1   Shakespeare and After

> Shakespeare, like the sun, is a metaphor; he always means something other than he is.[1]

Edward Pechter's by now classic *What Was Shakespeare* sets out to evaluate Shakespeare Studies after the so-called "Theory Wars" and concludes that, at the turn of the millennium at least, there was no "end of Shakespeare Studies as We Know It" in sight, rather a "transformation".[2] This transformation – the result of ideological battles over the role of literature, history, politics and aesthetic value – seemed to have shattered a kind of previous consensus, or, as Pechter calls it, a "unified discourse"[3] in Shakespeare criticism. The unified discourse, was that of "formalist humanism"[4] which collapsed as a result of the combined attack of poststructuralist theory, postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism, new historicism and cultural materialism. At the centre of this "alternative" and "political" Shakespeare were "questions about textuality and history, and about subjectivity, agency, and political effectiveness".[5] Where the self-stylised radicalism of the new dissidents saw discontinuity, however, Pechter in his critique sees nothing but continuity – since dissidence and radical critique are the very backbone of the humanities and humanism itself. This is a tenet that has become quite strong in recent years: the antihumanism of theory and new historicism relies in fact on a caricature of ('liberal') humanism and detracts from the idea that the humanities have always depended and thrived on dissensus, rather than on a kind of enforced ideological consensus, as their fundamental form of knowledge production – an argument most forcefully made by Edward Said almost twenty years ago.[6]

There is of course something utterly disarming about the idea of the humanities – the core of the venerable humanist institution called 'University' – as thriving on dissensus rather than agreement. And it is true that some of the antihumanism of theory today, upon re-reading, appears somewhat 'naff' and, its use of politicised 'jargon', at times sounds almost like 'agit-prop'. But the idea that a return to the some idealised 'radical humanism' might be possible is equally unconvincing, simply because the cherished humanist university ceased to exist at the same time as theory, cultural studies and the new interdisciplinarity apparently came to rule over it. The university (and the humanities) has been "in ruins" ever since[7] and merely survives in its neoliberal, managerialised, 'posthistorical' and 'postcultural' form. With it ceased not only the consensus of a 'unified discourse' (for example in Shakespeare criticism), but also, in a sense, 'Shakespeare' himself. As Scott Wilson

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[1] Scott Wilson, "Heterology", in: Nigel Wood, ed. *The Merchant of Venice* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), p. 128.

[2] Edward Pechter, *What Was Shakespeare? Renaissance Plays and Changing Critical Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[6] Edward Said's *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004).

[7] Cf. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

explaind, at the time, Shakespeare had already become a mere icon, an empty metaphor, a commodity and an "object of an institutionally channelled desire".[8] Hence also Wilson's conclusion that whatever remains of Shakespeare is subject to "heterology". Shakespeare criticism 'after' Shakespeare has therefore been looking for what remains 'other' and "utterly heterogeneous to his homogenized cultural body".[9] As Wilson rightly pointed out, this heterology can still be recuperated by a new form of humanism. Shakespeare may have become a "collapsing star" and a "black hole",[10] or a "dense, retentive abyss reflecting nothing but the horror, the impotent plight of the would-be uniquely clever, honest and above all disciplined Shakespeare scholar faced with over 4,000 items lodged by the World Shakespeare Bibliography every year and the certain knowledge that any and every interpretation evaporates the instant it is written";[11] but the human and humanist urge of the Shakespeare scholar past, present and to come should not be underestimated. Shakespeare's "solar unassailability" will not stop engulfing humanistic scholarly labour. So, what to do when humanism in its most antihumanist, political and theoretical form becomes a cynical 'reflex'? If this sounds like an almost existentialist dilemma, it probably is, and hence the call for 'authentic' action cannot be far off. We know, since Sartre, that existentialism is also a humanism, a 'dogged' and desperate kind of humanism *'malgré tout'*. Wilson's proposed 'authentic' action, in fact, follows Bataille's logic in "putting [Shakespeare] back into the use circuit *as* shit" and "putting all of Shakespeare's shit, all that is remote, revolting, terrible, Other and so on back into play".[12] Shakespeare's texts thus become the 'resident evil', that which cannot be recuperated by any humanism, simply because it is not (entirely) human. Investigations into the 'inhuman' in Shakespeare, consequently, are what has been proliferating since and while these readings are not immune to a recuperation by humanism they are nevertheless no longer entirely humanist. I would suggest, they are, for want of a better word, 'posthumanist'.

However, posthumanist does not imply a simple turning away, neither from humanism nor from theory, but rather a 'working through' or a 'deconstruction of humanism' for which something like theory is needed more than ever. It also is no turning away from historicism and materialism, but it is a historicism and materialism adapted to the changed, 'posthuman condition'. One aspect of this condition 'after' humanism is the lost consensus, the lost universalism, concerning history and culture. The relevance of Shakespeare after humanism lies in a combination of the "presentism", the strategic anachronism, even futurism, expressed in Linda Charnes's well-known essay "We were never early modern",[13] in which she claims that Shakespeare in contemporary culture stands for "Historicity itself".[14] It is not so much 'calendar time' but the intensity of 'subjective time' outside the dialectic

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[8] Wilson, "Heterology", p. 129.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Cf. Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (London: Hogarth Press, 1990).

[11] Wilson, "Heterology", pp. 130-131.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[13] Linda Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs: Shakespeare and the Politics of a New Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 43-52.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

between early and late modernity that resonates in Shakespearean characters like Hamlet. They are "always already postmodern, or rather, *amodern* – since (…) one cannot 'post' something that has not yet happened".[15] This is not to say, however, that their value lies in a timeless aestheticist human essence, or that they speak to the 'heart of human feeling'. Instead, what they highlight – in analogy with Bruno Latour's argument in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) – is that modernity (and therefore also humanism) remains a 'virtuality', or an impossible task:

> If Latour is correct that we have never been modern, then Hamlet has never been early modern, we have never been postmodern, and we are all, along with the pesky Prince, stuck in the same boat with regard to what, exactly, 'being historicist' means (…). Hamlet continues to speak to us because he continues to be 'timeless': not because he 'transcends' history but because *we were never early modern*.[16]

Shakespeare 'After' Theory

> A conjunction between tradition and novelty in Shakespeare's plays exercises an enchantment at once renewable and altogether singular.[17]

It seems thus that after several decades of heated ideological debates, theory, canon and culture wars, if not entirely settled, have somewhat petered out amidst the general crisis and decline of the humanities. Hardened ideological positions on historicist and cultural relativism and the role of truth, politics, ethics and aesthetic value in literature and culture have mellowed. However, the role of the early modern period, the Renaissance and Shakespeare after having been hotly contested by new historicists, cultural materialists, traditionalists and humanists, remains as unclear and ambiguous as ever. As a result there is a new uncertainty in Shakespeare and early modern studies. The uncertainty this time however seems more profound – too pressing are the 'future-of-the-humanities' and the 'role-of-literature' questions to allow for a simple return to business as usual in the post-theoretical English department. What returns instead is a new kind of pluralism, precisely around the notion of the 'human' and 'humanism', and around the relationship between literature and life. Humanism, having been one of the main targets of theory, continues to be the main battleground, arguably this time in its pluralised form: humanism*s*.[18] A new dissensus about the past, present and future of humanism and its subject – the human – emerges, as a result of new threats. The 'posthuman' and 'posthumanism' have been taking shape, but just like the fragmentation of humanism into 'mainstream' or 'liberal humanism', 'existentialist humanism', 'radical humanism' etc., the uncertainty and pluralisation spills over into that which

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[16] Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs*, pp. 48, 52)

[17] Catherine Belsey, *Why Shakespeare?* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2007), p. 20.

[18] A point made, although in a much less charitable way, by Claus Uhlig, "Humanism(s) – Beyond the 'New Historicism'", in: *Literatur und Philosophie* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004), pp. 23-42.

is supposed to supersede it. Posthumans promise and threaten in many familiar and sometimes less familiar forms. Posthumanisms revaluate, reject, extend, rewrite many aspects of real or invented humanisms. There is no surprise in this, because that is what the prefix 'post-' does. This is its rhetorical essence: it ambiguates. It plays with supersession, crisis, deconstruction, regression and progression at once. Its main virtue, if one choses to take it seriously, is to defamiliarise, detach and surprise. Arguing for 'posthumanist Shakespeares' does not mean to exclude the resurfacing of the human and humanism in a more fragile form. It means that 'we' still 'care' about the human, humanness, humanity, but that 'we' also embrace the new plurality and the new questions that are put to humanism, antihumanism, posthumanism, even transhumanism alike: questions of human survival in late-modern, global, techno-scientific hypercapitalist societies and their technocultures, facing extinction threats, global migration and climate meltdown. Above all, it means confronting humanism with its 'specters' – the inhuman, the superhuman, the nonhuman in all their invented, constructed or actual forms. It is a strategic move away from anthropocentric premises: the human can no longer be taken for granted, humanity as a universal value is no longer self-legitimating, humanism as a reflex or self-reflex cannot be trusted. To stay 'critical' (in a humanistic, 'philological' sense)[19] in these times of plurality and global risk means to re-read, to read carefully and differently. I would like to suggest the label 'critically posthumanist' as a compromise that shows the care, the scepticism and the openness towards Shakespeare 'after' Shakespeare, or Shakespeare after humanism. Some of its guiding questions are: is there life beyond Shakespeare? What Shakespeare for the age of 'life sciences', biotechnology and biopolitics? What does Shakespeare have to tell us about our post-anthropocentric or even post-biological times? Can we still make him our contemporary?

It must be clear, however, that these kind of questions cannot be answered without further but maybe different theorising. Critical posthumanism (CPH) is theorising that is no longer entrenched in ideological dogmatism. Rather, it is a more 'relaxed' and open-minded theoretical approach that values the lessons learned from the theory and other wars. Theory that puts its ear to the ground and listens to the new sounds, which, it is true, mostly come from the 'sciences' these days – bio-, info-, cogno-, neuro- etc. sciences to be precise. It is no wonder that, in the face of the challenges that these new sciences, after the so-called 'science wars', the question of the human and the question of the relationship between literature and life come back to haunt the humanities. By referring to the current climate as 'posthumanist', I do not mean 'dehumanising' but simply that the human and humanity are in transition or transformation. Humanism – the discourse about what it means to be human – is in the process of transformation and hence the object of this discourse – the human (who is also its subject, but maybe no longer exclusively so) – is being rewritten. The anxiety and desires that this change and uncertainty cause reopen, for

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[19] Cf. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*.

Shakespeare studies, the question of the bard's (or by now also the "CyberBard's")[20] role within the history of humanism.

The argument as to what exactly Shakespeare's humanism entails and what function it plays in his work is far from being settled, and remains to be pursued in all its complexity. It goes beyond critiques of the positioning of Shakespeare as a mainstay of a 'liberal' education, or the temptation to read decadence or 'anarchy' (as Matthew Arnold might have had it) in any of the related counter-positions. It is in any case not a question of polarisation between pro- and antihumanists that is needed in order to continue to make Shakespeare and the early modern period relevant to our so called 'posthumanist' moment. What is at stake, instead, is a historically and textually informed clarification of the privileged relationship between the early modern on the one hand and the late modern, or even postmodern, on the other: between early humanism and a humanism that may be on its last legs, awaiting either its renewal or, indeed, its end. This opens onto what I mean by 'posthumanism'. Posthumanism, as I understand it, is a critical stance that is at one and the same time aware of at least three choices for a contemporary literary criticism mindful of the interdisciplinary temper of our time. The first of these choices reacts to the consequences of what is most canonical within the canon becoming increasingly detached from any of the assumptions that consolidated a humanist paradigm. The second choice responds to outlooks that distance themselves even further from those assumptions, and recognises that the implications of bio-, nano-, cogno- and info-technology on body, mind, culture, and epistemology have now become part of mainstream debate within the humanities and within interdisciplinary explorations of the integrity of the human. It should therefore be possible to read Shakespeare according to re-conceptualisations influenced by these outlooks – among them the possibility that Shakespeare may have 'invented the posthuman' as well as the human. The third choice remains doggedly insistent that nothing much substantially has changed, that Shakespeare has survived far worse upheavals than these, and that it continues to be perfectly feasible to read him as if there were no hint of a brave new world that has such posthumanists in it.

Reading Shakespeare through CPH means revisiting the humanist/antihumanist debate in the light of current thinking, cultural practices, and re-orientations towards the posthuman. In practical terms, this involves recognising that at present the question of what it means to be human is being asked in the context of dramatic technological change and global environmental threats. Rereading Shakespeare within this present therefore takes on a new and exciting relevance. To discuss whether Shakespeare's work coincides with the invention of the human is surely to question also his understanding of the inhuman, the nonhuman, the more-than-human, the less-than-human. Above all, it involves exploring whether the posthuman, too, finds itself there already. Is it prefigured, represented, contested in Shakespeare? If so, is it possible to come up with a posthumanist approach to

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[20] Linda Charnes, "Styles That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Ideology Critique", *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996): 142.

Shakespeare that would be able to respond to his work in the light of critical perspectives that retain the memory of humanism but which also seek to exemplify what posthumanist interpretation might entail?

Shakespeare 'After' Humanism

> Life itself has become a naturalistic unreality, partly, because of Shakespeare's prevalence (…). To have invented our feelings is to have gone beyond psychologizing us: Shakespeare made us theatrical (…).[21]

The question of Shakespeare's humanism has created a vast amount of controversy and heated debate between self-proclaimed humanists and proponents of a politicised new historicist and cultural materialist Shakespeare. The argument has mostly been fought at an ideological level and has involved some strategic misrepresentations of the other camp. New Historicists and cultural materialists have been reduced to 'postmodernists', or 'constructivist anti-essentialists', while all too often defenders of Shakespeare's 'humanism' have themselves been caricatured as politically naïve, reactionary, or idealist-*cum*-aestheticist. Those who seek a ready point of reference for this debate need go no further than reactions to Harold Bloom's notorious equation of Shakespeare with the "invention of the human", and his idea that we were "pragmatically invented" by Shakespeare.

Indeed, Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare – The Invention of the Human* (1999) insists on explaining Shakespeare's pervasiveness through his apparent universalism. It is of course a very Western universalism that Bloom has in mind because he equates it with the invention of (modern) personality, which, in turn, is taken to be, as the subtitle professes, the "invention of the human":

> More even than all the other Shakesperean prodigies – Rosalind, Shylock, Iago, Lear, Macbeth, Cleopatra – Falstaff and Hamlet are the invention of the human, the inauguration of personality as we have come to recognize it. The Idea of Western character, of the self as a moral agent, has many sources: Homer and Plato, Aristoteles and Sophocles, the Bible and St. Augustine, Dante and Kant, and all you might care to add. Personality, in our sense, is a Shakespearean invention, and is not only Shakespeare's greatest originality but also the authentic cause of his perpetual pervasiveness.[22]

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[21] Bloom, *Shakespeare*, p. 13.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

For Bloom, Shakespeare *is* the Western and *therefore* the universal canon, and thus the only defense against the "anti-elitist swamp of Cultural Studies"[23] which has presumably led to the current identity crisis within the humanities. Quite obviously, Bloom represents all that has been discredited in 'mainstream' humanism: an aestheticism that makes moral political (i.e. liberal) judgments on the basis of an apparent "empirical supremacy".[24]

While Bloom defended the universalism and meliorism of the humanistic project against postmodern cultural relativism, others, like Robin Headlam Wells in their defense of humanism and their attack on theory's antiessentialism and cultural constructivism turned to quite unlikely allies, like evolution, biology and genetics. Quite ironically, the idea that there may be a human 'essence' after all, even if it is not cultural but genetic, was seen as 'liberating'. Humanity from this angle is not a construct but a 'predisposition', the self not an invention but a neuropsychologically explicable effect of hard-wired evolution-driven brain activity. As a result, literature (including criticism), strictly speaking, becomes a branch of 'cognitive poetics' and neuroscience. I would certainly agree that in the light of technoscientific change literary criticism cannot stand still. But, from my point of view, it is precisely because of this change that a straight-forwardly humanist understanding of literature is no longer possible. Replacing theoretical anti-essentialism and constructivism with a new bioscientific essentialism cannot repair humanism, and using genetic notions of human 'nature' to defend oneself against antihumanist theory only accelerates the proliferation of a rather uncritical posthumanism. Wells's project in *Shakespeare's Humanism* (2005), which was to show "the centrality of human nature in Shakespeare's universe", "by listening to what other disciplines have to say about human nature", in order for criticism to "move on from an outdated anti-humanism",[25] turned out to be rather counter-productive. The anti-anti-essentialism directed against new historicism and theory was bought at the price of a new 'naturalism' and techno-idealism. Instead, there is now a new, and I would claim, posthumanist, materialism available that does engage with technological challenges not by comparing concpets of 'human nature' but, precisely, by denaturing the 'human'. One simply does not need the mystification of a phrase like 'human nature' to explain what constitutes our species's biological and cultural charcateristics once evolution is no longer confused with teleology. This does not invalidate the theory of evolution, it merely helps to 'de-anthropocentre' it. It is important not to confuse or freely slide between universalism and essentialism in terms of human 'nature'. The fact that members of the species *homo sapiens (sapiens)* share genetic and cultural characteristics which, at a basic non-normative level, are undoubtedly universal, does not *automatically* lead to moral aesthetic values about 'human nature' since the concept of nature just like all the concepts used in science (from 'life' to 'gene') are first and foremost linguistically and culturally mediated entities. CPH is turning its back neither on constructivism, nor on materialism and historicism, nor on the idea that universal *meaning* like truth is not given but *made*. A statement like Wells's "If

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[25] Wells, *Shakespeare's Humanism*, p. 5.

there were no universal passions and humours, we would have no means of evaluating literature from another age or another culture: a text would have value only for the community in which it was produced",[26] is not an argument against a presumed theoretical 'presentism', because it neglects the fundamentally hermeneutic condition of all human and maybe also nonhuman knowledge, namely that meaning, including historical and scientific meaning always needs to be appropriated and interpreted by a materially, historically, and radically contextualised subject. This is, in fact, precisely what Wells is doing in attempting to redress what he thinks is an imbalance. What else does it prove to show that Shakespeare and his historical Renaissance or early modern context were already in many ways anti-essentialist, than to increase (and construct) Shakespeare's continued, renewed, intensified, modulated etc. relevance to our own, equally constructed, stance regarding *our* present time? I regard the opening up of literature and criticism 'after' humanism, following on from and thus inheriting postmodern theory, towards what appear to be fundamental technoscientific challenges, towards a constructed human nature, as inevitable but not as unproblematic – hence my call for a *critical* posthumanism.[27]

Life 'After' Shakespeare

Can Shakespeare help us with the question of how to live?[28]

For Andy Mousley, in *Re-Humanising Shakespeare* (2007), Shakespeare's 'greatness' undoubtedly lies in his 'humanity'. He tries to revive the idea of "Shakespeare as sage" or of the great writer's "wisdom" as that part of Arnoldian criticism that looks upon literature as a "coherent criticism of life". Mousley sees a resurgence of "literary humanism" after anti-humanist theory that reaffirms literature as an "antidote to dehumanisation, alienation and instrumentalism".[29] Shakespeare's ethics and the "existential significance" of his writings for living an "authentically human" life should not, however, do away with antihumanist theory's "scepticism".[30] Mousley tackles this seemingly impossible task by differentiating between what he calls "mainstream humanism" ("individualism, (…) sovereignty, unbridled freedom, autonomy and a magnified image of humanity")[31] – which was and continues to be the justified target of theoretical scepticism – and 'other humanisms' that do not depart from a 'transcendent' human 'nature', but see the essence of humanness as an exploration of its limits – or, as Jean Paul Sartre famously explained, in defending existentialism against what he called '*les naturalistes*', that it, existentialism, is a humanism, because it starts from a

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[27] See Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanismus: Eine kritische Einführung* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2009) and *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[28] Andy Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare: Literary Humanism, Wisdom and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 1.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.

radicalised idea of freedom (namely, as responsibility and task) and from the lack of determination in anything human, captured in the phrase: "*l'existence précède l'essence*". For Mousley, however, we cannot be just anything. Having examined the various scepticisms and nihilisms staged by Shakespeare in Part 1 of his book, Mousley turns in Part 2 to plays which indicate the persistence of certain bodily and emotional needs, and explores the implications of these needs for questions of value and ethics. In short, Shakespeare was both, a sceptic and a sage, a kind of ironic humanist. Mousley thus puts his trust in Shakespeare to achieve a "better humanism",[32] one that constitutes an attempt "to answer the question of what remains of the human, when 'the human' like all else is liable to evaporate".[33] Shakespeare, he hopes, may help us to "become human",[34] after all.

Mousley, in what I would call his 'yearning for the human',[35] is following in the footsteps of eminent critical humanists like Edward Said, for whom humanism is first of all, literally speaking, self-criticism, while the foremost task of every humanist scholar or 'philologist' is to be critical of humanism itself. As admirable and noble as this existential, almost desperately hopeful, yearning for our 'promised' humanity is, the radical openness of the human and thinking the human 'at the limits' are part of a very risky strategy. Humanism has never been able to guarantee anything, and even Shakespeare as 'life coach' cannot perform miracles. There have always been humans who yearned for something entirely other than (being) human – and currently their number seems to be on the rise again. One can yearn for God, the machine, artificial intelligence, transhuman successor species, in short, transcendence in any form. This is why I have no confidence in merely radicalising the critical potential that undoubtedly lies in some forms of humanism.[36] Instead I would insist on using the admittedly awkward 'posthumanist' label, at the risk of being mistaken for a 'techno-enthusiast'. But the historical-material imperative compels one to take the newness of the posthuman challenge seriously and to a certain extent, literally. Shakespeare 'after' humanism is still humanist – maybe. But the challenge to the humanist tradition does not just stem from antihumanist theory, it also lies in 'post-, de-, super-, trans-' etc. humanising tendencies *within* technoscience and late capitalist humanity itself. In this sense, Shakespeare is not only 'after' humanism, he is also 'after' technology and, ultimately, 'after' the human as such.

Shakespeare 'After' Technology

In many ways, the posthuman gestures towards technology and cultural change that, if not driven by, at least is inseparable from technological and scientific

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[35] To paraphrase Akeel Bilgrami's introduction to Edward Said's *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*.

[36] Cf. Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley, *Critical Humanisms: Humanist/Anti-Humanist Dialogues* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

development. However, that this is no one-way street is demonstrated by works like Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday's *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (2000), Arthur F. Kinney's *Shakespeare's Webs: Networks of Meaning in Renaissance Drama* (2004) or Adam Max Cohen's *Shakespeare and Technology: Dramatizing Early Modern Technological Revolutions* (2006). Shakespeare's own awareness of technological change in early modern culture takes place at a time when modern knowledge partitioning was not yet in place and thus interdisciplinarity or rather 'transdisciplinarity' made a dialogue between early scientific investigation and humanistic study relatively simple. There was also no modern sense of 'technology' but merely mechanical practices, tools, new instruments, machines and artefacts or 'techniques'. That technical and machinic metaphors are present in Shakespeare's works is no secret; but their ambiguity is also a reflection of a developing general cultural ambiguity towards the machinic human 'other'. Especially in such a mechanical environment as the theatre the mixing of human and machine, and thus early modern forms of 'cyborgisation', are never far off – a process that Cohen names "turning tech", by which he means the "description of the individual as a machine".[37] If the early modern age is the beginning of the *homo mechanicus*, and if early modern literature gives rise to something like the literary cyborg,[38] there is also ambiguity about the distinction between nature and culture, the boundaries of the body, biology and spirituality, materialism and idealism, emotion and cognition. No wonder that cognitive and neurosciences are increasingly called upon to explain the cognitive cultural 'map' of the early modern mind and "Shakespeare's brain".[39] All these are attempts to demonstrate the continued if not increased relevance of Shakespeare and the privileged relationship between early and late modern culture. One useful analogy here might be the image of 'retrofitting', in the sense of creating an adaptability between old and new (technologies, and by analogy cultures and their readings) which thus represent a kind of reinforcing and bridging continuity. Reading Shakespeare through and with CPH is about 'retrofitting' the early modern in this sense – combining technological change with continuity and cultural 'ecology'. Links are forged between the "first age of print" and that which presents itself as maybe the last age of print with its transition to digital and digitalised culture and their respective major conceptual reorientations. As Rhodes and Sawday put it:

> The computer, through its possibilities for interactivity, 'play' and the creativity of hypertext, is now rapidly undoing that idealization of stability [underpinning the age of print], and returning us to a kind of textuality which may have more in common with the pre-print era.[40]

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[37] Adam Max Cohen, *Shakespeare and Technology: Dramatizing Early Modern Technological Revolutions* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2006), p. 17.

[38] Cf. Jonathan Sawday, Renaissance Cyborg", in: Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman, eds., *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 1999), pp. 171-195.

[39] Cf. Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading With Cognitive Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[40] Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday, eds., *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 11-12.

Even though the Shakespearean text will undoubtedly survive into the digital age, the idea and the available technologies relating to text and textuality (cf. the wonderful French phrase *traitement de texte*) – text, which itself, as Graham Holderness reminded us, is in its irreducible multiplicity a piece of technology[41] – will change, have already changed the practice of textual editing and literary criticism. It is thus becoming increasingly difficult to disentangle 'pastism' (historicism), 'presentism' and 'futurism' in Shakespeare studies (and culture more generally) 'after' technology.

Shakespeare 'After' the Human

Ultimately, the effect of the collapsing of the humanist tradition and the radical opening of the 'human' and its meaning, is motivated ethically, hence the major focus on nonhuman others, the inhuman, the subhuman but also the superhuman. On the one hand, there is the 'greening' of Shakespeare through various forms of ecocriticism; on the other, the postanthropocentric thrust of posthumanist theory that concerns itself with all kinds of nonhuman others also radicalises the eternal 'animal question'. Gabriel Egan explained his motives in writing *Green Shakespeare* (2006) as an attempt to "show that our understanding of Shakespeare and our understanding of Green politics have overlapping concerns".[42] The increasing and concretising threat of environmental disaster, questions of sustainability and the contemporary critique of 'speciesism' actually go hand in hand. What do early modern forms of 'ecology' and attitudes towards nature and animals have to teach late modern Green politics and animal rights movements? There is a new organicism, vitalism and ideas of interconnectedness between nature and culture, humans and their environment, networks and nodes, that promises new forms of interdisciplinarity between the sciences and the humanities outside or 'after' the humanist tradition, producing new, posthuman(ist) forms of subjectivity. To what extent can the beginning of modernity and humanism be helpful in making choices for us who find ourselves at the other end of five hundred years of modernity and humanism? Again, the notion of retrofitting seems appropriate here:

> Shakespeare's plays show an abiding interest in what we now identify as positive- negative-feedback loops, cellular structures, the uses and abuses of analogies between natural and social order, and in the available models for community. Characters in Shakespeare display an interest in aspects of this natural world that are relevant for us, and if we take that interest seriously we find that there is nothing childlike or naïve about their concerns.[43]

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[41] Graham Holderness, *Textual Shakespeare: Writing and the Word* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2003).
[42] Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 1.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

In analogy with the indeterminacy of nature and culture in early modern times, there is also a "space of ontological indeterminacy" between humans and animals, as Bruce Boehrer put it.[44] It is worth studying the "distinctions between human and animal nature", which are "central to western cultural organization (…), help to license particular forms of material and economic relations to the natural world; (…) help to suggest and reinforce parallel social distinctions on the levels of gender, ethnicity, race, and so on" historically,[45] but it is also necessary to draw parallels with contemporary forms of anthropomorphism, anthropocentism and speciesism. In *Perceiving Animals* (2000), Erica Fudge argued for this kind of continuity, this retrofitting of early modern and late modern speciesism. The "degradation of humanity in the face of the beast in early modern thought is a recurring theme", she explained;[46] but anthropomorphism allows for both, sentimental humanisation of animals and animalisation of humans. If this mutual dependence of the violent and speciesist process of 'becoming human' and 'becoming animal' is a major concern in early modern culture and in early modern humanism, then it increasingly comes back to haunt a late modern, posthumanist culture, in which the boundaries between human and animal (like in fact all the boundaries between humans and their various related significant others, which have played and continue to play a role in the process of shoring up and guaranteeing the humanity of the human: the monster, the machine etc.) once again, this time through bio- and other technologies, have become, to use Donna Haraway's word, "leaky".[47] "Thinking with animals" becomes thus a major task, since "ignoring the presence of animals in the past [as in the present or the future one might add] is ignoring a significant feature of human life".[48] Nonhuman animals do have agency within human culture, and they can also be subjects: "humans cannot think about themselves – their cultures, societies, and political structures – without recognizing the importance of nonhumans to themselves, their cultures, societies, and political structures".[49] Reading Shakespeare alongside CPH therefore also means sharing in this "dislocation of the human" brought about by the return of its nonhuman others and the possible parallel between the challenges to early modern and late modern humanism, where, as Donna Haraway famously put it in her "Manifesto for Cyborgs" in 1985, the boundaries between human and animal, and human and machine have been thoroughly breached.[50]

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[44] Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare Among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), p. 1.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[46] Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), p. 10.

[47] Cf. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century [1985]", in: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 152.

[48] Erica Fudge, ed., *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 3.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[50] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 151.

CPH thus opens up several lines of questioning for Shakespeare studies (and literary studies more generally): what would it mean to read Shakespeare no longer 'as' humanist – neither as a humanist author nor from a humanist (reader's) standpoint? Who, in fact, is the 'real' posthumanist, Shakespeare or 'we'? Two humanisms are here in fact in doubt – Shakespeare's and ours. Doubting, after a period of prolonged theoretical antihumanism, can mean several things: on the one hand, it can simply be a rather stubborn confirmation of humanism, a return to 'common sense' in post-theoretical times (cf. Bloom, Wells). It can also lead to a revaluation of humanism, in the form of a critical return to and an affirmation of the radical potential within humanism itself (cf. Said, Mousley). But it may also be understood as an attempt to read Shakespeare through all sorts of figurations of the 'inhuman' (either in their late modern, technological forms, like cyborgs, machines, computers etc., or in their more timeless, even premodern or 'amodern' appearances, like ghosts, monsters, animals, etc.). Finally, CPH can also work its way back to Shakespeare and construct genealogies between his work and a perceived or real current shift away from a humanist knowledge paradigm, the possible advent of a new 'episteme', in which the human again becomes a radically open category, for the promise of a postanthropocentric, posthumanist future.