

## Abstracts

### *Shakespeare and Philosophical Criticism*

TZACHI ZAMIR

The essay considers competing ways in which the interface between Shakespeare and philosophy may be conceived. After rejecting some routes, the essay unfolds its own proposal regarding philosophical criticism, exemplifying the approach through a reading of *Sonnet 71*.

**Keywords:** Knowledge in literature, Truth in literature, Intensity, Philosophy, Epistemology, Shakespeare

### *Reading Shakespeare – Reading Modernity*

KRISTIN GJESDAL

From the mid 1700s onwards, the German literati and theatre community were engaged in a heated and wide-ranging debate over William Shakespeare's drama. At stake were not only questions about the theatrical implications and impact of Elizabethan drama, but also a more systematic inquiry into the nature of art. In this context, one voice stands out: that of Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder's 1772 essay "Shakespear" (sic) sums up the contemporary discussion, but also brings it to a new philosophical level. For Herder, Shakespeare is the Bard of modernity. His theatre articulates patterns of diversity within and between cultures, thus also triggering a set of new hermeneutic problems and challenges. Through his work on Shakespeare, Herder brings forth a novel understanding of modernity – of art in modernity, of the conditions of self-understanding and understanding others – that differs from the way Hegel and his likes, a good thirty years later, would shape the discourse of hermeneutics as well as our understanding of the modern world and the role of art within it.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Modernity, Herder, Hegel, Shakespeare, Aesthetics

*"The Charm Dissolves Apace": Shakespeare and the Self-Dissolution of Drama*

PAUL A. KOTTMAN

In this essay, I argue that Shakespeare – perhaps the world's pre-eminent dramatist – stages, from within his drama, the self-dissolution of our need for the sensuous, material representation of human actions in order to understand ourselves as actors, as free self-determining agents in the world. The depiction of our lessening need for sensuous representational drama becomes, itself, a primary task of Shakespearean drama – as if being a dramatist, for Shakespeare, means making the historical disappearance of the conditions under which traditional (sensuous, representational) forms of drama matter into the very stuff of a dramatic work. Building on these claims, I suggest that Shakespearean drama offers an alternative future for modernism to the one presented in recent philosophical work on modernist art. Precisely because Shakespeare's artistic horizons are less limited than other modernist movements – his dramatic work is not nearly as restricted (not nearly as precious, some might say) as Cage's or Pollock's – it is to Shakespeare's radical modernism that we might turn to find a more capacious future for art (and, hence, for philosophical reflection on art) beyond both its sensuous and its representational form.

**Keywords:** Hegel, *The Tempest*, Aristotle, Aesthetics

*Nietzsche's Shakespeare: Musicality and Historicity in The Birth of Tragedy*

KATIE BRENNAN

Nietzsche was deeply interested in Shakespeare during the period leading up to the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. His notebooks from this period clearly indicate that throughout the planning stages of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had intended to devote an entire chapter to Shakespeare, in which Shakespeare was to serve as a bridge between the spirit of the great ancient Greek playwrights and Wagner. In this paper I discuss why, despite the absence of a detailed account of Shakespeare in the final version *The Birth of Tragedy*, he is nonetheless essential to Nietzsche's theory of tragedy.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, Shakespeare, Tragedy, Aesthetics, *Hamlet*

### *Considerazioni 'impolitiche' sul Re Lear*

MASSIMO CACCIARI

This essay reads Shakespeare's *King Lear* as the extreme expression of a world in decay, approaching a kind of apocalypse, the end of all time and radical dissolution of every human bond – political, social, familiar – symbolized in particular by the corrosion of the filial bond. Aspects of the carnivalesque inhabit such an accelerated world, rushing madly towards its end; however, it is argued, the process of the carnival here does not fulfil its traditional role as reversal leading to the re-establishment of a new world order. In this sense, the end cannot be interpreted as a new beginning, and the order of tragedy is abandoned in favour of the "grotesque absolute" (Hegel). The grotesque is traced throughout the play in the excess of passion that plagues the characters, while the apocalyptic setting is materialized through the diverse forms of *secessio* – the severance and radical departure from established human bonds and social and political norms – that the characters enact.

**Keywords:** *King Lear*, Anomie, Impoliticity, Excess, Carnavalesque

### *Il testo dell'altro. Derrida dentro Shakespeare*

SILVANO FACIONI

*Aphorism Countertime* is a short collection of thirty-nine aphorisms written by Jacques Derrida on *Romeo and Juliet*. In these aphorisms the French philosopher discusses the structure of the tragedy: Romeo and Juliet are, in a sense, the heroes of 'countertime' (*contretemps*), because they missed each other, but they also survived each other, through their name, by means of a studied effect of *contretemps*. The problem of the name represents the theoretical center of Derrida's analysis: when Juliet addresses Romeo asking him to disown his father and his name, she seems to call him beyond his name, or, in other words, she seems to want Romeo's death. He, his living self, living and singular desire, is not 'Romeo', but the separation, the aphorism of his name remains impossible. He dies without his name but he dies also because he has not been able to set himself free from his name, and this is the contradiction that leads the two lovers of Verona to their death. Jacques Derrida therefore wishes to show that the mourning of the other performed by each of the two lovers marks a relationship with otherness: the mourning of the other will always be, in a sense, the mourning of the self.

**Keywords:** Countertime, Jacques Derrida, *Romeo and Juliet*, Survival, The Other, Death

## *Confusing Matters: Romeo and Juliet and Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*

JENNIFER ANN BATES

This article concerns how we generate continuity from the disparate; how experienced time, like fire, is a show, is tragic, and yet is also kindling cognition. I discuss this by looking at nature metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet* through the lens of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*. This tragedy is not primarily about freedom. I begin with two metaphors of unification through mediation: the Friar's "plant" and Hegel's "rose in the cross". I then focus on Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and the 'show' of nature in terms of 1) the point of contact between ideality and reality and 2) ideality as light dialectically en-mattered into increasingly complex forms (fire, time and the self-kindling life of plants and animals). Light as chemical fire is the tragic "prose of nature", existing directly prior to organic life, the living "poetry of nature". In *Romeo and Juliet*, I draw on the play's abundant nature metaphors, especially of light, fire, the earth's elements, and the heat of contact between lovers and duelers. I show how these metaphors trace the en-mattering of light through fire into chemical combustion and thus reveal the tragic show of the inability of these lovers to exist as the poetry of nature.

**Keywords:** Hegel, *Romeo and Juliet*, Philosophy of nature, Nature metaphors, Dialectic, Tragedy

## *Hamlet and the Passion of Knowledge*

ALESSANDRA MARZOLA

This essay explores the ways Hamlet dramatizes early modern epistemophilia, a drive towards knowledge that is infused with passion and triggered by desire. Hamlet's desire to know "what lies inside" picks up rhetorical, scientific and philosophical threads of knowledge to see whether they are able to dissect, along with the deep recesses of the body, the density of language and of time. I submit that Hamlet's quest for knowledge finds its sense and its urgency in the Ghost's poisonous story (I.v), where the biblical Fall is said to be beyond salvation and yet imposed upon as the foundational scene of action. In fact, I propose to read the whole play as a striking revisitation of that Fall, which stages and re-enacts the trauma of Protestant modernity. *Hamlet* is thus seen to partake in the early modern interrogation of the Scriptures, an impressive cultural venture whose political and religious implications the play masterfully foregrounds. More than any biblical exegete could have done, *Hamlet* shows the ways in which desire feeds the search for knowledge. And through a close reading of selected passages, I set out to trace and

explore the *loci* of such desire. I also point to ways in which Hamlet's lines of questioning – of the body, of Time, of memory techniques and of their encroachment upon oblivion – ultimately converge into one, all-encompassing interrogation of knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Hamlet*, Epistemophilia, Traumatized memory, Desire

### *It Nothing Must*

SIMON CRITCHLEY, JAMIESON WEBSTER

The figure of Hamlet haunts our culture like the Ghost haunts Shakespeare's melancholy Dane. Arguably, no literary work is more familiar to us. Everyone knows at least six words from *Hamlet*, and most people know many more. Yet the play – Shakespeare's longest – is more than "passing strange", and it becomes even more complex when considered closely. Reading *Hamlet* alongside other writers, philosophers, and psychoanalysts – Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Freud, Lacan, Nietzsche, Melville, and Joyce – Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster go in search of a particularly modern drama that is as much about ourselves as it is a product of Shakespeare's imagination. They also offer a startling interpretation of the action onstage: it is structured around "nothing" – or, in the enigmatic words of the player queen, "it nothing must". From the illusion of theater and the spectacle of statecraft to the psychological interplay of inhibition and emotion, *Hamlet* discloses the modern paradox of our lives: how thought and action seem to pull against each other, the one annulling the possibility of the other. As a counterweight to Hamlet's melancholy paralysis, Ophelia emerges as the play's true hero. In her madness, she lives the love of which Hamlet is incapable. Avoiding the customary clichés about the timelessness of the Bard, Critchley and Webster show the timely power of *Hamlet* to cast light on the intractable dilemmas of human existence in a world that is rotten and out of joint. (From the blurb of *Stay Illusion!: The Hamlet Doctrine*, New York, Pantheon Books, 2013, of which the chapter is an excerpt.)

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Nihilism, Gorgias, Sovereignty

### *Shakespeare's Sense of Dialectics: A Contribution to Kate's Policy*

FRANCA D'AGOSTINI

I suggest that the notion of conceptual dialectics finds an ideal representation in Shakespeare's theatrical work. In a sense, Shakespeare shows us how concepts work, and how we may make them work. This is especially interesting, from a philosophical point of view: not exactly in theoretical but rather

*methodological* perspective. After a brief specification concerning the meaning of dialectics here taken into account, I focus on one of the first (maybe the first) of Shakespeare's comedies, *The Taming of the (a) Shrew*, in which Shakespeare's sense of dialectics finds a peculiar expression, revealing that it is not only a linguistic feature, but a true principle of dramaturgic creation, as well as a reflection on life and human interactions.

**Keywords:** *The Taming of the Shrew*, Dialectics, Truth, Contradiction, Men and women

### *Tempo e sovranità. Note a Richard II*

EDOARDO FERRARIO

Based on the well-known interpretations of Shakespeare by Giorgio Melchiori, Ernst H. Kantorowicz and Franco Moretti, this paper examines some of the verbal and dramatic sequences around which the tragedy of *Richard II* develops. These are viewed as the onset and the gradual deepening of the conflict between time and sovereignty. With the help of the philosophy of Kant, Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas, the paper traces them back to their roots in human subjectivity, or rather, in ipseity.

**Keywords:** *Richard II*, Ipseity, Music, Care, Paradoxes

### *"To Save the Honor of Reason": Quasi-Antinomical Conflict in Troilus and Cressida*

ANDREW CUTROFELLO

In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Jacques Derrida contrasts two different ways of saving the honor of reason. One way is that of Immanuel Kant. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant purports to save reason's honor by resolving its antinomies – the conflicts that arise when reason seeks to determine the world as a totality. The other way consists in acknowledging reason's inability to resolve such conflicts while warding off the concomitant danger of reason's autoimmunity or self-destruction. In the preface to the *Critique* Kant purports to save the honor of metaphysics by resolving the antinomies. By personifying "the queen of the sciences" as Hecuba, he implicitly likens antinomical conflict to the Trojan War. After briefly indicating how Kant's critical project is rhetorically supported by his Roman sources (Ovid and Virgil), I go on to show the relevance of *Troilus and Cressida* both to Kant's representation of the antinomies and to Derrida's account of the two different ways of saving reason's honor. For Troilus, as for Kant, the honor of Hecuba has

metaphysical significance. But for Troilus, who stands for pure honor rather than pure reason, the threat of the antinomial represents another kind of danger, one that bears on the autoimmunity of honor itself. The question with which Shakespeare's play leaves us is what it might mean to save the honor of honor.

**Keywords:** *Troilus and Cressida*, Honor, Reason, Antinomies, Autoimmunity, Hecuba, Metaphysics

*Sucking the Sweets of Sweet Philosophy: Shakespeare's Dramatic Use of Philosophy*

ERIK W. SCHMIDT

This essay explores the suggestion that Shakespeare incorporates philosophical elements into his plays to pursue dramatic rather than philosophical or intellectual goals. I suggest that attending to this dramatic dimension reveals how the plays can make a genuine contribution to philosophical thought while avoiding a common form of philosophical bardolatry that attributes to the plays an explicitly philosophical intention they lack. The essay breaks down into three sections. First, it provides an overview of the way Shakespeare uses philosophy to pursue three kinds of dramatic goals in the plays. Next, it outlines the way our study of those effects contributes to philosophy. Finally, it explains how focusing on the issue of dramatic contribution enables us to address three important concerns that have been raised over any effort to link literature to philosophy. By the end, its intent is to show how thinking about the dramatic role philosophy plays in Shakespeare's dramas can help us develop a more complete account of the relationship between philosophy and Shakespeare while avoiding the spectre of a form of philosophical bardolatry that attributes an explicitly philosophical intention to the plays.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Philosophy, Performance, Philosophical method, Literature as philosophy

