Making "Anything of Anything" in the Age of Shakespeare

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MAKING "ANYTHING OF ANYTHING" IN THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE

BY GERARD PASSANNANTE

In the opening scene of *King Lear*, Cordelia answers her father's question of what she might add to her sisters' public professions of love with the word "nothing," to which Lear responds almost offhandedly, "Nothing will come of nothing: speak again."[1] As everyone knows, what follows is an eruption of anger that seems to come out of nowhere.[2] Scholars have long made much of Lear's phrase, "[n]othing will come of nothing"—connecting it to the pagan dictum, *ex nihilo nihil fit*.[3] If there is little doubt that this philosophical background is on William Shakespeare's mind in one way or another, what it doesn't help us understand is the logic of the event itself—the precipitous transition Lear makes from the ordinary meaning of "nothing" to the language of philosophy. As Edward W. Tayler has put it, "Lear's reply thumbs a metaphysical badge at the audience, authorizing the poet to enter another domain of discourse."[4] The question I want to pose is: Why, in Shakespeare's plays, does this connection between making too much of too little (or "nothing") and the language of ontology so often feel like second nature? In this essay, I will attempt one answer by following the several lives of a "common saying," as one contemporary called it.[5] The phrase is "quidlibet ex quolibet," which translates roughly as "anything you like out of anything you like." For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, "anything of anything" established a connection between the practice of overreading and the misconstrual of the nature of things—a pattern I follow from the expression's early history in scholastic translations and commentaries to Michel de Montaigne's description of willful reading in the *Essays* and beyond. After exploring the connotations of the phrase in the early modern imagination, I describe its explanatory power in pivotal scenes in Shakespeare's plays, with special attention to *Lear* and *The Winter's Tale*. While the playwright doesn't directly use the expression, its logic illuminates the habit of mind we observe in characters such as Lear and Leontes. Unlike "nothing will come of nothing," "anything of anything" foregrounds the problem of intention or desire (the *libet* of *quidlibet* suggests what "pleases") and the conversion of one kind of discourse into the stuff of another.

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What's in a phrase? In this one, it turns out, quite a bit. The history of "quidlibet ex quolibet" connects it from the beginning to thinking about the material world. We first come upon a version of the phrase in the earliest Latin translations of a passage from Aristotle's *Physics* that concerns the philosophy of Anaxagoras. In the Renaissance, the name Anaxagoras was most closely associated with the idea that the matter of all things was in the matter of all other things—an idea the philosopher founded on that familiar premise, "nothing comes from nothing." As Aristotle explained:

> All such things are already there in each other and do not come into existence but are merely sifted out from where they are and take their names from their dominant constituents, and anything can be sifted out of anything (water out of flesh or flesh out of water)[.][6]

For Anaxagoras, man could call himself a little world or microcosm because his body literally contained the stuff of everything else—and thus anything could be made of anything, or "ex quolibet quodlibet," as James of Venice rendered the Greek in his 12th-century Latin translation.[7] For Aristotle, however, the notion that the bodies of all things were in everything else was absurd. Moreover, as Aristotle complained elsewhere, Anaxagoras said one thing and did another, positing a notion of Mind or intelligence behind the organization of the world, and "drag[ging] it in whenever he is at a loss to explain some necessary result; but otherwise [making] anything rather than Mind the cause of what happens."[8] It was easy enough to accuse Anaxagoras himself of making "anything of anything"—and so the phrase came to refer not only to an argument for the make-up of things but the willful derivation of one thing from another. By the time it arrives in the Renaissance, the now "common saying" suggests all manner of bad or strained interpretation, but especially the kind that derives from very little—or almost nothing.

The phrase became especially popular in theological disputes throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[9] Responding to one of his adversaries, the Anglican divine James Calfhill quipped: "I rather think you to be some scholar of Anaxagoras, which have learned to make *quidlibet ex quolibet*; an apple of an oyster."[10] Another clergyman, John Weemes, likewise complained of the excesses of biblical interpreters: "To make divers senses in the Scripture, is to make it like that which Anaxagoras dreamed of, making Quidlibet ex quolibet."[11]

The phrase, however, wasn't limited to theological contexts. Allegorical interpreters and etymologists were prone to making "anything of anything"—as were paranoid or overly scrupulous readers. John Donne named a volume in the catalogue of his satirical library "Quidlibet ex quolibet; Or the art of decyphering and finding some treason in any interpreted letter."[12] Astrologers too were vulnerable to the charge. In 1588, the year some had predicted the world would end, the physician John Harvey accused his overzealous contemporaries (including his own brother Richard) of being "impostural wringers, making at their own pleasure *Quidlibet ex quolibet*, numbers of cyphers, bodies of Atomes, or sun motes, something of nothing."[13] Harvey treats the phrase "quidlibet ex quolibet" and "something of nothing" as near-synonyms.[14] Though he doesn't mention the name Anaxagoras, the philosophical connotations of "quidlibet ex quolibet" are clearly on his mind as he arrives at the question of what "bodies" are made of ("bodies of Atomes, or sun motes"). Where making "anything of anything" is concerned, one philosopher speculating wildly is just as good (or bad) as another.[15] Astrologers, those who make "numbers of cyphers," and atomists—they are all, in the end, making "anything of anything" by making "something of nothing."[16]

As we've begun to see, one curious feature of the phrase's travels in the early modern period is that it never entirely lost contact with the old philosophical questions about substance to which it was originally attached. Montaigne was particularly interested in the way it brought different kinds of discourses into contact. In the "Apology for Raymond Seybond," he retraces the logic of "quidlibet ex quolibet" to its roots, showing how quickly a bad or willful interpretation can devolve into philosophical dogmatism. Unfolding over several pages, the passage begins like this:

> There is no prognosticator if he has enough authority for people to deign to leaf through [feuilleter] him and study carefully all the implications and aspects of his words, who cannot be made to say whatever you want [à qui on ne face dire tout ce qu'on voudra], like the Sibyls. For there are so many means of interpretation that, obliquely or directly, an ingenious mind can hardly fail to come across in any subject some sense that will serve his point.[17]

With his penchant for quoting ancient authors promiscuously, sometimes bending their meaning to its opposite sense, Montaigne knew well of what he spoke.[18] Recalling Virgil's image of the Sibyl's prophetic "leaves" (*folia*) jumbled by the wind, he imagines the unscrupulous

(or is it delusional?) interpreter "leaf[ing] through" (*feuilleter*) pages in order to find "whatever [he] want[s]."[19] This sense of the phrase "quidlibet ex quolibet" will exfoliate over the next few paragraphs, bringing us from bad readers of prognostications to readers of Homer. Is it possible, Montaigne asks, "that Homer meant to say all they make him say?"[20] From reading literary texts, he then moves, almost imperceptibly, to interpreting the text of the world.[21] Elaborating on a passage from Sextus Empiricus, he writes: "From the same foundation that Heraclitus had, and that maxim of his that all things had in them the aspects that were found in them, Democritus derived a wholly opposite conclusion, that things had in them nothing at all of what we found in them[.]"[22] Montaigne here identifies one particular species of interpretive waywardness, pointing out that different philosophers draw opposite conclusions from the same premise, remaking what they perceive according to their pleasure.[23] At the end of this section, Montaigne will bring the issue to a head, citing a passage from *De rerum natura* that begins, "Hence what the senses see is always true," and condemning the Epicureans for their delusions with an intensity that feels almost personal:

> This desperate and most unphilosophical advice means nothing else than that human knowledge can maintain itself only by unreasonable, mad, and senseless [forcenée] reason; but that still it is better for man, in order to assert himself, to use it and any other remedy, however fantastic, than to admit his necessary stupidity.[24]

Knowledge from the senses devolves into "unreasonable, mad, and senseless reason" and the unauthorized drawing of conclusions from perception becomes a desperate attachment to an untrustworthy image. This, he seems to be saying, is how we become enthralled by an idea. The word "forcenée" suggests a person fanatical, obsessive, without control, frantic. Montaigne here is talking about the fanaticism of philosophers—but what he is saying has further implications. Writing in the shadow of the French wars of religion, the author of the *Essays* was sharply attuned to the disastrous consequences of dogmatic interpretation. "How many quarrels," he wrote in another essay, "and how important, have been produced in the world by the doubt of the meaning of that syllable *Hoc*!"[25] He is talking about the theological controversy over the word "hoc" in "Hoc est corpus meum" (Christ's "This is my body").[26] Like "quidlibet ex quolibet," this phrase also posed a question of what it was that composed a body (in this case, the Eucharist). John Calvin made the connection explicit when

he deployed "quidlibet ex quolibet" to criticize those who have "not one particle of ingenuous shame" and make of "Hoc est corpus meum" whatever they want.[27]

Shakespeare's use and confusion of words like "anything," "something," and "nothing" give us another context for thinking about the history of the phrase. He could have come upon it in any number of the sources I mentioned above and is likely to have found a version of it in Samuel Harsnett's *A declaration of egregious popish impostures*—a source we know he drew upon in *Lear*.[28] In Harsnett, we hear of priests who "made what they list of any thing" and "would make a faire tale of any thing."[29] We may hear echoes of the phrase in the titles of plays such as *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* (1601–2) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598–99), but the phrase's main line of influence (or at least its greatest power to illuminate) in Shakespeare can be found in moments of strained or willful interpretation when the language of ontology rises to the surface. When Othello responds to Iago's deliberately vague insinuations with the phrase "Thou dost mean something" he too is making "anything of anything."[30] Even if we place a considerable amount of blame on Iago for what befalls Othello, we are nonetheless surprised by how little it takes for Othello to assume the worst. In this scene, Iago is very much a minimalist, leaving Othello to make "something" of his "exsufflicate and blowed surmises"—an image that once again recalls the Sibyl's scattered leaves and the chaotic wind of hasty interpretation.[31] In *Lear*, we find another example when Gloucester comes upon his son Edmund reading a letter supposedly written by Edmund's half-brother Edgar (a letter Edmund himself forged):

> GLOUCESTER: What paper were you reading?
> EDMUND: Nothing, my lord.
> GLOUCESTER: No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles. (*L*, 1.2.30–35)[32]

One would not require Donne's imaginary book to find treason in this particular letter, which broadcasts Gloucester's worst fear that his only legitimate son would like to see him dead sooner rather than later. Though the letter itself is hardly ambiguous, the fact that Gloucester is willing to believe its contents so quickly is disturbing. "You know the character to be your brother's?" Gloucester asks, "character" here suggesting "handwriting" but also perhaps something like "the sum of moral and mental qualities" (a meaning, according to the *OED*,

that begins to come into focus in the early seventeenth century) (*L*, 1.2.58).[33] Edmund answers his father, punning on the word "matter," meaning "contents" but also "substance" in a sense that underlies their discussion of legitimacy and lineage: "If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his, but in respect of that, I would fain think it were not. . . . It is his hand, my lord, but I hope his heart is not in the contents" (*L*, 1.2.59–60, 62–63). In the end, Edmund promises the letter will be backed up by "auricular assurance" (which never arrives), but that is already unnecessary, for Gloucester's certainty is well established (*L*, 1.2.85–6). The flimsy matter of the letter stands in for his son and unequivocally declares his guilt.[34]

As in Montaigne, we can see Shakespeare connecting the dots from a question of interpretation to one of material substance. Though the expression "quidlibet ex quolibet" isn't used directly here, the entire scene seems to bear out its implications. Having leapt to conclusions from the forged letter, for example, Gloucester then turns to the stars to moralize, calling to mind the "impostural wringers" in Harvey's treatise:

> GLOUCESTER: These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects[.] (*L*, 1.2.95–98)[35]

Gloucester eschews rational explanation for the influence of the stars. When he leaves, Edmund notes the absurdity of the practice of those who "make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars" (*L*, 1.2.106–7). We might recall here that the word *facere* (to make) usually precedes the phrase "quidlibet ex quolibet." The word "make" appears again slightly later in Lear's response to the fool, "Nothing can be made out of nothing," which echoes his earlier words to Cordelia (1.4.138–39). As Harvey suggested, to make so much of the stars is to make "something of nothing." The irony is that the kind of "mak[ing]" Edmund describes leads to passivity:

> EDMUND: [A]s if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treacherers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on. (*L*, 1.2.111–115)

In other words, we make whatever we want of the stars (or of a few words or of our own perceptions) and then forget the role we played in our actions.

By making "anything of anything," Edmund shows just how fungible the "matter" of legitimacy can be. In unmaking his brother, he hopes to remake himself. Nevertheless, Edmund still finds himself constrained by a system of assurances that is as full of "nothing" as the letter he forged. In the same train of thought, he wonders why he is called a bastard by "custom" (*L*, 1.2.3):

> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
> As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
> With 'base?' With 'baseness,' 'bastardy'? Base? Base?
>
> (*L*, 1.2.7–10).

It is as if Edmund were invoking a critique of etymology along with his critique of astrology, laying bare the dubious etymology that derives "bastardy" from "base."[36] The irony of custom, however, is that even if one word doesn't derive from the other, the association still has a palpable force—one he has trouble escaping. A scene about making whatever you like out of whatever you like once again raises a question of ontology. In spite of his best efforts, he remains Edmund the bastard, "base" in that most material sense of the word—literally not made of the same "stuff" as his brother. In 1616, the satirical poet Robert Anton would connect Edmund's complaint again to a question of matter, making fun of those who "boast their gentry from a starre / Kinde in coniunction."[37] As Anton wrote, addressing the ancient grandfather of atomism, Democritus:

> These are those atomes of nobilitie,
> Which in thy schoole thou taugh'st erroneously,
> To be the worlds beginning.[38]

As in Harvey, making whatever you like of the stars was just as bad as making "bodies of Atomes, or sun motes."

Like Montaigne, Shakespeare understood how quickly a subjective perception or interpretation might harden into the dogmatism of belief. While scholars such as Julia Lupton have noted Leontes's strange turn to the language of ontology in *The Winter's Tale*, considering the phrase "quidlibet ex quolibet" sheds a new and revealing light on the problem.[39] What Shakespeare shows us is how dangerous it can be when the "anything" of interpretation is converted into the "anything" of substance. The story is a familiar one: Leontes doubts whether his wife has been faithful. He even doubts whether his son is his own, which raises a question of resemblance that haunts the play. In a well-known passage, the king crudely addresses his son:

> Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that I have,
> To be full like me. Yet they say we are
> Almost as like as eggs—women say so,
> That will say anything.[40]

The eggs here are proverbial, and Leontes mentions them almost in passing, but the image points us to one of the larger problems of the play: how we know for certain the things we think we know. These eggs recall a discussion about the nature of knowledge from Cicero's *Academica* where we find Lucullus, the Stoic representative in the dialogue, debating with the skeptics, who hold that certain knowledge is impossible. The example of the eggs comes up when Lucullus is refuting the contention that false presentations are not discernible from true ones and responding to the various instances of resemblance the skeptics used to make their case (twins, eggs, seals in wax). For the Stoics, the experience of examining eggs—which often look alike— shows how close inspection can reveal small differences between seemingly identical objects. As Lucullus explains: "yet we have been told that at Delos at the time of its prosperity a number of people were in the habit of keeping large number of hens for trade purposes; these poultry-keepers used to be able to tell which hen had laid an egg merely by looking at it."[41] Though Lucullus says he is "content not to be able to know those eggs apart, since to agree that this egg is the same as that egg, is nevertheless not the same thing as if there really *were* no distinction between them," he is certain that there is a set of criteria that would allow him to make meaningful distinctions between eggs—as between true and false claims.[42] As he says: "for I possess a standard [regulam] enabling me to judge presentations to be true when they have a character of a sort that false ones could not have; from that standard I may not diverge a finger's breadth, as the saying is [ut aiunt, digitum discedere], lest I should cause universal confusion [ne confundam Omnia]."[43] This image of the "finger's breadth" dramatizes the sense that small things really do matter—that "universal confusion" might hinge on the slightest "somethings" or "nothings."[44] Like the Stoic, the king believes he has a standard for judging truth from falsehood, but Shakespeare shows us how arbitrary such a standard can be.[45]

As we've seen (in Harvey, for example), making "anything of anything" can give rise to a host of other ontological terms—a proliferation of "somethings" and "nothings" out of "anythings." Shakespeare is a master of this kind of play.[46] In the passage I've been discussing, Leontes passes from "anything" to "nothing" to "something" in the space

of 13 lines. Here is the remainder of the speech following immediately upon the remark about eggs. Recall that Leontes is speaking to his son when he falls into this "mysterious, mumbling half-soliloquy" (as Northrop Frye memorably calls it):

> Can thy dam—? May't be?—
> Affection, thy intention stabs the center:
> Thou dost make possible things not so held,
> Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?—
> With what's unreal thou coactive art,
> And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
> Thou mayst cojoin with something, and thou dost,
> And that beyond commission, and I find it,
> And that to the infection of my brains
> And hard'ning of my brows.
>
> (*WT*, 1.2.137–46)[47]

Leontes addresses "Affection," referring to his own jealous passion (*affectio* in the Ciceronian sense of "a disposition or mutation happening to bodie or minde: trouble of minde").[48] As Judith Anderson has suggested, the phrase "thy intention" "belongs . . . at once to Leontes, whose affection 'thy' references, and to the personified form of an Affection to whose self-centered power he is surrendering."[49] Apostrophe is the perfect figure for this kind of making—a making that one does oneself (a form of agency) that is projected upon objects or, in this case, abstract beings (as if one is being acted upon from the outside).[50] Though he knows that affection is "coactive" with the "unreal" and "fellow'st nothing," Leontes doesn't realize that his own mind is generating "somethings" out of "nothing" and thus making "anything of anything."[51] Affection's "intention" (reminding us again of the *libet* of *quidlibet*) is a mirror of Leontes's own (disavowed) will.

In a moment of wishful thinking, Leontes's wife, Hermione, allows herself to imagine that the disaster of her husband's jealousy might be explained as an effect of an "ill planet" (*WT*, 2.1.107). A little later in the same scene, we see all too clearly that it is he, with the aid of his own passions rather than the stars, who converts "nothings" into "somethings," observing his wife's interactions with his best friend and interpreting every little thing they do as evidence of infidelity: "Is whispering nothing? / Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?" (*WT*, 1.2.284–85). The list goes on until Leontes's speech begins to break down again:

> Is this nothing?
> Why, then, the world and all that's in't is nothing,
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
> My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings
> If this be nothing
>
>   (*WT*, 1.2.292–96).

Leontes deploys his forensic imagination in search of his wife's betrayal and finds clues everywhere he looks. As Aaron Landau has put it: "His methodology is in many respects that of an extremely meticulous, even obsessive, interpreter: he constantly plays around with words, rearranges syntax, recontextualizes statements, reevaluates gestures—everything in the service of his own particular 'reading.'"[52] Translated into the period's terms, Leontes is making "quidlibet ex quolibet," transforming the language and gestures of courtesy with which the play begins into grist for his jealous mill. Interpretation, we might conclude, reaches for the language of ontology when it most wishes to substantialize itself and disavow the agency of its desire. Leontes's initial trust in the Delphic oracle conveys the completeness with which he has assimilated the world to his psyche. When the oracle ends up pronouncing definitively that he is wrong, he throws its verdict away—for he has already become his own sibyl and interpreter.[53] As Harold C. Goddard has suggested: "Leontes is exactly right, but not in the sense he intends, for it is precisely out of the vast realm of Nothing—of pure possibility—that he has summoned these nothings."[54] Equating "the vast realm of Nothing" with "pure possibility," Goddard shows just how close "nothing" can come to "anything."

When one willfully makes "anything" into a test of one's knowledge about the material world—when one hangs the world on a "nothing"—the object or perception in question tightens its grip on the mind. This is certainly the case with Leontes's conviction about his wife's infidelity. As he puts it:

> If I mistake
> In those foundations which I build upon,
> The center is not big enough to bear
> A school-boy's top.
>
>   (*WT*, 2.1.101–4)

The "center" has commonly been taken to mean the earth in the old Ptolemaic system. If Leontes is wrong, he is saying, then the earth is not large enough to support the motion of a toy. With this image of the earth mentally reduced in size and substance, Shakespeare

perhaps had in mind Thomas Digges's description of the earth in an infinite (Copernican) universe, which "scarcely retaineth any sensible proportion, so marvelously is that Orb of Annual motion greater than this little dark star wherein we live."[55] Leontes might well have wanted to charge Copernicus or Digges with making "anything of anything." This would have been the least of his mistakes. Though he doesn't know it, the top might be understood as an image of the violence of thought working upon (and building upon) itself: Leontes won't let his mind stop spinning. As Montaigne's protégé, Pierre Charron, would explain in *Of Wisdome*, translated into English in 1608:

> And then euen as a wheele that is alreadie in motion, receiuing another motion by a new force, turnes with farre greater speede; so the *Soule* being already mooued by the first apprehension, ioining a second endeuour to the first, carrieth it selfe with farre more violence than before, and is stirred vp by passions more puisant and difficult to be tamed. . . . Thus you see the principall windes from whence arise the tempests of our Soule, and the pit whereout they rise is nothing else but the opinion (which commonly is false, wandring, vncertaine, contrary to nature, veritie, reason, certaintie) that a man hath, that the things that present themselues vnto vs, are either good or ill.[56]

As Charron goes on to say, these kinds of "violent affections" can arise from "serious affaires," as we might expect, "but also vaine and friuolous [ones], as in play."[57] He links the tyranny of this mood to the figure of prognostication, implicitly invoking the phrase "quidlibet ex quolibet": "[such men] wax mad if they be contradicted . . . interpreting all prognostications and occurrents *at their owne pleasure*, and making them serue their owne designements."[58]

In *Disowning Knowledge*, Stanley Cavell attributes the irrational doubt of characters such as Othello and Leontes to "skepticism," which he describes as the misinterpretation of "a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack."[59] By mistaking our most basic relationship to the world for a matter of belief, Cavell argues, "the philosopher turns the world into, or puts it in the position of, a speaker, lodging its claims upon us, claims to which, as it turns out, the philosopher cannot listen. Everyone knows that *something* is mad in the skeptic's fantastic quest for certainty."[60] It's hard not to hear Othello in this last phrase ("Thou dost mean something") or to feel that there is a more-than-ordinary sense conveyed by Cavell's italics. The logic of making "quidlibet ex quolibet" emerges here, I would suggest, as a description of both the skeptical enterprise and Cavell's interpretation of it. Both are forms

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of allegoresis: the transformation or conversion of one problem into another. For Cavell, Othello and Leontes transform the world into a speaking subject who comes to "stand in" for the world.[61] Yet Cavell himself might be said to be making "anything of anything" because, much like the tragic characters he anatomizes, he substantializes interpretation, transforming a question of hermeneutics into one of ontology.[62]

Making "quidlibet ex quolibet" can certainly lead to ruin, as we've seen, but such making needn't always imply disaster. It might even suggest the activity of the creative imagination. In the context of a work of art, such making can refer back to the figure of the artist. In a well-known passage, George Puttenham "reverently" compares the poet to God, "who without any travell to his diuine imagination made all the world of nought."[63] Shakespeare wrote famously in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.[64]

Converting tragedy into the "stuff" of comedy in *The Winter's Tale*, the playwright shows how one might be made from the seeds of the other—indeed, much as a marvel might be made of a commonplace. In the final scene of the play, we find Shakespeare exploring a different meaning of making "anything of anything" when he turns the statue of Leontes's long-dead wife Hermione into living flesh—a metamorphosis that brings the play to its miraculous conclusion. Leontes, we recall, has been brought by Paulina, Hermione's lady-in-waiting, to a gallery to find the statue, which he hastily attempts to embrace. Paulina stops him, setting the stage for the transformation. As it turns out, the statue will come to him. Here "quidlibet ex quolibet" describes not the idea of a strained interpretation that one makes for oneself (Leontes's blasphemous *creatio ex nihilo*, as Frye has it) but rather an act of creative making for another.[65] We can find a theological frame for this thought in the following commentary on Corinthians 1:13 from the soon-to-be Dean of Canterbury, John Boys, writing in 1610, the year (or year before) Shakespeare is thought to have composed *The Winter's Tale*:

> If a man could thunder in an Oration, as *Aristophanes* said of *Pericles*; or tune his note so sweetly, that hee could moue mountaines and stony rockes with *Orpheus*; or fetch soules out of hell. . . . If a man were

> so bewitching an Orator . . . so subtill a disputer, as that he could make *quidlibet ex quolibet*, euery thing of anything, yet without loue were he nothing.[66]

In Corinthians 1:13, Paul celebrates the virtues of love, arguing that even the so-called gifts of speech and knowledge (he refers to prophecy) are "nothing" without it. Throughout *The Winter's Tale*, as Huston Diehl has shown, the character of Paulina echoes both the paternal and maternal aspects of St. Paul.[67] In the final scene of the play, Paulina translates the powers that Boys attributes to the verbal arts of the preacher to the creative potential of the theater—a power that includes the Orphic ability to move rocks and bring the dead back to life (we might recall that the myth of Pygmalion—another story of a statue come to life—takes place in the narrative frame of the Orpheus story in Ovid).[68] Without love, the spectacle of Hermione's statue is just that: empty spectacle—"nothing." With the power of love Paul describes and faith awakened through art, another kind of transformation takes place—an internal one. Is it an enduring transformation? Perhaps, but as Shakespeare knew well, when it comes to the dangerous art of interpretation, anything is possible.

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[1] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katherine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), folio, act 1, scene 1, line 88. Hereafter abbreviated *L* and cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

[2] The quarto reads: "Cordelia: Nothing, my lord. / Lear: How? Nothing can come of nothing. Speak again" (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, quarto, act 1, scene 1, lines 75–6), while the folio echoes the word "nothing" two additional times in the corresponding place (*L*, 1.1.85–88).

[3] Most editors of the play trace the idea of "nothing will come of nothing" back to the Aristotelian *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Others such as L. C. Martin have argued that Lear was channeling not Aristotle but Lucretius, who "at first or second or tenth hand, may have been among the influences which affected Shakespeare during his mainly tragic period" ("Shakespeare, Lucretius, and the Commonplaces," *Review of English Studies* 21 [1945]: 178). Cited and discussed in Adam Rzepka, "Discourse *Ex Nihilo*: Epicurus and Lucretius in Sixteenth-Century England," in *Dynamic Reading: Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism*, ed. Brooke Holmes and W. H. Shearin (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 113–32, esp. 113–14.

[4] Edward W. Tayler, "King Lear and Negation," *English Literary Renaissance* 20 (1990): 25.

[5] Robert Crowley, *A setting open of the subtyle sophistrie of Thomas Watson Doctor of Diuinitie* (London, 1569), 131. The full quote runs as follows: "And if we may be

alowed, to alledge scriptures for our purposes in that sense, and let passe both the litterall and morall senses (as you doe here) then let us as the common saying is: *facere quidlibet ex quolibet,* make what we lust of euerye thing, as commonly men of your sort use to doe" (Crowley, 131).

⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, 2 vol., trans. P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), volume 1, book 1, chapter 4, 187b.

⁷ Aristotle, *Physica. Translatio Vetus*, 2 vol., ed. Fernand Bossier and Josef Brams, *Aristoteles latinus* 7/1.2 (New York: Brill, 1990), vol. 1, book 1, chapter 4, 187b.

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2 vol., trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933–35), volume 1, book 1, chapter 4, 985a. Compare to Plato: "So I thought when [Anaxagoras] assigned the cause of each thing and of all things in common he would go on and explain what is best for each and what is good for all in common. I prized my hopes very highly, and I seized the books very eagerly and read them as fast as I could, that I might know as fast as I could about the best and the worst. My glorious hope, my friend, was quickly snatched away from me. As I went on with my reading I saw that the man made no use of intelligence, and did not assign any real causes for the ordering of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other absurdities" (*Phaedo*, trans. Harold North Fowler [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933], sections 98b–c).

⁹ The phrase recalls the tradition of scholastic "quodlibets," famously subtle and often elaborate disputations on theological and philosophical subjects freely chosen by the speaker. For the history and afterlife of the quodlibetal tradition, see in general Christopher Schabel, ed., *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages*, 2 vol. (Leiden: Brill, 2006–2007); and especially William J. Courtenay, "The Demise of Quodlibetal Literature," in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages*, 2:693–700. Another relevant medieval context is the logical rule *Ex impossibili sequitur quodlibet*, "from the impossible follows anything." As Thomas Bilson writes: "You remember belike the olde rule, *Ex impossibili sequitur quodlibet, from an impossibilitie supposed any thing will follow*: and seeing your selfe destitute of all proofes for your new Doctrine, you will needs make lotteries of impossibilities, and thence draw what you like best" (*The suruey of Christs sufferings for mans redemption and of his descent to Hades or Hel for our deliuerance* [London, 1604], 365).

¹⁰ James Calfhill, *An aunswere to the Treatise of the crosse wherin ye shal see by the plaine and vndoubted word of God, the vanities of men disproued* (London, 1565), 43. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*, "an apple of an oyster" is the not-so-distant ancestor of "comparing apples and oranges," which might suggest an Anaxagorean heritage to that familiar expression (*American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Christine Ammer [New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt], 12).

¹¹ John Weemes, *Exercitations divine; containing diverse questions and solutions for the right understanding of the Scriptures* (London, 1632), 177.

¹² John Donne, *The Courtier's Library: Or Catalogus Librorum Aulicorum Incomparabilium Et Non Vendibilium*, ed. Evelyn Mary Simpson (London: Nonesuch Press, 1930), 32. In *Pseudo-martyr*, Donne defends his practice of citing authors loosely rather than to the letter, calling out "the curious malice of those men, who in this sickly decay, and declining of their cause, can spy out falsifyings in every citation: as in a jealous, and obvious state, a Decipherer can pick out Plots, and Treason, in any familiar letter which is intercepted" (*Pseudo-martyr. Wherein out of certaine propositions and gradations, this conclusion is euicted. That those which are of the Romane religion in this kingdome, may and ought to take the Oath of allegiance* [London, 1610], sig.

A2ʳ). Acknowledging his own practice of avowedly inexact citation, which we might expect to receive the charge, he instead accuses those who would find him guilty of "falsifyings" of making *quidlibet ex quolibet.*

[13] John Harvey, *A discoursive probleme concerning prophesies how far they are to be valued, or credited, according to the surest rules, and directions in divinitie, philosophie, astrologie, and other learning* (London, 1588), 96. Harvey, an astrologer himself, initially supported his brother Richard's predictions. When the tides changed in 1588, he turned against nearly all forms of divination. For an overview of the "fiery trigon conjunction" and the trouble it caused the Harvey brothers, see Margaret Aston, "The Fiery Trigon Conjunction: An Elizabethan Astrological Prediction," *Isis* 61.2 (1970): 158–87; and Howard Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry, and Power in Renaissance England* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 108, 120.

[14] Echoing Harvey in the seventeenth century, Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, would level a similar critique against the astrologers, tracing a line from "anything of anything" to "nothing:" *"methinks that it ought to be Conviction . . . that the whole business of* Judiciary Astrology *is a mere piece of phantastry, in which they make* quidlibet ex quolibet *. . . and that there is nothing found at the bottom"* (Henry More, *Tetractys anti-astrologica, or, The four chapters in the explanation of the grand mystery of holiness which contain a brief but solid confutation of judiciary astrology, with annotations upon each chapter* [London, 1681], 168).

[15] In 1666, Samuel Parker would attribute the phrase not to Anaxagoras but to Epicurus: "[A]nd if such a licentious latitude may be allowed in historical guesses, *Quidlibet ex Quolibet* will soon be as warrantable a *maxime* in History, as 'tis in Epicurean Philosophie" (*A free and impartial censure of the Platonick philosophie: being a letter written to his much honoured friend Mr. N.B.* [Oxford, 1666], 104).

[16] For us, Harvey's phrase, "numbers of cyphers," calls to mind the Fool's words to Lear: "[N]ow thou art an O without a figure" (1.4.200–1). William R. Elton cites the proverb "He is a Cipher among numbers" in connection with this passage (*King Lear and the Gods* [Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1966], 308n39). See also Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs found in English literature and the Dictionaries of the Period* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1950), C391.

[17] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958), 442; Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and Victor Louis Saulnier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 586. Montaigne makes a similar point in the essay "Of Prognostications": "And they have been so strangely fortunate in [making prognostications] in my time as to persuade me that since divination is an amusement of sharp and idle minds, those who are trained in this subtle trick of tying and untying knots would be capable of finding, in any writings, whatever they want" (*Essays*, 29).

[18] As Timothy Hampton has explained: "[T]he blade of disfiguration and distortion cuts both ways. To preserve himself and express 'ce qui est mien par nature' [what is naturally my own], Montaigne must run the risk of being disfigured, or at least misunderstood, by his readers. He must open himself to the charge that he has failed to comprehend the 'natural usage' of the passages he borrows" (*Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990], 178–79).

[19] Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1–6*, ed. G. P. Goold, trans. H. R. Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), book 6, line 74. The full line reads: "Only trust not your verses to leaves, lest they fly in disorder, the sport of

rushing winds" [foliis tantum ne carmina manda, / ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis] (Virgil, 74–75).

[20] Montaigne, *Essays*, 442. Compare to François Rabelais: "Now do you really and truly believe that Homer, when composing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, had any thought of the allegories which have been caulked on to him by Plutarch, Heraclides of Pontus, Eustathius or Conutus and which Politian purloined from them? If you do so believe, then you come by neither foot nor hand close to my own opinion, which decrees that they had no more been dreamt of by Homer than the mysteries of the Gospel by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (as a certain Friar Loopy, a filcher of flitches, endeavors to prove, provided that he can chance upon folks as daft as he is: 'Lids,' as the saying goes, 'worthy of their pots')" (*Gargantua*, in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. M. A. Screech [New York: Penguin Classics, 2006], 207–8).

[21] On Homer and ancient philosophy, see Gerard Naddaff, "Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy," in *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature*, ed. William Wians (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 99–132. Montaigne himself knew of the tradition in which ancient commentators had transformed the tales of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into philosophical allegories. On the uses of this tradition in the Renaissance, see Jessica Wolfe, "Spenser, Homer, and the Mythography of Strife," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58.4 (2005): 1220–88; and Gerard Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philosophy and the Afterlife of Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011), 146–48.

[22] Montaigne, *Essays*, 443. Compare to Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933), book 2, chapter 6, section 63.

[23] As Montaigne explains the forking paths of interpretive error, he suggests two meanings of the phrase "nothing at all" (*tout rien*) (*Les Essais*, 587). The first is fairly straightforward: atoms themselves do not correspond to the sensible properties we perceive in objects. As Democritus says: "Sweet exists by convention, bitter by convention, colour by convention. Atoms and Void (*alone*) exist in reality" (*Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Kathleen Freeman, [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983], 93). For Montaigne's source for the fragment, see Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, trans. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), book 1, section 135. The second meaning of "nothing at all" conjures up another fragment from Democritus, though this one introduces a more strident note of skepticism: "We know nothing in reality; for truth lies in an abyss" (Freeman, 104). This fragment is transmitted through Diogenes Laërtius (see *Lives of eminent philosophers*, 2 vol., trans. R. D. Hicks. [London: Heinemann, 1931–38], vol. 2, book 9, chapter 11, section 72). Closely related fragments can be found in Cicero, *Academica*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933), book 1, chapter 12, section 44; and Cicero, 2.10.32. Depending on your interpretation, either truth lies in a pit (that is, beneath the ground of perception) or is not knowable at all. For the history of interpreting Democritus's skepticism, see Mi-Kyoung Lee, *Epistemology After Protagoras: Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 217–50.

[24] In this place, Montaigne quotes book 4, lines 499–510 of *De rerum natura*, ed. and trans., W. H. D. Rouse. Revised by M. F. Smith (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997). I have opted for Frame's translation of line 499 for its simplicity. Montaigne, *Essays*, 447; *Les Essais*, 592.

[25] Montaigne, *Essays*, 229.

[26] For Montaigne's interest in the controversy surrounding this phrase, see Antoine Compagnon, *Nous, Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980), 32–35;

for a discussion of the phrase and the problem of signification, see Louis Marin, *La critique du discours: Sur la 'Logique de Port-Royal' et les 'Pensées' de Pascal* (Paris: Minuit, 1975). Both are cited by Ulrich Langer, who finds an echo of the phrase in Montaigne's image of himself in his book. See Langer, *Divine and Poetic Freedom in the Renaissance: Nominalist Theology and Literature in France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), 111.

[27] John Calvin, *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, 3 vol., trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–51), 2:445; *Opera omnia,* 9 vol. (Amsterdam, 1667), 8:711. The full quote runs as follows: "Our faith rests in the saying, 'This is my body' [Hoc est corpus meum] so far as to have no doubt that the communion of Christ is truly offered. In this way there is no need of subtle arguments as to the quantity of body. These we are forced to use by the extravagance of those who, depriving Christ of the reality of his flesh, transform him into a phantasm. When we say that we are made partakers of Christ spiritually, we do not mean that his body is held forth to be eaten only in a figurative, symbolical, and allegorical sense. This vile falsehood, like the others, sufficiently declares that those men who thus assume a license of making anything out of anything [quidlibet ex quolibet], have not one particle of ingenuous shame" (Calvin, *Opera Omnia*, 8:711). Here Calvin is using the phrase to describe the willful misunderstanding of readers, but also driving home the point that men like Westphal misunderstand the very nature of the Eucharist.

[28] On the parallels between Samuel Harsnett and Shakespeare in *King Lear*, see Kenneth Muir, "Samuel Harsnett and *King Lear*," *The Review of English Studies* 2.5 (1951): 11–21.

[29] Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties subiects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils* (London, 1603), 188; 282.

[30] Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, act 3, scene 3, line 107.

[31] Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.180. With this image of scattered words like leaves "blown" in the wind, Iago, as Joel Altman has suggested, is a "desacralized Sibyl" (*The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010], 218).

[32] Edmund's "nothing" at least verbally parallels Cordelia's. Despite their very different origins (Cordelia was speaking honestly while Edmund is baiting his father), both "nothing[s]" lead to disastrous conclusions.

[33] *OED*, s.v., "character, *n*.," 9.

[34] As Richard Meek has argued, "Edmund's forged letter brilliantly generates the illusion of a real, if absent, author" (*Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* [New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2009], 121). According to Alan Stewart, letters were "not merely a means to maintain communication across distances, but increasingly taken as documentary evidence of transactions, of responsibility, and ultimately of guilt. . . . Even on those occasions where letters are forged or mistaken . . . the characters still subscribe to their power as evidentiary documents" (*Shakespeare's Letters* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008], 299).

[35] Harvey, 96.

[36] On the relation between "bastardy" and "base," see Abram Smythe Palmer, *Folk-etymology: A Dictionary of Verbal Corruptions Or Words Perverted in Form Or Meaning, by False Derivation Or Mistaken Analogy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 23. As Anthony Gilbert has shown, Edmund here is engaging in some serious word

play, with the word "bastardy" for example, evoking the tardiness of the younger in a system of primogeniture. See Gilbert, "'Unaccomodated man' and his discontents in *King Lear*: Edmund the Bastard and Interrogative Puns," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.2 (2000): 1–11.

[37] Robert Anton, *The Philosophers Satyrs* (London, 1616), 25.

[38] Anton, 25.

[39] Reading the passage we're about to explore, Julia Lupton poses the following question: "If the passage indeed describes adulterous desire, why is the topic pursued in such contortedly ontological terms ('unreal,' 'something,' 'nothing') rather than ethical ones?" (*Afterlives of Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature* [Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996], 187). Lupton finds an answer in the biblical injunction against idolatry. Idolatry was one particularly fraught way of making "anything of anything" in this historical moment. As Lupton writes: "Whereas God creates something out of nothing (the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*), the false images of the idolater and the false love of the adulterer create nothing out of something by rendering reality itself into a vain fiction" (Lupton, 189).

[40] Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, act 1, scene 2, lines 128–31. Hereafter abbreviated *WT* and cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

[41] Cicero, 2.18.57. Cited and discussed in Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2012), 120. Erasmus discusses this passage under the heading "Non tam ovum ovo simile" [As like as one egg to another] (*The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 31, *Adages li1 to lv100*, ed. Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982], 393). Montaigne recalls the passage at the start of "Of Experience," modifying it slightly as if to emphasize the point: "And we ourselves use eggs for the most express example of similarity. However, there have been men, and notably one at Delphi, who recognized marks of difference between eggs, so that he never took one for another; and although there were many hens, he could tell which one the egg came from" (*Essays*, 815).

[42] Cicero, 2.18.58.

[43] Cicero, 2.18.58.

[44] Moments earlier, Lucullus refers disparagingly to Democritus, who "says that there are a countless number of worlds, and what is more that some of them to such an extent not merely resemble but completely and absolutely match each other in every detail that there is positively no difference between them, and that the same is true of human beings" (Cicero, 2.17.55). We bear this specific example of philosophical error in mind as Lucullus insists on the importance of making subtle distinctions.

[45] According to a Platonic distinction in the background of Cicero's dialogue, the wise man rejects opinion in favor of true knowledge. In *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina refers pointedly to "the root of [Leontes's] opinion, which is rotten / As ever oak or stone was sound" (*WT*, 2.3.88–89). Leontes believes that he holds a "true opinion," but if we accept the distinction between opinion and knowledge, there is no such thing (*WT*, 2.1.38). See also Cicero, 2.21.67–68.

[46] For example, as Paul A. Jorgensen has shown, when Shakespeare evokes "nothing" he is drawing on the "highly potential nature of the word and idea" in contexts such as the *De contemptu mundi* tradition, which understood all the mortal world (as compared to the spiritual realm) as "nothing," as well as on the playful literary tradition that produced mock encomia like *The Prayse of Nothing* (1585) ("*Much Ado About Nothing*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5.3 [1954]: 287).

⁴⁷ Northrop Frye, "Recognition in the *The Winter's Tale*," in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1962), 243.

⁴⁸ Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (London, 1578), "Affectio," sig. E4ᵛ. Cited and discussed in Hallett Smith, "Leontes's Affectio," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 14.2 (1963): 163–66, esp. 163.

⁴⁹ Judith H. Anderson, "Working Imagination in the Early Modern Period: Donne's Secular and Religious Lyrics and Shakespeare's Hamlet, Macbeth, and Leontes," in *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary*, ed. Anderson and Jennifer C. Vaught (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2013), 204.

⁵⁰ For a useful discussion of the objectifying role of apostrophe in poetry see Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2008), 6–10.

⁵¹ As Philip Lorenz has pointed out, "Generations of scholars have struggled with the passage, trying to clarify how the term 'affection' functions by showing how it must either refer to Hermione's lust or to Leontes's jealousy, but not to both" (*The Tears of Sovereignty: Perspectives of Power in Renaissance Drama* [New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2013], 228). As a counterexample Lorenz cites Christopher Pye, who suggests that Leontes is both "in the throes of his delirium and [also able] to recognize it as delirium" ("Against Schmitt: Law, Aesthetics, and Absolutism in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108.1 [2009]: 202).

⁵² Aaron Landau, "'No Settled Senses of the World Can Match the Pleasure of That Madness': The Politics of Unreason in *The Winter's Tale*," *Cahiers Élizabéthains* 64.1 (2003): 33.

⁵³ For the certainty of the oracle, see Plutarch, *The Oracles at Delphi No Longer Given in Verse*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, in *Moralia*, 16 vol. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927–2004), vol. 5, pages 340–1.

⁵⁴ Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 2 vol. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), 2:264.

⁵⁵ Leonard Digges and Thomas Digges, *A prognostication euerlasting* (London, 1592), sig. N2ʳ.

⁵⁶ Pierre Charron, *Of wisdome*, trans. Samson Lennard (London, 1608), 74.

⁵⁷ Charron, 250.

⁵⁸ Charron, 250, emphasis added.

⁵⁹ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 11.

⁶⁰ Cavell, 7–8.

⁶¹ Cavell, 19. As Cavell elaborates: "The expression 'withdrawal of the world' promises the following of various paths into and out of the collapse of the 'best case' in the skeptical interrogation: the sense, as in the case of Descartes's wax or of C. I. Lewis's apple, that 'if I cannot know this then I cannot know anything'; and the sense that here the object stands for, enacts the position of, the world as such; and that this elicits, as in some metaphysical parody, the animism (and loss of animism) of the world; and that these paths presume that the best case of acknowledging another mind works itself out similarly to and hence differently from the best case of knowing a material object" (Cavell, 19).

⁶² Cavell himself understands that "criticism is inherently immoderate and melodramatic," which does not mean that it should be discounted (Cavell, 82). As he explains, "that quality will itself be serviceable if it provides further data for investigating the act of criticism" (Cavell, 82). The question Cavell raises is: what does it mean for criticism

to risk hyperbole? As David Rudrum has suggested, it may mean coming to terms with its own vulnerability and fragility—a lesson, Cavell suggests, philosophy would do well to learn. See Cavell, 82–84; and Rudrum, *Stanley Cavell and the Claim of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2013), 18–20. As Christopher D. Johnson has put it, "Cavell asks us to acknowledge Othello's ridiculous doubts and Lear's histrionic avoidance as our own; he asks us to measure them by and against how we ordinarily speak about our world and ourselves. He asks us, in short, to make their hyperbole our hyperbole, and then consider the consequences" (*Hyperboles: The Rhetoric of Excess in Baroque Literature and Thought* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010], 284).

[63] George Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vol. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1904), 2:3. Cited in Tayler, 26.

[64] Shakespeare, A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, act 5, scene 1, lines 14–17.

[65] See Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 115.

[66] John Boys, *An exposition of the dominical epistles and gospels used in our English liturgie throughout the whole yeare together with a reason why the church did chuse the same* (London, 1610), 272.

[67] See Huston Diehl, "'Doth Not the Stone Rebuke Me?': The Pauline Rebuke and Paulina's Lawful Magic in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 69–82.

[68] As Diehl explains, "Shakespeare appears to claim for the playwright here the power of the [Pauline] preacher to 'do good,' and he locates that power in the impurities of the theatre—its mingling of piercing words and marvelous images, its cunning tricks, illusions and fictions" (82). Lynn Enterline reads Shakespeare's use of Orpheus and Pygmalion as an interrogation of the powers of the theater and the "cost to women of Ovid's foundational tropes for poetic authority" ("'You Speak a Language that I Understand Not': The Rhetoric of Animation in The Winter's Tale," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.1 [1997]: 44).