

salmon. That man was a Celtic god, and when he walks the sea, he is walking over the meadows of his island, surrounded by deer and sheep. That is, there is something like a double space, a double plane in space: for the prince, he is walking on water; for the king, over a meadow.

There is a curious fauna in those islands: gods, birds that are angels, laurels of silver and deer of gold, and there is also an island of gold, standing on four pillars, which stand, in turn, on a plain of silver. The most astonishing wonder is when Abraham crosses the western seas, looks up, and sees a river that flows through the air without falling, and in that river there are fish and boats, and all of it is religiously in the sky.

I should say something about the meaning of landscape in Celtic poetry. Matthew Arnold, in his remarkable study of Celtic literature, says that the sense of nature, which is one of the virtues of English poetry, is derived from the Celts. I would say that the Germans also felt nature. Their world is, of course, quite different, because in ancient Germanic poetry, what is felt above all is the horror of nature; the swamps and the forests and the twilights are populated by monsters. Dragons were called "the night horrors." In contrast, the Celts also understood nature as a living thing, but they felt that these supernatural presences could also be benign. The fantastic world of the Celts is a world of both angels and demons. We now speak of the "other world": the phrase, I think, appears for the first time in Lucan, referring to the Celts.

All of these facts I have noted lead to various observations. They explain, for example, the birth of the Academy in a country like France, a country with Celtic roots; they explain the absence of academies in a profoundly individualistic country like England. But you may draw better conclusions than I. For now, it is enough to merely note the curious phenomenon of the legislation of literature on the island of Ireland.

[1962]

[EW]

## The Enigma of Shakespeare

The two final chapters of Paul Groussac's *Crítica literaria* are dedicated to the Shakespeare question, or as I have preferred to call it here, the enigma of Shakespeare. As you will have guessed, this is the theory that the individual William Shakespeare, who died in 1616, was not the father of the tragedies, comedies, history plays, and poems that are now admired

throughout the world. In his two articles, Groussac defends the classic opinion, the opinion shared by all until the middle years of the nineteenth century, when Miss Delia Bacon, in a book with a prologue by Hawthorne—to a book Hawthorne had not read—elected to attribute the paternity of those works to the statesman and philosopher Francis Bacon, the founder and, in some sense, the martyr of modern science.

I, of course, believe that the William Shakespeare honored today in East and West was the author of the works we attribute to him, but I would like to add a few points to Groussac's argument. Moreover, in recent years a second candidacy has emerged, the most interesting of all from a psychological and, we might say, from a police detective point of view: that of the poet Christopher Marlowe, murdered in a tavern in Deptford, near London, in the year 1593.

Let us examine, first of all, the arguments against Shakespeare's paternity. They may be summarized as follows: Shakespeare received a fairly rudimentary education in the grammar school of his hometown, Stratford. Shakespeare, as attested by his friend and rival, the dramatic poet Ben Jonson, possessed "small Latin and less Greek." There are those who, in the nineteenth century, discovered or believed they had discovered an encyclopedic erudition in Shakespeare's work. It seems to me that while it is a fact that Shakespeare's vocabulary is gigantic, even within the gigantic English language, it is one thing to use terms from many disciplines and sciences and another thing altogether to have a profound or even superficial knowledge of those same disciplines and sciences. We can recall the analogous case of Cervantes. I believe a Mr. Barby, in the nineteenth century, published a book entitled *Cervantes, Expert in Geography*.

The truth is that the aesthetic is inaccessible to many people and they prefer to seek out the virtue of men of genius—which Cervantes and Shakespeare indisputably were—elsewhere: in their knowledge, for example. Miss Delia Bacon and the rest claimed that the profession of playwright was an insignificant one in the era of Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, and James I, and that the erudition they believed they discovered in Shakespeare's work could not have belonged to poor William Shakespeare, for the author of those works had to be an encyclopedic man. Miss Delia Bacon discovered that man in her homonym, Francis Bacon.

The argument is as follows: Bacon was a man of vast political and scientific ambitions; Bacon wanted to renew science, to found what he called the *regnum hominis* or kingdom of man. It would have been out of keeping with his dignity as a statesman and philosopher to compose dramatic

works. He therefore sought out the actor and theatrical impresario, William Shakespeare, to use his name as a pseudonym.

Those who endeavored to enrich Miss Bacon's thesis, or to carry it to an absurd extreme, had recourse—and now we are in the realm of the detective story, in the "Gold Bug" of the future Edgar Allan Poe—to cryptography. Incredible as it may seem, they pored over the complete works of William Shakespeare in search of a line that begins with a B, followed by a line beginning with an A, then by one beginning with a C, the penultimate with an O, and the last with an N. In other words, they were seeking a secret signature by Bacon in his work. They did not find it. Then one of them, even more absurd than his predecessors, which seems difficult, remembered that the English word "bacon" refers to the meat of the pig, and that Bacon, instead of signing his own name, even cryptographically or acrostically, might have preferred to sign "hog" or "pig" or "swine"—an extraordinarily improbable thing, since no one makes that kind of joke with his own name. This particular individual, I believe, had the good fortune to run across a line that began with a P, followed by one that began not with an I but with a Y, and a third beginning with a G. He believed his strange hypothesis was amply justified by this lone pig discovered in the works of Shakespeare.

There is also a long, meaningless Latinate word in which some have discovered the anagram "*Francis Bacon sic scriptit*" or "*Francis Bacon fecit*" or something like that. One of the partisans of the Baconian thesis was Mark Twain, who summarized all the arguments very wittily in a book entitled *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, which I recommend not for your convictions but for your amusement. All of this, as you can see, is purely speculative and hypothetical, and all of it was magisterially refuted by Groussac.

To those arguments, I would add others of diverse natures. Groussac speaks of the poor quality of the verse that has been attributed to Bacon; I would add that the minds of the two men are essentially and irreparably different. Bacon, of course, had a more modern mind than Shakespeare: Bacon had a sense of history; he felt that his era, the seventeenth century, was the beginning of a scientific age, and he wanted the veneration of the texts of Aristotle to be replaced by a direct investigation of nature.

Bacon was a precursor of what today we call science fiction; in his *New Atlantis*, he narrates the adventure of some travelers who arrive at a lost island in the Pacific on which many of the marvels of contemporary science have become realities. For example: there are ships that travel beneath the water, others that journey through the air; there are chambers in which rain, snow, storms, echoes, and rainbows are artificially created; there are

fantastical zoos that exhaust the variety of all hybrids and current species of plants and animals.

Bacon's mind had no less of a propensity for metaphor than Shakespeare's, and here was a point of contact between the two, except that the metaphors differ greatly. Let us take, for example, a book of logic, such as John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic*, in which he points out the errors to which the human mind is prone. Mill, as many others have done, creates a classification of fallacies. Bacon, in doing the same thing, said that the human mind is not a perfectly flat mirror but a slightly concave or convex mirror, which distorts reality. He claimed that man is prone to error, and he called the errors to which we are prone "idols," and proceeded to list them.

First were the "*idola tribus*," the idols of the tribe, the idols common to the entire human race. He declared that there are minds that note the affinities between things, and other minds that tend to notice or exaggerate the differences, and that the scientific observer must observe himself and correct this inclination to note differences or resemblances (differences or sympathies, Alfonso Reyes would say). Next, Bacon speaks of the idols of the cave, "*idola specus*." In other words, each man, without knowing it, is prone to a certain type of error. Let us imagine a man, an intelligent man, to whom, say, the poetry of Heine, the philosophy of Spinoza, and the doctrines of Einstein or Freud are explained. If this man is anti-Semitic, he will tend to reject these works, simply because they are by Jews; if he is Jewish or philo-Semitic he will tend to accept them, simply because he feels sympathy for Jews. In both cases he will not impartially examine these works, but will subordinate his estimation of them to his likes or dislikes.

Next, Bacon speaks of the "*idola forum*," the idols of the forum or marketplace; that is, the errors caused by language. He observes that language is the work not of philosophers but of the people. Chesterton would later maintain that language was invented by hunters, fishermen, and nomads and therefore is essentially poetic. In other words, language was not created to be a description of truth, it was created by arbitrary and fanciful people; language is continually leading us into error. If you say that someone is deaf, for example, and someone else doubts your word, you will say "Yes, he's deaf as a post," simply because you have at hand the convenient phrase, "deaf as a post."

To these idols, Bacon adds a fourth type, the "*idola teatri*," idols of the theater. Bacon notes that all scientific systems—without excluding his own system of philosophy, observation, and induction; of going not from the general to the particular, but from the particular to the general—replace the

real world with a world that is more or less fantastical, or, in any case, simplified. Thus we have Marxism, which examines all historic events by economic criteria; or we have a historian like Bossuet, who sees the hand of Providence in the entire historic process; or the theories of Spengler; or the contemporary doctrines of Toynbee; and none of them, Bacon would say, is reality, but is a theater, a representation of reality.

Furthermore, Bacon had no faith in the English language. He believed the vernacular languages had no power, and therefore had all his works translated into Latin. Bacon, archenemy of the Middle Ages, believed, like the Middle Ages, that there is a single international language: Latin.

Shakespeare, on the contrary, had, as we know, a profound feeling for the English language, which is perhaps unique among Western languages in its possession of what might be called a double register. For common words, for the ideas, say, of a child, a rustic, a sailor, or a peasant, it has words of Saxon origin, and for intellectual matters it has words derived from Latin. These words are never precisely synonymous, there is always a nuance of differentiation: it is one thing to say, Saxonly, "dark" and another to say "obscure"; one thing to say "brotherhood" and another to say "fraternity"; one thing—especially for poetry, which depends not only on atmosphere and on meaning but on the connotations of the atmosphere of words—to say, Latinly, "unique" and another to say "single."

Shakespeare felt all this; one might say that a good part of Shakespeare's charm depends on this reciprocal play of Latin and Germanic terms. For example, when Macbeth, gazing at his own bloody hand, thinks it could stain the vast seas with scarlet, making of their green a single red thing, he says:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

In the third line we have long, sonorous, erudite Latin words: "multitudinous," "incarnadine"; then, in the next, short Saxon words: "green one red."

There is, it seems to me, a psychological incompatibility between the minds of Bacon and Shakespeare, and this suffices to invalidate all of the Baconians' arguments and cryptographies, all the real or imaginary secret signatures they have discovered or think they have discovered in Shakespeare's work.

There are other candidates whom I choose to overlook, until I reach the

least implausible of them all: the poet Christopher Marlowe, who is believed to have been murdered in the year 1593 at the age of twenty-nine, the age at which Keats died, the age at which Evaristo Carriego, our poet of the city's outskirts, died. Let us look briefly at Marlowe's life and work.

Marlowe was a "university wit," that is, he belonged to a group of young university students who condescended to the theater; moreover, Marlowe perfected the "blank verse" that would become Shakespeare's instrument of choice, and in Marlowe's work there are lines no less splendid than those in Shakespeare. For example, the line so greatly admired by Unamuno that he said this single line was superior to all of Goethe's *Faust*—perhaps forgetting that perfection is easier in a single line than in a vast work, where it may be impossible. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, like Goethe's *Faust*, finds himself before the specter of Helen (the idea that Helen of Troy was a ghost or apparition is already present in the ancients) and says to her, "Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss." And then, "O thou art fairer than the evening air clad in the beauty of a thousand stars." He does not say "evening sky," but "evening air." All of Copernican space is present in that word *air*, the infinite space that was one of the revelations of the Renaissance, the space in which we still believe, despite Einstein, the space that came to supplant the Ptolomaic system which presides over Dante's triple comedy.

But let us return to Marlowe's tragic fate. In the final decades of the sixteenth century, there were fears in England of a Catholic insurrection, incited by the power of Spain. At the same time, the city of London was agitated by riots. Many Flemish and French artisans had arrived in London and were being accused of eating "the bread of fatherless children." There was a kind of nationalist movement that attacked these foreigners and even threatened a general massacre. At that time, the State already had what we would call today a "secret service," and Marlowe was one of its men. It persecuted Catholics as well as Puritans; a playwright, Thomas Kyd, was arrested, and in his house certain papers were found. Among those papers was a manuscript with twenty or so heretical theses, some of them scandalous; one, for example, held that Jesus was a homosexual—there was, in addition, a defense of homosexuality—and another denied that a man, Christ, could be both man and God. There was also a panegyric to tobacco, which Raleigh had brought from America. Marlowe was part of the circle that surrounded Raleigh, the corsaire, the historian, who would later be executed, and in whose house were held the gatherings ominously called the School of Night.

Marlowe's characters, the characters with whom it is clear the author is

in sympathy, are magnifications of Marlowe. They are atheists: Tamburlaine burns the Koran and finally, having conquered the world, wants, like Alexander, to conquer the heavens, and orders that his artillery be turned against the sky, and that black banners be hung from the sky to signify the hecatomb, the massacre of the gods: "And set black streamers in the firmament," etc. There is Doctor Faustus, who represents the Renaissance appetite to know everything, to read the book of nature, not in search of moral teachings, as in the Middle Ages, when the physiologies or bestiaries were compiled, but in search of the letters that compose the universe. There is *The Jew of Malta*, which is a magnification of greed.

Kyd's manuscript was examined by the police. He was tortured—torture is not an invention of our own time—and he confessed or declared, which was very natural, since his life was at stake, that this manuscript was not his but was written by the hand of Marlowe, with whom he had shared a room when the two of them worked together revising and correcting plays. A tribunal called the "Star Chamber" judged this type of crime; Marlowe was told that in one week he would have to appear before this tribunal to be accused of blasphemy and atheism, and to defend himself. Then, two days before the hearing, Marlowe's murdered body was found in a tavern in Deptford.

It seems that four men, all belonging to the secret service, went to the tavern, had lunch, took a nap, went out for a stroll in the small country garden around the tavern, played chess or backgammon, I don't know which, and then had an argument about the bill. Marlowe took out his knife (knives were then the weapon of choice), and was supposedly stabbed in the eye with it, with his own knife, and died. Now, according to Calvin Hoffman's hypothesis, the man who died was not Marlowe but another man, any one of the other three. In that day and age, there was no way of identifying people, fingerprints were unknown, it was very easy to pass one man off as another, and Marlowe had told his friends of his intention of fleeing to Scotland, then an independent kingdom. Hoffmann's theory has it that Marlowe passed the dead man off as himself, then fled to Scotland, and from there sent his friend, the actor and theatrical impresario William Shakespeare, the works today attributed to Shakespeare. From Scotland, he had the manuscripts of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, etc., delivered to Shakespeare. Then Marlowe died, according to this theory, about four or five years before Shakespeare's death. The latter, after selling his theater and retiring to his hometown of Stratford, forgot all about his literary work and devoted himself to being the richest man in town, giving

himself over to the pleasures of litigation against his neighbors until the death that befell him after a drinking bout with some actors who came from London to see him in the year 1616.

The argument I will sketch out against this hypothesis is that although Marlowe was a great poet and has lines not unworthy of Shakespeare—and there are, as well, many lines by Marlowe interspersed, as though lost, in the works of Shakespeare—there exists, nevertheless, an essential difference between the two. Coleridge used Spinoza's vocabulary in praise of Shakespeare. He said that Shakespeare was what Spinoza calls "*natura naturans*," creative nature: the force that takes all forms, that lies as if dead in rocks, that sleeps in plants, that dreams in the lives of animals, which are conscious only of the present moment, and that reaches its consciousness, or a certain consciousness in us, in mankind, the "*natura naturata*."

Hazlitt said that all the people who have existed in the universe are in Shakespeare; that is, Shakespeare had the power to multiply himself marvelously; to think of Shakespeare is to think of a crowd. However, in Marlowe's work we always have a central figure: the conqueror, Tamburlaine; the greedy man, Barabas; the man of science, Faust. The other characters are mere extras, they barely exist, whereas in Shakespeare's work all the characters exist, even incidental characters. The apothecary, for example, who sells poison to Romeo and says, "My poverty, but not my will consents," has already defined himself as a man by this single phrase. This appears to exceed Marlowe's possibilities.

In a letter to Frank Harris, Bernard Shaw wrote, "Like Shakespeare I understand everything and everybody; and like Shakespeare I am nobody and nothing." And here we arrive at the true enigma of Shakespeare: for us, he is one of the most visible men in the world, but he was certainly not that for his contemporaries. Here, the case of Cervantes is repeated. Lope de Vega wrote, "No one is so stupid as to admire Miguel de Cervantes." Gracián, in his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* [Wit and the Art of Genius] does not find a single ingenious feature of the *Quixote* worth citing; Quevedo, in a romance, alludes offhandedly to Don Quixote's leanness. That is, Cervantes was almost invisible to his contemporaries; even his military action in the battle of Lepanto was so thoroughly forgotten that he himself had to remind people that he owed the loss of his arm to that battle.

As for Shakespeare, outside of an ambiguous accolade that speaks of his "sugar sonnets," his contemporaries do not seem to have had him much in view. The explanation for this, it seems to me, is that Shakespeare dedicated himself primarily to the genre of drama, except for the sonnets and the oc-



casional poem such as "The Phoenix and the Turtle" or "The Passionate Pilgrim." Every era believes that there is a literary genre that has a kind of primacy. Today, for example, any writer who has not written a novel is asked when he is going to write one. (I myself am continually being asked.) In Shakespeare's time, the literary work *par excellence* was the vast epic poem, and that idea persisted into the eighteenth century, when we have the example of Voltaire, the least epic of men, who nevertheless writes an epic because without an epic he would not have been a true man of letters for his contemporaries.

As for our own time, consider the cinema. When we think of the cinema, most of us think of actors or actresses; I think, anachronistically, of Miriam Hopkins and Katharine Hepburn—you can undoubtedly fill in more current names—or we think of directors: I think of Josef von Sternberg, who seems to me to be the greatest of all film directors, or, more recently, of Orson Welles or Hitchcock; you can insert whatever names you like. But we do not think of the screenwriter. I remember the films *The Dragnet*, *Underworld*, *Specter of the Rose*—that last title from Sir Thomas Browne—but Ben Hecht had to die a few days ago in order for me to remember that he was the author of the screenplays of these films that I have so often watched and praised.

Something analogous happened with plays in Shakespeare's time. Plays belonged to the acting company, not to their authors. Each time they were staged, new scenes with up-to-date touches were added. People laughed at Ben Jonson when he published his plays in all solemnity and gave them the title *Works*. "What kind of 'works' are these?" they said. "These are just tragedies and comedies." "Works" would have to be lyric or epic or elegiac poems, for example, but not plays. So it is natural that his contemporaries did not admire Shakespeare. He wrote for actors.

One more mystery remains. Why does Shakespeare sell his theater, retire to his native town, and forget the works that are now one of the glories of humanity? An explanation has been formulated by the great writer De Quincey: it is that, for Shakespeare, publication was not the printed word. Shakespeare did not write to be read, but to be performed. The plays continued to be staged, and that was enough. Another explanation, this one psychological, is that Shakespeare needed the immediate stimulus of the theater. That is, when he wrote *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, he adapted his words to one actor or another; as someone once said, when a character sings in Shakespeare's work it is because a certain actor knew how to play the lute or had a nice voice. Shakespeare needed this circumstantial stimulus. Goethe

would say much later that all poetry is "*Gelegenheitsdichtung*," poetry of circumstances. And Shakespeare, no longer driven by the actors or by the demands of the stage, felt no need to write. This, to my mind, is the most probable explanation. Groussac says that there are many writers who have made a display of their disdain for literary art, who have extended the line "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" to literature; many literary people have disbelieved in literature. But, he says, all of them have given expression to their disdain, and all of those expressions are inexpressive if we compare them to Shakespeare's silence. Shakespeare, lord of all words, who arrives at the conviction that literature is insignificant, and does not even seek the words to express that conviction; this is almost superhuman.

I said earlier that Bacon had a vivid sense of history. For Shakespeare, on the contrary, all characters, whether they are Danish, like Hamlet, Scottish, like Macbeth, Greek, Roman, or Italian, all the characters in all the many works, are treated as if they were Shakespeare's contemporaries. Shakespeare felt the variety of men, but not the variety of historical eras. History did not exist for him; it did exist for Bacon.

What was Shakespeare's philosophy? Bernard Shaw has tried to find it in the maxims so widely dispersed throughout his work that say life is essentially oneiric, illusory: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of"; or when he says that life "is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing" or before that when he compares every man to an actor, which is a double play on words, because the king who speaks these words, Macbeth, is also an actor, a poor actor, "that struts and frets his hour upon the stage/And then is heard no more." But we may also believe that this does not correspond to any conviction of Shakespeare's, but only to what his characters might have felt at that moment. In other words, life may not be a nightmare, a senseless nightmare, for Shakespeare, but life may have been felt to be a nightmare by Macbeth, when he saw that the fates and the witches had deceived him.

Here we arrive at the central enigma of Shakespeare, which is perhaps the enigma of all literary creation. I return to Bernard Shaw, who was asked if he truly believed that the Holy Spirit had written the Bible, and who answered that the Holy Spirit had written not only the Bible, but all the books in the world. We no longer speak of the Holy Spirit; we now have another mythology; we say that a writer writes with his subconscious mind, or with the collective unconscious. Homer and Milton preferred to believe in the Muse: "Sing, oh Muse, the wrath of Achilles," said Homer, or the poets who were called Homer. All of them believed in a force of which they were the

amanuenses. Milton refers directly to the Holy Spirit, whose temple is the bosom of the just. All of them felt that there is something more in a work than the voluntary intentions of its author. On the final page of the *Quixote*, Cervantes says that his intention has been nothing other than to mock books of chivalry. We can interpret this in two ways: we can suppose that Cervantes said this to make us understand that he had something else in mind, but we can also take these words literally, and think that Cervantes had no other aim—that Cervantes, without knowing it, created a work that mankind will not forget. He did so because he wrote the *Quixote* with the whole of his being, unlike the *Persiles*, for example, which he wrote with merely literary aims, and into which he did not put all that was dark and secret within him. Shakespeare may also have been assisted by distraction; it may help to be a little distracted in order to write a masterpiece. It may be that the intention of writing a masterpiece inhibits the writer, makes him keep a close watch on himself. It may be that aesthetic creation should be more like a dream, a dream unchecked by our attention. And this may have happened in Shakespeare's case.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's work has been progressively enriched by the generations of its readers. Undoubtedly Coleridge, Hazlitt, Goethe, Heine, Bradley, and Hugo have all enriched Shakespeare's work, and it will undoubtedly be read in another way by readers to come. Perhaps this is one possible definition of the work of genius: a book of genius is a book that can be read in a slightly or very different way by each generation. This is what happened with the Bible. Someone has compared the Bible to a musical instrument that has been tuned infinitely. We can read Shakespeare's work, but we do not know how it will be read in a century, or in ten centuries, or even, if universal history continues, in a hundred centuries. We do know that for us the work of Shakespeare is virtually infinite, and the enigma of Shakespeare is only one part of that other enigma, artistic creation, which, in turn, is only a facet of another enigma: the universe.

[1964]

[EA]

## Blindness

In the course of the many lectures—too many lectures—I have given, I've observed that people tend to prefer the personal to the general, the concrete to the abstract. I will begin, then, by referring to my own modest blindness.