosophy and psychoanalysis. Marx developed a revolutionary theory of history in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852) through a subversive reading of the Ghost of Hamlet's father. Freud famously first sketched his theory of the Oedipus complex (later developed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900) in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess in October 1897 in which he argued that, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's "unconscious understood the unconscious of his hero" in this way²⁷.

It is pointless trying to come down on one side or the other; perhaps both views of the matter are true.

For all those who have lent Shakespeare their ears, however, the legacy is not experienced as a debt, a compulsion to repetition, or an

²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, Paris, PUF, 1983, p. 60.

²⁶ Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp. ix-x, cit. in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 26. Of course, in this context, there is no need to completely exclude Marx and Freud as thinkers from the category of philosophers in the strict (i.e. systematic) sense of the word. See Hillman, "Freud's Shakespeare".

²⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 26.

obligation. It is rather a choice: a habit of freedom, to be relaunched in the challenge of interpretation. This is where Shakespeare is different, never inherited in full; since no legacy – in Derrida's terms – is ever identical to itself²⁸. It is a cluster of fragments dropped from the past, a spectral thing, *the thing*, that obsesses the modern imaginary, which has been given over to the demon of 'hauntology'.

One can never come into full possession of a legacy, least of all Shakespeare's. It is not a *corpus* to appropriate or identify with; it is a living thing yet always other. Its power lies in an endless process of deferral, a game that never reaches a conclusion. The meeting is constantly being renewed, but is never completed; it is rather the driving force of an unending metamorphosis. The phantom is both past and present: it goes on speaking, it always has something more to say, and yet, precisely because it is living, it retains its mystery, undermining – as Beckett understood better than anyone else – all desire for closure. Shakespeare's legacy is a horizon: it recedes the more one tries to approach it. But in the meantime one has moved forward.

²⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, Paris, Galilée, 1993, p. 40. I am indebted to my friend Silvano Facioni for this important reference, along with other valuable suggestions while I was writing these pages.