

CHAPTER FIVE

In Shakespeare do we trust?

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Trust is evanescent. Trust is tenuous. Trust faces its equivocal trajectory in its subtle and somewhat sublime presence in psychoanalysis. Its presence is often evinced through its conspicuous absence in the definition of trust in theory. Except for Erik Erikson (1950), who proposed the notion of “basic trust,” no psychoanalyst offers much of an explanation of trust. It makes one wonder: do psychoanalysts not trust? Of course they do, but psychoanalytically!

Trust in psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalysis understands the tenuous nature of trust and alludes to it, through implication, in the theory of psychoanalysis. In the earliest writing of Sigmund Freud (1895d), inability to “put up with things” (p. 108) is explored as the possible explanation of paranoia, making it a defense against painful experiences (pp. 109–110). He goes on to develop his theory on paranoia based on projection where “repressed homosexuality” is proffered as the origin of paranoia (1911b, 1915c, 1922b), keeping it within his theory of libido. Though Freud had stated (in a draft of a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess) how the primary symptom in paranoia is “distrust that permits the avoidance of

self-reproach" (cited in Masson, 1985, p. 160), he went on to develop the crucial role of narcissism in paranoia with no future reference to "trust." One plausible Freudian understanding of "trust" could be its relation with secondary narcissism¹ (1911c), premised at the level of the body-ego libido. The repudiation of libidinal energy from the "object libido" back into the ego libido operates at the level of the body; hence it is the body ego² (Freud, 1923b) that creates an experience of mistrust, which finds its projection in distrust.³

Following Freud, Melanie Klein's (1935, 1946) notion of the "paranoid schizoid split" carries implications of mistrust at the schizoid state. Henri Rey (1988) writes that a schizoid state is ridden with "mistrust" (p. 207), as it is operating from a split between "good breast" and "bad breast," necessitated to preserve the good breast from the bad breast. It's of significance to note that the bad breast is nothing but an absence of the good breast which is inferred as bad. It's the break in the continuity of good which doesn't let the trust of its prevalence persist.

Michael Balint (1968), a proponent of object relations theory, understands trust through two body relationships (mother and child)⁴ and gave the conception of "basic fault" as something that has "gone wrong or missing" between the mother and child. It presents like a dynamic power in the life of the person but doesn't take the form of a conflict. It's something like a gap or a break in the structure. It cannot be healed without a permanent scar with which the subject must learn to live. This "gap" implies the "mistrust" which pervades the psyche and is followed by the "area of creation" in Balint's work.⁵

Developing psychic representations of the early mother-child interactions, Margaret Mahler, Pine & Bergman (1975) explain "trust" through her theory of separation-individuation. It is the name she gave to the process by which internal maps of self and others are formed. It is the ability to integrate pleasurable and frustrating aspects of interacting with another person that leads to a stable sense of self that can tolerate fluctuating emotional states between self and other. Early attachment in the autistic phase is a manifestation of trust, the ways in which the mother responds to the instinctive needs of the infant, and leads to an organization of self. A disruption in this leads to a complication in the "core self" (primitive capacities of self) which surfaces in the symbiotic stage as difficulty in differentiating between self and other (Mahler & Furer, 1963). This inability to differentiate leads to a grandiose self-structure which shields low self-esteem, inability to trust others, and

results in a pseudo self-sufficiency to compensate for an unintegrated sense of self which further results in the lack of connection with the other (Horner, 1984). This pseudo-self-sufficiency is what Donald Winnicott (1960) explains as the "false self":

As the mother-child interaction fails to be forged on trust, such that the spontaneity of the infant experience is encroached upon through either ineffective or inadequate caretaking, the nascent vulnerable self develops a defensive, complaint mode of being, called "false self". It is "false" because it does not reflect the spontaneous, true expression of the infant and lacks "being real". (p. 143)

False self is a consequence of mistrust of one's own capacity to be real. Formed precociously on one's own resources, this high functioning "self" is largely defensive where the overreliance on self is simply an inability to trust oneself. Giving as if a cohesive comment on trust through object relations, Winnicott (1967), while explaining a clinical vignette of "feeling real," compares "false self" with Balint's "basic fault" (1979)," and states how poor attachments of the patient made her feel unreal where no trust could salvage her from within.

Of all the deliberations across the discipline, Erik Erikson (1950) is the only psychoanalyst in whose work one finds affirmation of "basic trust" as constitutive of psychosocial development. Erikson denotes "basic trust" to be the sustained inner feeling of optimism regarding oneself and the world at large. It develops out of frequent experiences of one's childhood needs being met with satisfaction. This stage is marked by the dialectics of basic trust vs. basic mistrust, conceived as two polar outcomes that are the opposites of each other. Basic trust is manifested by the willingness to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability (p. 147).⁶ Such a sense of trust implies that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer world but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges. On the other hand, basic mistrust resulting from unreliable and mostly frustrated maternal care leads to a lifelong tendency to veer toward pessimism, withdrawal, lack of faith, and a paranoid view of life. The virtue of "hope" evolves from the notion of trust. When one is able to trust, one is able to have an enduring belief in the attainment of desires despite the dark urges which mark the beginning

of existence (Erikson, 1963). As per Erikson, hope is the earliest and most indispensable virtue inherent in this stage of life. If life is to be sustained, hope must remain even when confidence is wounded and trust is impaired.

In looking at the predicament of trust in psychoanalytic lexicons, it is framed through what Erikson said about hope—it's hard to specify the criteria and even harder to measure it; yet when one reads a psychoanalytic theory, one knows what's not there—a definition of trust, with an implication of it.⁷

Trust in literature

Psychoanalysis might be reticent in providing a grand theory of trust (and more importantly, mistrust) but literature, given its boundless appreciation of human nature and condition, has never been parsimonious about the importance of understanding trust as a fundamental preoccupation of social life. Also, trust and mistrust have always been and remain powerful factors for conflict and resolution across literary genres, be it drama or fiction or the epic form. On the other hand, lyric poetry, which is a heavily individuated literary form and usually considers the self as the sovereign phenomenological agency to understand the universe, deftly uses trust as a conditioning that is fundamental to its ability to comprehend the world, an ability which is so rudimentary that it can only be called an "Eriksonian" imperative. This can be read as an underlying potency of literature, a potency that transcends time and territory. In extant Greek literature for example, from Homer's *Iliad* (c. 1194–1184 BCE), to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (c. 429 BCE), and Euripides' *Medea* (c. 413 BCE), trust occupies a centrality not accorded to other faculties like love and remorse. Similarly, the narrative in Indian epics like Mahabharata (c. 500 BCE) is propelled from the beginning of time to the apocalyptic end by a zealous and breathless invocation of both trust and mistrust. It is as true for Sufi literature of medieval Asia, literature in Romance and Slavic languages, and of course, most contemporary literature across the world. In short, hence, it is not enough anymore to ask how trust is represented in literary studies and what can the debate on trust in psychoanalysis bring to the literary studies table. Instead, trust-mistrust is a multiplex faculty that connects psychoanalysis with literature through complex channels and networks.

There is great currency to be gained by interrogating literary conceptualizations of trust and mistrust through the Shakespearean canon. The reasons at one level are apparent. The plays of William Shakespeare are widely read and are seemingly an inexhaustible resource not only for serious practitioners of English letters but also those whose relationship with the English language is, at best, transactional. Shakespeare has come to define an intellectual legacy as well as a literary agency whose writ is large across cultures. Many of his plays are cultural crucibles and easily recognizable. In other words, very few, if any, contemporary writers are in a position to rival Shakespeare in his multicultural, multimodal, and multinational reach, often industrial in its size and proclivity. Shakespeare is cultural capital of very high and distinguished authority. His plays have become more and more contemporary as traditional receptions of his works have given way to a variety of positions and perceptions of his texts and a fascinating array of adaptations into musicals, experimental performances, and films, in his own language as well as in languages far removed from his own. The beauty and inexhaustibility of the Shakespearean canon makes it imperative that one visits his works from time to time through evolving epistemological frameworks to unlock the value of his literary accrue-ments.

But all of the above can be, even if with limited success, applied to some other author or literary school—from the Greeks to the Romantics, from Milton and Goethe to Tagore or Joyce, Brecht or Marquez, Ghalib or Eliot. What separates Shakespeare from the others is not only the prominent universality of his authorship but also the enigmatic absence of the author. In other words, Shakespeare remains the most absent author ever to be so universally present. And it is here that mistrust, as a category of literary and psychoanalytical interpretation, can play a rather exciting part. Trust might be able to refer to a wide range of factors that Shakespearean scholarship has highlighted over the years: power, politics, state, performativity, materiality, identity, corporality; sexuality, ethnicity, and of course, the unconscious. But most important for this paper is how mistrust is the architect of absences, fault lines, specters, ghostliness, and misappropriations and authorial slipperiness that the great absence of Shakespeare the author entails. The aim of this contribution hence is not just to derive mistrust as a psychoanalytically potent literary idea but to arrive at it through the most quotidian of literary figures to have ever been entrusted to authorship. As 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of his death, we use the language

of psychoanalysis and read Shakespeare once again hoping we shall unveil the truth—but do we really trust Shakespeare?

A study of mistrust in the works of Shakespeare

Exactly how many well-known plays of Shakespeare can be scanned from the vantage point of trust and mistrust? It would not be an overstatement to say, all of them. But for the sake of the scope of the paper, let's consider the plays that have gained wide cultural recognition over the years: *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–1597), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Macbeth* (1603–1606), and, of course, *Hamlet* (1603).

A deed of mistrust: The Merchant of Venice

In *The Merchant of Venice*, a considerably earlier play in the conjectural chronology of the Shakespeare canon, on one hand we have the friendship bordering on homoerotic bonding between Antonio and Bassanio and on the other, the irascible Shylock, for whom there is no bonding above that of money and wealth. They are rivals too in the mercantile community, having to establish their profitable businesses in the highly competitive entrepreneurial climate that they operate in, a climate that offers immense scope for profit but not much security against losses. The play's elementary conflict is not religious but economic. Or rather which community is able to monopolize mercantile trade in what seems to be the opening days of the early modern world in Europe? As is the case in all such capitalist ventures, none can claim the moral high ground because all of them are ponderous and affected in their own way and hide behind a culpable faith to cover their essential misogyny. But the real conflict of the play is elsewhere. It is in how trust, when erroneously converted into a transactionable commodity in a mercantile society, can determine or threaten both social and legal reasoning, to the detriment of everyone. In an earlier article, A. W. Bellringer (1983) writes:

The main dramatic feature of *The Merchant of Venice* is the making and breaking of contracts. Binding agreements dominate the play; between merchants is a bond, between friends a loan, between generations, a will. The three main phases of the plot, Shylock's hold over Antonio, Portia's betrothal and the deception over the rings all turn on the literal interpretation of a contract. It was W. H. Auden

who established this point, without exploring all its ramifications when he argued that Shakespeare has deliberately set the play in the post-feudal society where the object of lifelong loyalty is replaced by the contract which binds its signatories to fulfill certain promises by a certain specific future date, after which their commitment to each other is over. (p. 331)

In other words, trust in one's word is substituted by hard, paper contacts in which the repercussions of breaking the contract are only too readily realizable. In a growing mercantile economy, Shakespeare weaves a play around the very idea of trust and mistrust, both of which are factored in the aspects of bonds, treaties, and contracts. Hard contracts are not based upon the factor of trust but mistrust (or distrust) of one's capacity to trust as well the other's to be trusted. It would be well to remember what happened to Shylock for trying to stick too closely to the contract in letter than in spirit. He had already lost part of his bearings when his daughter eloped with a Christian and he chased them further away instead of trying to let go of his "principled" Jewishness. Later, at the court, Shylock remains unperturbed by the offer of ten times the bonded money or by the quality of justice. He reasons that he had taken:

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven/ Shall I lay perjury upon my soul? / No, not for Venice. (IV.1.224-226)

This, as is so well known, is challenged by Portia in the guise of the lawyer. It would be important to note that she bests Shylock not by invoking a sense of moral or eschatological uprightness but through an act of sheer rhetorical one-upmanship. The vacuous moral sanctimoniousness of Shylock is upended by the cold, clever logic of reason.

This bond doth give thee here no jolt of blood;/ the words expressly are a pound of flesh:/ take then thy bond, take thy pound of flesh;/ But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed/ One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods/ Are by the laws of Venice, confiscate/ Unto the state of Venice. (IV.1.305-312)

One can read Shylock's humiliation and defeat as showing too much trust on the transactional aspects of mercantilism, as against the possibility of human trust and comradeship, a trust that could have

saved Shylock his irreversible dissolution; that too, twice over. What is essentially at stake hence in the play is not so much a defeat of the cornered, pennywise Jew by a state which speaks and enacts the Christian language (the problems of which are too apparent in the act of the state confiscating Shylock's property), but how and why the value of trust can never be resolved within the manufactured neutrality of the legal bond. To that end, Shylock's belief in the value of the cold contract is upended by the Christian state as something that can only be too harshly demanded by the Jew and not by Christian acts of "benevolence" and "forgiveness." However, a close reading of the play reveals the vehemence of both Antonio and Bassanio toward Shylock for him being a rival and a Jew. So as long as the deed holds true, the mercantile state is willing to go by its words. The moment the deed is rendered null and void by Portia's irrefutable logic, the Christian malice manifests itself through the citizens and the state, both of which were preaching dedicated commitment to the "law" of the land as long as the deed could not be challenged and the Jew had advantage. As John Drakakis (2011) says in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play:

The racist animosity that is generated by the outsider's desire to be included achieves its crudest expression in the murderous hatred of Gratiano towards the Jew. Manipulative patriarchy elicits a degree of sympathy in so far as Portia's judiciously conditional will is made to conform to its demands, but in case of Shylock's "family", however, the discourse of gift-giving is transformed into a theologically sanctioned denigration. (p. 91)

The denigration of the Jew is hence both a matter of pride and reward for having stuck closely to being the ideal, "unfallen" Christian, an identity whose trustworthiness, we realize, is much more at stake than that of the accursed Jew. To that end, this is a play that primarily plays on the present and absent values of trust rather than deeds and contracts, without however losing sight of the essential moral ambiguity of law and the land that makes the law as an apparently neutral and equal-opportunity apparatus!

A "body" of mistrust: Julius Caesar

From the questionable sanctity of the deed, Shakespeare turned to the questionable sacredness of the sovereign's body in *Julius Caesar*, a play

which as per the consensus chronology, comes next (by most accounts, in or around 1599) and marks Shakespeare's return to a fully realized tragedy after his initial attempts at the genre with the blood-spattered *Titus Andronicus* and the lumbering *Romeo and Juliet*. *Julius Caesar*, often considered the first among Shakespeare's great tragedies, in many ways marks the beginning of Shakespeare's prime.

The usurpation of the sovereign body is the theme of *Julius Caesar*. It would be good to note that the impregnable body of the sovereign turns out to be of fundamental importance and potency in Shakespeare's later plays, *Julius Caesar* being the first in this line of tragedies. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare creates layers of investment around the pompous, self-important character of Caesar, especially in the concentric cycles of trust and betrayal. Caesar himself is never short of bombast when he talks about his constancy and infallibility and makes his own self constitutive of the mythology of power. At the same time, he is dependent on his senators and tribunes and has no inkling of a major conspiracy taking shape against him. The man who is on the verge of being declared the emperor of Rome clearly has no control over his immediate realm and no admiration among his peers. One must note the tone of sheer incredulity which underlies the last words of brutalized, betrayed Caesar: "*Et tu, Brute!* Then fall, Caesar!" (III.1.77). On being stabbed by Brutus among others, Caesar not only dies but causes a permanent rupture in the very possibility of the familial brotherly trust. Caesar, in his own confession, expected his own mythology of infallibility to have been bolstered, among other things, by an unquestioned act of trust, which having been usurped, kills him two times over.

Brutus, for his part, stands as a crucible of trustworthiness. His inclusion in the team of "conspirators" is considered by others as not only a matter of honor but of ecumenical importance. In the eyes of the public, they argue, Brutus's presence turns the wrong thing right, murder into sacrifice. Shakespeare's relentless interrogation of the human psyche makes it impossible to draw the line in *Julius Caesar*. Who failed whose trust?, we keep asking, often without answers. Did Caesar betray the Roman republic? Did Brutus, after all, betray Caesar? Did Cassius betray Brutus's trust in his moral strength? Did Antony betray Brutus? Did Brutus undermine Antony's capacity as a rabble-rouser? Finally, was Brutus betrayed by the reach of Caesar's name when he mistook the proud senator's sovereign body as the limit of his affective power?

As the play progresses, we see how the body of Caesar becomes the primary object and provocation for greater public posturing. It is no wonder hence that Antony's famous speech makes wily use of Caesar's bloodied body as the primary sight of "reckless" violence. It helps him to surrogate a purportedly noble act of mutiny against the state as a conspiracy against the benign form and function of Caesar.

Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:/See what a rent the envious Casca made:/Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;/And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,/Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,/As rushing out of doors, to be resolved/If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;/For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:/Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!/This was the most unkindest cut of all. (III.II.174–182)

This speech reaps rich dividends for Antony and makes Brutus an exile from Rome. The very body which he stabbed comes to haunt Brutus—not only by alienating him from the very Rome he had betrayed Caesar for but also as a ghost in Caesar's form. At the same time, it is in Brutus that Shakespeare invests a type of the ideal noble Roman who was more wronged against than wronging, more betrayed against in trust of higher ideals than who had betrayed. If anything, Brutus's ethical uprightness and the contrasting allegations hurled against him are the real tragedy of the play. Brutus wants to be seen as a man of nobler mission but has only managed to go down in history as an archetype of betrayal, accused of "ingratitude, more strong than traitors" (III.II.186).

Mistrust is written all over the body of *Julius Caesar* as much as the play itself plays with the over-wrought body of Caesar as both a murdered leader and an insatiably reproducible name, a name that finally restores to unwanted authority the schizoid state of Rome. The Roman republic falls forever and the Roman Empire is born! The ghost of Caesar, available to Brutus's brutalized and conscientious consciousness at the beginning of the fatal war with Antony and Octavius, is symptomatic of the ghost of the republic that is going to forever haunt the Empire. In Shakespearean terms, the phantom of Caesar is the spectre of his apparent inscrutability, the paradox of immortality, the affective lure of mistrust and corporal fatality. This is also the beginning of several ghostly recurrences in Shakespeare.

A crown of mistrust: Macbeth

As against the transactional nature of (mis)trust and the concomitant dangers that we observe in *The Merchant of Venice* and the dangers of solipsistic moral uprightness in *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* ponders over the natural obligation of trust that is ideally carried from the sovereign to his subjects. In *Macbeth*, the much-loved eponymous general, in the wake of a difficult triumph he has won for Scotland, falls into an abyss of desire for power when he hears his own thoughts reflected in three meddling oddballs, who entice him toward ill-conceived immortality. Along with his wife, he conspires against the aging King Duncan, notwithstanding the immediate rewards the king bestows on him. The couple decide to murder the king when the latter intends to make a visit to their castle as an act of gratitude for having won the war. But Macbeth is at war with himself when the plan is on the verge of being carried out. In what is the first of *Macbeth's* great soliloquies, he declares:

He's here in double trust;/First, as I am his kinsman and his
subject,/Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,/Who
should against his murderer shut the door,/Not bear the knife
myself. Besides, this Duncan/Hath borne his faculties so meek,
hath been/So clear in his great office, that his virtues/Will plead
like angels, trumpet-tongued, against/The deep damnation of his
taking-off;/And pity, like a naked new-born babe,/Striding the
blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed/Upon the sightless couriers of
the air,/Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,/That tears shall
drown the wind. I have no spur/To prick the sides of my intent,
but only/Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself/And falls on
the other (1.7.12–28)

Hence, by killing him in his sleep, Macbeth not only violates the three embodiments of trust of which he himself is aware (kinsman, subject, host) but also the fourth, which renders the sovereign body no less sacrosanct than the crown, especially in the moment of sleep/slumber. In the play, this act of violation of the king's body (as much as the crown) weighs heavily on both the Lady and Macbeth, who individually and collectively are robbed of sleep forever, one giving way to convoluted somnambulism and one to sadistic annihilation of all near and dear ones. The immortality of the crown that Macbeth himself destroys in

the beginning is despondently sought by him in the end, if only in the fraudulent assurances of the dubious “witches.” Psychoanalytically, therefore, Macbeth’s murder of Duncan, instead of resolving his oedipal situation, only accentuates it further till it returns to kill his own self. His final duel with Macduff is hence more an act of wanton self-annihilation than that of natural justice, an act that apparently restores trust in the sovereign but actually leaves the possibility of its repeated oedipal usurpation wide open.

Macbeth’s powerful reasoning against the horrific deed safeguards himself, alas only momentarily, from the act which is both regicide and parricide in one. And Macbeth makes it clear that the bond he shares with Duncan is established on an age-old template of trust between the king and his kinsman, subject and host, each of them potent enough to dislodge himself from his ambition. However, he does not hold long enough against his own doubts. The murder is, after all, carried out after Lady Macbeth questions Macbeth’s self-doubts as selling himself to mediocrity, overlooking the fruits of natural ambition and steadfast action. And from the very first minute of the murder we see how that self-doubt has returned to find a permanent home in Macbeth. It torments not only him but also his Lady and we see how, to prevent one catastrophe from spinning out of control, they devise more horrific and vicious plans and how it all comes to naught in the final act.

But more than the factors of power, desire, and faulty ambition which have been discussed over and over again, *Macbeth* (and *Hamlet*) lays out the deeply complex factor of trust as inherent not only in the sovereign crown but again in the sovereign body. Here, of course, the sovereign Duncan, historically ignoble, does not carry the weight of Julius Caesar but the ubiquity of the fatherly Hagemon, of the well-meaning king who nevertheless safeguards familial claims to authority and stands in the way of just ambition. In *Macbeth*, hence, we keep going back to the somewhat visceral spectacle of a sovereign body torn open by the usurper’s dagger when the former is given to sleep, an act and a moment in which the sovereign body and the human body find common ground. As Benjamin Parris (2012) says:

Agamben argues that the sacred life of the king is bound to the bare life of his body natural, and that it infuses the sovereign with the power to define and eradicate bare life in the bodies of his subjects. In the tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, however, sovereign sleep

and insomnia crack open that metaphysical seal, and prevent the sacred life of kingship from attaching to the body of the sovereign successor—even though both Claudius and Macbeth appear to exercise a “sovereign decision” by killing the bare life of the sleeping king. (p. 104)

Mistrust is hence not just an oedipal factor here but also carries the burden of being at the core of the organization of the self under unquestionable and incontestable authority. The problem with Macbeth is not only that he is the best man in town to be at the helm but also that he deserves a chance to be one. But Duncan lies in between him and his natural aim, destabilizing Macbeth and rendering his natural desire as unnatural and diabolic. So one would expect him to lead as well as expect him to obey: something that can only lead to tragedy of the self and it does. Brutus is betrayed by his belief in the desire of an ideal republic while Macbeth is betrayed by his own “oedipality”. But both of them are doomed and destroyed. Trust in the public and trust in the self are rendered equally intractable while their fall remains as inconsolable a spectacle as great tragedy can be.

Both *King Lear* (1603–1608) and *Othello* (1603) continue with Shakespeare’s unmatched powers of employment of various possibilities of trust and mistrust in language and in experience. In both, a spate of personal failures of the protagonist assume a political, even a fatal scale leading to death—of Lear in a war and Othello in a suicide. Both of them are “betrayed” by the person they think is closest to them—Cordelia and Desdemona respectively—and both realize that they had mistrusted the women and their ability for truthful commitment. Both the plays talk about the human propensity for jealousy and the human gullibility to blind, slippery rhetoric. To that end, both these plays show a key use of trust that is extended—from document and deeds (*Merchant*) and bodies (*Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*) to the familial and the domestic spaces.

However, the real conundrum of Shakespeare the author and the foundational consequence of (mis)trust as symptomatic of the Shakespearean canon cannot be gauged unless we look closely at the crisis that informs the heart of *Hamlet*, the play that will close this chapter. Shakespeare’s greatest play is also his greatest meditation on the faculty of (mis)trust and the essentially unreliable nature of what we define as life. At the same time, *Hamlet* is about Freud, Nietzsche, and

Joyce, about Shakespeare's authority and the impossibility of finding the real closure to the case of the Shakespeare doctrine. Before we go to the most famous Dane in history, it is necessary to understand what really the problem of the Shakespeare doctrine is.

Absent author, mistrusted text?

It is no new knowledge that very little is known about Shakespeare the author, the actual person to whose name this redoubtable body of work of exceptional brilliance is allocated to. We do not know his date of birth (only date of baptism), let alone his provenance. We do not know what he did after the age of thirteen, when he arrived in London, and how, without any verifiable links to the social and intellectual elite of the period, he managed to usurp the Elizabethan stage as the most performed playwright during his time and surely for four centuries in his afterlife. We do not know if he was a seedy Catholic in an age of militant Protestantism or a wily Protestant who could effortlessly muster the ministrations of not just two monarchs of very difficult and different manners, but also an army of censors and masters-of-revel, competitors, rivals, lovers, and admirers. We do not know the chronology of his plays nor does a single page of manuscript survive that can unequivocally award him the distinction of authorship of the plays circulated in his name. What we have are badly assembled quartos of individual plays and a *First Folio* (collection, 1623) edited by his friends John Heminges and Henry Condell, which are often erratic and wayward, not to say often full of printing errors, erroneous or adventurous corrections made by the typesetters with no hint of the author's person and form. In fact, in the known six signatures of the bard and a few mentions of his name in legal and courtly references, the famous surname is spelt in about a dozen different ways, hardly anything matching the current order of letters that have become standardized as the name of William Shakespeare.

In other words, Shakespeare, often referred to in hyperbolic British polemics as the greatest poet to have ever lived, is famously absent—dead so to say—and eminently detachable from the idea of Shakespeare. What are we to make of this great disjuncture? How are we to accommodate Shakespeare the author in Shakespeare the canon, if at all? Instead of definite answers one can only quantify the possibilities that are raised by this ticklish, recalcitrant problem. Has the lack

of evidence of the real authorial attendance boosted the reception of Shakespeare? Or in other words, the author form being almost entirely inaccessible, can we read back into his absence from the hermeneutics of the text?

The indeterminacy of the author in the twenty-first century, though substantially beyond the consolidated attack from postmodernism, should nevertheless begin with Barthes and Foucault, both in their now-celebrated essays, urging us to reconsider authorship as distinct and some ways antithetical to the idea of the author. For both of them then, the real author is not a vantage point for the text but is in actuality an impediment for it. The author obfuscates the text instead of enriching it. To that end then, what Barthes and Foucault are proposing is to extradite the text from the author. Both Barthes and Foucault make a strong case for democratising the meaning of the text without being hounded by the author. They are naturally speaking from a position of deep suspicion that any public intellectual of the 1960s would hold for authority. They extend the general climate of anti-authoritarianism to the author of the text itself, to whose primacy literary scholars have always lent their obvious support. Even during the days of peak avant-gardism across Europe between the two great wars, when modernism reaped its most astonishing riches, the cultural value of the “author” was never in question. To that end, even for the great modernists, the distant Shakespeare was as alive as their immediate forerunner Baudelaire, even though the latter’s life was as much part of his “vanguardist” superstardom as were his provocative poems in *The Flowers of Evil* (1857). If anything, modernism could have been under an anxiety of influence but there was never a question of authorial indeterminacy becoming fundamental to literary liberalism. But that became a real problem in the 1960s and Barthes’s and then Foucault’s polemic made the case of authorial agency or the lack thereof impossible to ignore anymore.

Barthes’s powerful thesis to give back the text to the reader was in keeping with the broader democratic principles of post-1960s France. Barthes (1997) writes,

... a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The

reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but its destination. (p. 148)

Barthes wants to reclaim the reader from both the critic and the author because, says Barthes, they are but complementary to the other. The critic's primary job is to locate the secret author in the text. But in the case of Shakespeare, this is only the beginning. Given the dearth of information about him—in severe contradiction to an entire academic and cultural industry that exists in his name—Shakespeare presents a rather beguiling case of authorship: his body of work is virtually the only thing we have about him, leaving us to consider the death of the author Shakespeare as *a priori* to the reception of Shakespeare the playwright. In other words, the more Shakespeare dies, the more he continues to live, the more we try to dissociate with the problem of creative genius, more we are attuned to its impassable properties.

Foucault (1998), providing examples from Greek epic and the Arabian Nights on the one hand, and Mallarme, Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka on the other, proposes that the assumption of the dead author is not enough to permit us to make meanings anew. We must ask more fundamental questions:

It is not enough however to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. For the same reason, it is not enough to keep repeating that God and man have died a common death. Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance; follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers. First we need to clarify briefly the problems arising from the use of the author's name. What is an author's name? How does it function? (p. 209)

Foucault, in keeping with the archeological foundations of his thoughts and his efforts to locate and interrogate what he calls the epistemes in history, proposes the historical moment where lies the real politics of re-presentation, reenactment, and misappropriation of the authorial sign and name, a function epistemically linked to the problem of authorial disappearance. Marjorie Garber (2010), Harvard scholar and Shakespeare scholar of repute, had first highlighted in her famous work *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* why and how the question of Shakespeare's

authorship assumed critical heft after Foucault's provocative essay. She writes,

It is significant, that the Shakespearean authorship controversy presents itself at exactly the moment Michel Foucault describes as appropriate for appropriation: the moment when the author-function becomes, in the late eighteenth and early centuries, an item of property, a part of the "system of ownership" in which strict copyright rules define the relation between the text and the author in a new way. (p. 5)

So one way to compensate for the authorial absence in the Shakespearean canon is to unearth resources that question the real authorship, like those undertaken by the Oxfordians (those hoisting Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford as the real Shakespeare) and Baconians (those thrusting Francis Bacon as the one). An ongoing debate with their own flag-bearers, societies, awards, and journals is now a veritable conspiracy industry. The other, more genteel pursuit would be to understand authorship as a symptom of writing, as a figurative agenda, as a morphology of mythopoeic praxis that only language provides and permits. Needless to reiterate, it is the latter that this chapter is chasing.

The problem of the unrealizable, unclassifiable, and uncodable writerly self is not just a problem facing the postmodern vilification of authorship and authority. Freud—many years before Barthes and Foucault—had flagged his inability to pursue such a case, given that it stonewalls the psychoanalyst's unmistakable arsenal of biographical investigation. In his essay "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (1928b) Freud made a startling confession about the creative artist(e) and the limits of psychoanalysis. Freud begins the essay by drawing his schema. He writes:

Four facets may be distinguished in the rich personality of Dostoevsky: the creative artist, the neurotic, the moralist and the sinner. How is one to find one's way in this bewildering complexity? The creative artist is the least doubtful: Dostoevsky's place is not far behind Shakespeare. The Brothers Karamazov is the most magnificent novel ever written; the episode of the Grand Inquisitor, one of the peaks in the literature of the world, can hardly be valued too highly. Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms. (p. 177)

Freud was writing this paper when in total command of his powers as a psychoanalyst and conscious of his stature as a man of potentially immortal claim to the science of human mind. Yet, without any attempt at further ado, Freud the analyst surrenders to Dostoevsky the creative artist—the genius—and proceeds to dismantle the other three Dostoevskys—neurotic, moralist, sinner. A similar essay on Shakespeare, whom Freud addresses as the worthy predecessor to Dostoevsky, would not have proceeded beyond the first paragraph, because Freud would have nothing to proceed with except the “problem of the creative artist.” So when Freud asks psychoanalysis to lay down its arms in front of the creative artist, as per Barthes’s understanding, Freud is then performing the role of the (failed) arch-critic. The analyst, unable to move ahead with the notion of genius, surrenders the idea of locating the author in the text. Interestingly Freud was also keen to establish the missing links in the Shakespeare story and had not unknowingly sided himself with Edward de Vere as the most prominent beneficiary of the fraught and fraudulent Shakespeare mantle since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. And not unlike others, Freud was not successful in making the earl legit. Perhaps it was Freud’s inability to crack the absent genius that led him to desperately put a face and form to Shakespeare the author. But that is another story altogether. Should we then unquestioningly accept the “problem of the creative artist” as impenetrable to psychoanalysis and lay down its arms? Should we not ask how does one understand authorship when the author is not dead by decree but by actual historical evidence? How does one name an author who is so nominally present and so overwhelmingly and conspicuously absent? Moreover, how do centuries of readership negotiate Shakespeare’s minimal presence and his absolute absence?

Prefigured by the dead author, what remain in the Shakespearean canon are the traces, remembrances, hauntings, specters. If at all, it is Shakespeare’s transcendental genius which has come down to us, having transfused into his plays, like the ghost figures of his plays. The ghost returns, the uncanny haunts, the specter looms large, the phantom persists. Drawing from Freud’s “The Uncanny” (1919h), Garber (2010) writes,

The dual question—of plurality and the lost original—is directly relevant to the phenomenology of ghosts. And it is equally relevant to the phenomenology of the work of art. It is here, in the

overlapping status of the ghost and the art object, or the ghost and the text, that the further significance of Shakespeare as a ghost writer—as a writer of ghosts, and as their ghostly written—manifests itself. (p. 21)

It is *Hamlet*, more than any other work of the glover's son from Stratford, which might be trusted to offer a compelling case study.

Father, king, and the ghost writer

Psychoanalytic theory on trust can be a terse commentary involving primarily the idiom of "real." This idiom of real is what is rendered dubious in Freud's paranoia, positioned in Klein splits, perpetually lost in Balint's 'fault', precariously premised in Mahler's symbiosis, and spontaneously defended in Winnicott's self-system. It's this real which becomes an experience on which Eriksonian hope is fostered. In the chapter so far, the spectrum of trust in the work of Shakespeare unveils the real of mistrust as pervasive across his plays, permeating specifically the ones discussed above. Yet as we progress from engaging with the "texts" of Shakespeare to understanding the "text of Shakespeare," what does one examine? What does one arrive at in this speculative endeavor of mistrust? In this section, we evolve this arrival—arrival at the expedition of real in the "text of Shakespeare"—called *Hamlet*.

Hamlet's authorship, historically considered, is full of the ambiguity that haunts the act of Shakespearean authorship in general. There was a lost play called "*Hamlet*" or something similar, to which many Elizabethan references point. It is not known how much of this play Shakespeare reproduces in his own play, but it is generally accepted that he knew about the play. There is also Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (believed to have been written between 1582 and 1592), a play whose structural and thematic links with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are unmistakable. Most important, the current versions of *Hamlet* in standardized editions (Cambridge, Arden) have faced the daunting task of making sense of the real text, since three versions of it have been found, all by Shakespeare. The first published text of 1603—the first quarto edition—is 2,154 lines long and is regarded as a corrupt, unauthorized version. The second quarto of 1604—agreed to be better and based on the original manuscript—runs to a whopping 3,674 lines! The third,

First Folio version (1623), a collection often considered of better editorial custodianship than any quarto of any play that preceded it, is 3,535 lines. This version omits 222 lines from the second quarto and adds eighty-three new lines. For any editor of a standard text of *Hamlet*, this is as slippery a situation as one can get. No wonder most editors of Shakespeare have to decide on their own *final* text with the required *caveat* that the play they read in that edition is but one of the ways in which the play can exist, hinting that the combinations of the three printed versions and other variants can justifiably produce any number of variations of the same play.

In due course of time, the question of the authorship of *Hamlet* came to be seen as ingrained into the play as much as the play became an allegory of the problems of authorship itself. One of the most critically adventurous interpretations of *Hamlet* is to consider the nameless Ghost (purportedly Hamlet's father, the king) as the shapeless, formless author of the play. Not only does he appear at the very beginning, tearing apart the false state of mourning-induced peace that Hamlet is in but also triggers all the action that comes after. Moreover, the whole play and the play within the play become symptomatic of the demand that the Ghost makes of his son: to avenge his murder. The whole of *Hamlet* is but whether Hamlet trusts or mistrusts his ghostly father. It is not so much a question of *should* he, since Hamlet is convinced of the conspiracy that his uncle and mother had waged against his father, but *could* he. To that end, it is not as much a case of moral fortitude as it is an intellectual one. All the myriad tensions built into the power games of a state and a family in crisis forged into one, start to unravel when Hamlet becomes aware of the conspiracy. Hamlet's knowledge of it is hence his undoing, his ignorance wasn't. In birthing the action necessary for a tragedy to disentangle, the Ghost "authors" the play. At the same time, by constantly procrastinating on that desired action and pondering over it, Hamlet denies the author his desired play. It would hence not be unusual to regard the Ghost and Hamlet as involved in a game themselves, of the despondent author and his unruly, truant text. Freud was drawn into the possibility of something like this, often equating the death of John Shakespeare in 1601 and the death of Shakespeare's own son, not accidentally named Hamnet in 1596 (at the age of ten), as the reason Shakespeare wrote the play. In this sense, the writing of *Hamlet* becomes a search for his own son in the realm of the possible.

Before Freud, however, Schiller, Goethe, and most important Nietzsche had taken up discussion of *Hamlet*. “Not reflection, no—true knowledge, the insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in *Hamlet* and in the *Dionysian Man*,” writes Nietzsche (1872), in *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche considers Hamlet’s inaction not a sign of his weakness or of sorrow but of too much intelligence, an excess of insight. It was this excess which later led T. S. Eliot, somewhat unflatteringly, to call *Hamlet* a dramatic failure. Eliot’s main contention was that Shakespeare was unable to contain, in the form of tragedy, the excess of Hamlet’s overarching, monumental insight into the workings and conditions of human life. One can take it to understand the difficulty of signification itself. After Derrida, hence, one can define Hamlet as meaning existing outside the form, as a free-floating signifier in search of a master signified. This is indeed why in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Stephen Dedalus considers *Hamlet* essentially a ghost story, a story which embodies the impossibility of trusting form with meaning—the Apollonian with the Dionysian. In *The Hamlet Doctrine*, philosophers Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster (2013) write:

Joyce is constantly playing with the question of creation, which he turns into the question of the father, of paternity ... Paternity is not a physical state as much as what Stephen calls a “mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten.” This is the strange truth of Stephen’s *Hamlet Doctrine*, summarized by Judge Eglinton: that Shakespeare “is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all.” (pp. 207–209)

Conclusion

Adam Phillips (2001) quotes Evelyn Waugh in the preface of his essays on *Psychoanalysis and Literature*, who shares how he finds “psychoanalysis to be an investigation of a character of literature” (pp. xi–xii). Phillips elaborates his semblance of psychoanalysis and literature where he finds literature to be a preparation for psychoanalysis for it’s through a reading of literary texts one comes close to listening as a psychoanalyst. So to what did we listen as we espoused trust in our reading of the character of Shakespeare? As we rejoiced the reprimand of Shylock in his deed—we heard more than that—we heard the mistrust of the greed. As Brutus embodies the desiccation of trust, we heard Caesar

collapse to the echoes of mistrust blinded by power. As Macbeth suffers his ghosts of doubts, we heard him tied to his oedipal desire. Of much significance was the analysis of Shakespeare, the writer of his own text penned through his own ghost—*Hamlet*.

If the little bits of his life are all we have, Shakespeare is as much the unnamable author as he is the unformed text. This leads us back into asking if mistrust is the primary occupant of the crack that creeps in between form and function of the text, between the ghost of the story and the ghost story itself. Authorship in Shakespeare hence cannot be reduced to the paper deed and the violated body but only in excess of what is knowable, either physically or metaphorically. Shakespeare the author is more than the apostolic Father (*King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*) and the begotten Son (*Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*). He is the Holy Ghost. And only in the ghost can we (mis)trust.

Notes

1. The desire and energy that drives one's instinct to survive.
2. Pithily put, Freud (1923b) explains it as the mental projection of our physical body (p. 30).
3. The paranoid person is able to blame others (distrust-avoidance of self-reproach) because he is unable to blame himself (mistrust). His distrust of people underlies a mistrust of his own self. Experienced fundamentally at the level of the body, which is the ego the world outside, object libido holds no longer a difference from ego libido and the mistrust is projected onto the world outside as distrust.
4. Object relations theory referred to as the relational model of psychoanalysis (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983) differs from the Freudian drive model. W. R. D. Fairbairn (1943, 1944) proposed how interpersonal relations are represented in the psyche and are internalized to make up the ego. He called them "object relations"—simply put as experiences with another person represented in the mind. While Freudian theory focuses on gratification of impulses and biological needs, object relations theory premises itself on inner representations of early interactions, namely between mother and child.
5. Unable to trust, the person withdraws his investment from objects of the outside world and tries to create new and possibly better ones of himself. He becomes the object of his creation where works of art, theories, insight, or even illness become means of redressing the "mistrust" that operates as the basic fault.

6. Erikson's notion of "trust" corresponds to Winnicott's notion of "capacity to be alone" and Margaret Mahler's "separation-individuation." While the Winnicottian child is truly able to be alone in the presence of another person, Mahler's child struggles with this capacity where any attempt at being alone is marred by the absence of the other person—namely the mother.
7. The original lines are, "It's hard to define and even harder to measure it; yet when someone sees a hopeless child, one knows what's not there" (1963, p. 115).

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