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978-0-521-03151-6 - Shakespeare and Dickens: The Dynamics of Influence

Valerie L. Gager

Excerpt

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Introduction

Charles Dickens's last written words include a quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*: "These violent delights have violent ends."¹ The chapter of the novel upon which he was working the day of his fatal collapse includes echoes, allusions, and quotations from *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *Macbeth*.² Dickens's last published article is largely devoted to a critique of Charles Fechter's impersonations of Iago and Hamlet.³ In his last public address Dickens incorporates quotations from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, while in his first speech at a public reception he makes one explicit and another tacit acknowledgement of the two Shakespearean principles by which he was to be guided throughout his writing career.⁴ The earliest surviving fragment of a manuscript by Dickens is from *O'Thello*, a burlesque of Shakespeare's tragedy. Between these first and last instances Dickens alludes to passages from Shakespeare's works in every one of his novels, as well as in many of his stories, letters, essays, and speeches. Although most scholars would probably now disagree with A. O. J. Cockshut's assessment that 'Dickens was seldom greatly influenced by other writers; he was at once too original and too egotistical to be a very attentive reader', a prominent view still seems to be that 'he could use Shakespeare's commonplaces, but no more ...

¹ *NLetters* III, to William Charles Kent, 8 June 1870. *Romeo and Juliet* 2.5.9. Although Dickens wrote more than one letter on this date Philip Collins thinks that Kent 'had the distinction ... of being the last person (probably) to whom Dickens wrote'. Philip Collins (ed.), introduction, *Charles Dickens as a Reader* by Charles Kent (England: Gregg International Publishers, 1971), x.

² See *MED* 23 listed in my catalogue under *Hamlet* 3.2, *Henry V* 1.1, and *Macbeth* 1.7.

³ Charles Dickens, 'On Mr. Fechter's Acting', *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1869), included in *Collected Papers*.

⁴ See Dickens's speech at the Banquet in his Honour on 25 June 1841 listed in my catalogue under *Henry V* 4.1.4–5 and *As You Like It* 2.1.12–16 and his speech at the Royal Academy Banquet on 30 April 1870 under *Hamlet* 2.2.259–61 and *Macbeth* 3.4.77–81.

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he would never risk the worrying, nor venture to stretch the minds, of his readers by offering them an allusion out-of-the-way'.⁵

The starting point of my study is the conviction that Dickens was influenced by Shakespeare's works to a greater degree than has hitherto been identified. My goal is to establish beyond doubt that Dickens was immersed in Shakespearean drama from childhood; to demonstrate the importance of the 'author and stage-player' (*LD* 1.12) to Dickens's imaginative life; to examine the variety of ways in which Dickens assimilated Shakespeare's plays and poems for his own creative purposes; and to demonstrate how Dickens's references to Shakespeare typically operate. By viewing Dickens and his writing from this new perspective, the fecundity of Shakespeare's works as an imaginative resource for successive generations of authors will yet again be demonstrated. Because Dickens's thought was necessarily shaped not only by his private reading of Shakespeare's text but also by interpretive ideas with which he was familiar, a secondary aim of my investigation is to suggest other likely sources of Shakespearean influence such as interpretations by contemporary actors, artists, and critics as well as by the allusive practices of prior dramatists, journalists, and novelists. In line with this, I hope to illuminate ways in which Dickens was both like and unlike his contemporaries in viewing Shakespeare's plays and poems at a time when 'Bardolatry bloomed'.⁶

The final section of this study, a catalogue of Dickens's references to Shakespeare's works, is intended as a supporting document rather than as an end in itself. Although there is surely more scholarly value in identifying allusions and greater aesthetic pleasure in hearing Shakespeare's words transformed by Dickens than Donald Fanger would grant, perhaps the ensuing chapters will disprove his contention that 'the very concept of "influence" ... has always appealed more to the cataloguing than to the critical mind. It is a dead-end notion, for it can do no more than hold up to view paired findings.'⁷ Not only does my catalogue demonstrate that Dickens alludes to Shakespeare more frequently and to a wider range of plays and poems than previous studies have recognized, but my critical analysis reveals that his literary indebtedness extends far beyond the occa-

⁵ A. O. J. Cockshut, *The Imagination of Charles Dickens* (London: Collins, 1961), 67. Herbert Howarth, 'Voices of the Past in Dickens and Others', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 41 (1972), 156.

⁶ Arthur M. Eastman, 'Shakespearean Criticism', John F. Andrews (ed.), *William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, His Influence*, 3 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), III.733. Eastman's essay provides a useful overview of critical views from 1623 to 1980.

⁷ Donald Fanger, *Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 253.

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sional ornamental quotation drawn from Shakespeare's most celebrated speeches to inform all aspects of his work in a rich and varied manner.

Garrett Stewart, acknowledging that the comparison of Dickens with Shakespeare is 'inescapable', nevertheless believes that this is 'an analogy whose challenge criticism has never entirely met'.⁸ This may be due partly to the fact that none has approached the 'analogy' from the standpoint of influence study rather than as Dickensian or Shakespearean criticism. Ironically, many twentieth-century studies, be they new historicist, psychoanalytic, feminist, or any other critical mode, are pursued from the Romantic perspective that Dickens was influenced while sitting in his arm-chair reading. Those that do take into account Dickens's fascination with the stage often do not recognize the extent to which the play as Dickens experienced it in the Victorian theatre differed from a twentieth-century production. A brief survey of past criticism should reveal *via negativa* the approach I intend to take.

The only full-length study attempted to date is Robert F. Fleissner's *Dickens and Shakespeare: (A Study in Histrionic Contrasts)*, a typescript publication of his doctoral dissertation. In a scathing review of this 'totally incompetent' book Philip Collins finds but one point with which to agree: 'Dr. Fleissner is right in saying that his subject is worthy of an extended book-length study: but he is emphatically not the man to write it.'⁹ Other past critical commentaries may be classified according to three principal types: those comparing the two authors without making any overt assertion of influence; those treating Dickens's references to Shakespeare in passing; and those focusing upon specific quotations, allusions, or echoes.

As Garrett Stewart's remark suggests, the first type is the most common and extends from the present back to the early days of Dickens's career. The earliest comment linking Dickens and Shakespeare may be Mary Russell Mitford's recommendation of *The Pickwick Papers* to a friend on the basis of Dickens's resemblance to Hogarth 'except that he takes a far more cheerful view, a Shakespearian view, of humanity'.¹⁰ Others follow in rapid succession, associating almost every imaginable aspect of Dickens's works with Shakespeare's. For example, Leigh Hunt remarks to Dickens that 'What rejoices me particularly in your having so much heart (not always the accompaniment of wit) is, that it makes me anticipate a Shakspearian lot for you'; a contemporary reviewer of *Oliver Twist* comments that 'Shakspeare

⁸ Garrett Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), xvi.

⁹ Philip Collins, Review of *Dickens and Shakespeare* by Robert Fleissner, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 21 (1967), 403.

¹⁰ Letter to Miss Jephson, 30 June 1837, included in the Revd A. G. L'Estrange, *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1870), III.78.

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exhausted worlds, and then imagined new ... Then look at Dickens ... Already has he peopled the regions of imagination with a crowd of new creatures'; Basil Hall writes to Dickens upon reading *The Old Curiosity Shop* that 'you have too much of old Shakespeare's kidney in you to be surprised at the apparent incongruities of human feelings'; the *Caledonian Mercury* hails Dickens as 'the Shakspeare of his day'; Walter Savage Landor reports to Lady Blessington that 'One blockhead talked of his [Dickens's] deficiency in the female character – the very thing in which he and Shakspeare most excel'; Henry Crabb Robinson, superseding Landor's assessment, believes that Dickens's 'women are superior to Shakespeare's'; Algernon Swinburne finds that in *Great Expectations* 'The tragedy and the comedy, the realism and the dreamery of life, are fused or mingled together with little less than Shakespearean strength and skill of hand'; Otto Ludwig concludes that *Great Expectations* 'is Shakespearean drama applied to the interests of a modern age', discovering 'the spirit of Shakespeare in the moral justice which permits the convict to die happy in the belief that Pip will inherit his wealth and live on as a gentleman'; Charles Kent says of 'Mugby Junction' that 'As well might you strive to detect the voice of the Globe Theatre Manager and Dramatist speaking variously through ... [his characters], as endeavour to detect that of the Conductor of *All the Year Round*'; while a reviewer of *Little Dorrit* discovers numerous points of comparison upon which 'his genius possesses ... resemblance to that of Shakspeare':

It is not merely that Dickens is himself a poet, and in nothing so much as his exquisite sensitiveness to those fine threads of analogy which connect the animate with the inanimate world, so that the still life of his scenes is constantly made to reflect the dominant emotion of the characters ... not merely that Dickens has added phrases to the language ... but much more on account of that feeling of universal sympathy with human nature which breathes through his pages.¹¹

¹¹ Leigh Hunt to Charles Dickens, July [1838], included in *Letters* 1.686. Review of *Oliver Twist*, *Literary Gazette* (24 November 1838), 741, included in Philip Collins (ed.), *Dickens: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 80. Basil Hall to Charles Dickens, 13 February 1841, included in *Letters* II.215 n. 5. 'Great Public Dinner to Charles Dickens, Esq.', *Caledonian Mercury* (26 June 1841), n. page. Letter from Walter Savage Landor, 4 July 1841, included in R. R. Madden, *The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington*, 3 vols (London: T. C. Newby, 1855), II. 386. Diary entry dated 25 April 1841, included in Derek Hudson (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson: An Abridgement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 206. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Charles Dickens', *Quarterly Review* 196 (1902), 32. L. H. C. Thomas, 'Otto Ludwig and Charles Dickens: A German Reading of *Great Expectations* and Other Novels', *Hermathena* 111 (1971), 37, 43. [Charles Kent], *The Sun* (December 1866), included in Collins (ed.), *Critical Heritage*, 420. Review of *Little Dorrit*, *The Leader* 379 (27 June 1857), 617.

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The foregoing comments, while assessing various qualities of Dickens's writing, also illuminate elements of Shakespeare's art prized by the Victorians.

Not all contemporary comparisons are in writing. An 1841 lithographic souvenir attributed to Richard Doyle titled 'Boz's Introduction to Christopher North and the Caledonian Youth' depicts Dickens 'hat in hand, bowing to Professor Wilson and Lord Robertson, on being presented by Lord Jeffrey ... while, faintly (but significantly) shadowed in the clouds above, are the familiar visages of Shakspeare and Scott'.¹² Although Dickens was buried between George Frederick Handel and Richard Sheridan, the perspective and lighting employed in a water-colour painting by S. Luke Fildes (later Sir) titled *The Grave of Charles Dickens, Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey* lead the eye back and forth between Dickens's simple flower-strewn slab on the floor and the Shakespeare monument by William Kent and statue by Peter Scheemakers (see plate one). The sharply defined diagonal lines of Dickens's grave marker point directly to the pedestal of the memorial while Shakespeare's gaze, outstretched left hand, and flexed right knee all point back. Commissioned by John Forster and engraved by J. Saddler for the first edition of *The Life of Charles Dickens*, the composition makes a subtle but powerful statement.

Twentieth-century critics are equally apt to suggest parallels between the two authors, finding even more diverse points of comparison. For example, Alan Horsman finds that Dickens's ability to appeal to both popular and sophisticated levels 'resembles Shakespeare'; F. R. Leavis cautions that by failing to perceive *Hard Times* as 'a poetic work ... we may miss ... possibilities of concentration and flexibility in the interpretation of life such as we associate with Shakespearean drama'; Harry Stone thinks that 'Shakespeare's weird sisters, portentous ghosts, and guilty hallucinations ... and Dickens's ogreish witches, fragmented minds, and recurrent episodes, are all part of the same imaginative reconstruction of reality'; A. E. Dyson believes that 'Like Shakespeare, ... he [Dickens] is more concerned to present evil than to explain it'; S. J. Newman praises *Sketches by Boz* as 'the greatest celebration of English common speech since Shakespeare'; Jack Lindsay claims that 'Dickens is the first writer in England after Shakespeare (except Blake) who is centrally and continuously aware of the problem of dissociation'; Edmund Wilson calls Dickens 'the greatest dramatic writer that the English had had since Shakespeare'; Leonard Manheim remarks that 'Dickens' generally immense success in portraying nuances of psycho-

¹² Frederic G. Kitton, *Charles Dickens: By Pen and Pencil*, supplement (London: Frank T. Sabin, 1890), 66.

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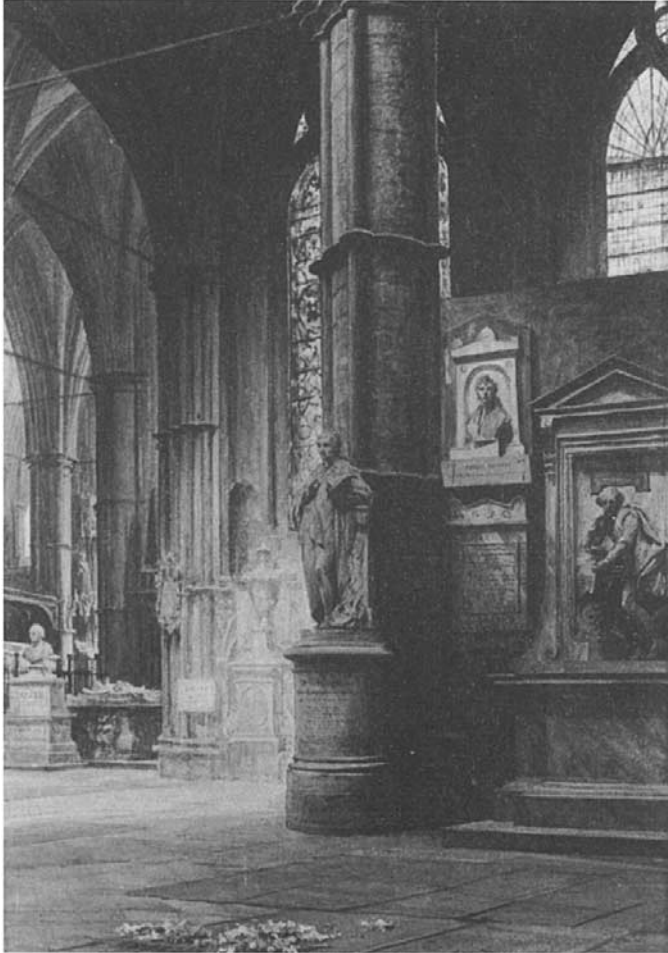
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Plate 1 Sir Samuel Luke Fildes, *The Grave of Charles Dickens, Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, 1873.*

pathic states marks him as the greatest literary psychopathologist since Shakespeare'; Peter Ackroyd says that Dickens 'Used topical events in his fiction with the same symbolic power as Shakespeare adopted North's translations'; John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson proclaim in the first paragraph of their book on Dickens's working habits that 'Just as Shakespeare thought in terms of [contemporary theatre conditions] ... so Dickens was accustomed to think of publication peculiar to his time'; Jane M. Ford sees Shakespeare's presentation of incest as 'a literary theme common to Dickens'; Allan Grant thinks that Dickens's 'preoccupation with the relationships between parents and children is Shakespearean in its mode'; G. D. Klingopulos makes an analogy between Dickens's 'continuous internal

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development' from episodic to integrated multiple plots and 'the gradual evolution of Elizabethan drama, most conspicuously in Shakespeare's ... work'; Steven Marcus compares Dickens's 'impulse to begin writing his next work into the middle of the one he was currently engaged upon' with 'Shakespeare's having to write rapidly on commission'; T. S. Eliot comments that 'Dickens's figures belong to poetry, like figures of Dante or Shakespeare, in that a single phrase, either by or about them, may be enough to set them wholly before us'; Raymond Chapman suggests that Dickens uses the mob in *A Tale of Two Cities* 'rather as Shakespeare uses the crowd in *Julius Caesar*'; Michael Slater opens his study of Dickens and women with the statement that 'Dickens is the greatest novelist to have written in English as Shakespeare is the greatest poet'; the editors of *Hard Times* even conclude that because of compositors' errors 'a chapter like chapter VII (Book III) could almost be described as a "bad" chapter, in the technical sense that attaches to the "bad" Shakespeare quartos'; and Martin Price introduces his anthology of twentieth-century Dickensian criticism with the assertion that 'There is no term that recurs more often in recent Dickens criticism than "Shakespearean", for the comparison is an almost inevitable way of defining some of Dickens's powers: his effortless invention, his brilliant play of language, the scope and density of his imagined world'.¹³

¹³ Alan Horsman, *The Victorian Novel*, John Buxton and Norman Davis (eds.), *The Oxford History of English Literature XIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 158. F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 241. Harry Stone, 'Fire, Hand and Gate: Dickens' *Great Expectations*', *Kenyon Review* 24 (1962), 691. A. E. Dyson, 'The Old Curiosity Shop: Innocence and the Grotesque', (1966), Dyson (ed.), *Dickens: Modern Judgements* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 65. S. J. Newman, *Dickens at Play* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 24. Jack Lindsay, *Charles Dickens: A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1950), 412. Edmund Wilson, 'The Two Scrooges', *The Wound and the Bow* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1941), 3. Leonard Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', *Dickens Studies Annual* 2 (1972), 74. Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990), 114. John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen, 1963), 13. Jane M. Ford, 'The Father/Daughter/Suitor Triangle in Shakespeare, Dickens, James, Conrad, and Joyce', Dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo (1975), 22. Allan Grant, *A Preface to Dickens* (London: Longman, 1984), xi. G. D. Klingopulos, 'The Literary Scene', Boris Ford (ed.), *From Dickens to Hardy*, *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature VI* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 97. Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), 224. T. S. Eliot, 'Wilkie Collins and Dickens', *Selected Essays* (1932), (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 424. Raymond Chapman, *The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 177. Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1983), xi. George Ford and Sylvère Monod, 'A Note on the Text', *Hard Times*, Norton Critical edition, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 235. Martin Price, introduction, Price (ed.), *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, *Twentieth Century Views* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 1.

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For nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators alike, the ‘imagined world’ of both authors is peopled by vivid characters imbued with an ‘extraordinary actuality’.¹⁴ One of the first to assert similarities in characterization is Basil Hall, who writes to Dickens that ‘I know enough of letters, & of their mysteries ... to respect most unaffectedly, the genius, as well as the talents which can give birth to such beings as Nell – (a sort of blood relation to Ariel)’.¹⁵ Andrew Halliday implicitly identifies a possible prototype of Mrs Gamp by having Juliet’s nurse in his 1859 burlesque of *Romeo and Juliet* assail the Apothecary with her umbrella, sip from a bottle of gin when ‘so disposed’, and converse with Mrs Harris, Sairey’s imaginary companion.¹⁶ Commenting on Dickens’s creation of Mrs Gamp, George Gissing thinks that we ‘must go to the very heights of world-literature, to him who bodied forth Dame Quickly, and Juliet’s nurse, for the suggestion of equivalent power’, while also finding that Sairey ‘sometimes comes into my thoughts together with Falstaff’.¹⁷ Old Martin Chuzzlewit has been compared variously with King Lear and the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, while characters as diverse as Mrs Jarley and Madame Defarge have been identified with Lady Macbeth.¹⁸ By identifying Hirsch in Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo* with Fagin and Shylock, Adam Gillon implicitly recognizes a literary line of descent. Barbara Hardy makes the genealogy of Dickens’s characters more explicit: ‘Their ancestors are Falstaff, Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Hamlet; like them, they speak with the force and simplicity of moral abstractions but are imagined as individuals with appropriate voice and form.’ Some comparisons are anachronistic, as when John Speirs concludes

¹⁴ Harold Bloom, introduction, Bloom (ed.), *David Copperfield*, Major Literary Characters (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992), 3–4. In ‘The Analysis of Character’, included as the opening essay in other volumes in this series, Bloom identifies Shakespeare as ‘the inventor of literary character as we know it’ (ix).

¹⁵ Basil Hall to Charles Dickens, 1 April 1841, transcribed from MS Huntington, *Letters* II.245 n. 3.

¹⁶ Andrew Halliday, *Romeo and Juliet Travestie; or, The Cup of Cold Poison*, collected in Stanley Wells (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeare Burlesques*, 5 vols (London: Diploma Press Limited, 1977–8), III.

¹⁷ George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898), (London: Blackie and Son, 1926), 83, 163.

¹⁸ Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 91. Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 84. James R. Kincaid, ‘Performance, Roles, and the Nature of Self in Dickens’, Carol Hanbery MacKay (ed.), *Dramatic Dickens* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 14. Sylvère Monod, ‘Some Stylistic Devices in *A Tale of Two Cities*’, Robert B. Partlow, Jr (ed.), *Dickens the Craftsman: Strategies of Presentation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 166.

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that ‘Mistress Quickly and Justice Shallow in the Falstaff comedy might almost come straight out of Dickensian comedy’.¹⁹

Not all parallels found between the works of Dickens and Shakespeare are necessarily complimentary. Some critics have noted affinities to excuse faults perceived in the works of one or both authors. Alfred Austin says that although ‘Dickens not unoften carried what he thought a joke too far ... the very same may be said of Shakespeare’, generously concluding that ‘We absolve them both!’. A. E. Brookes Cross finds that ‘Other writers have said that Dickens was unable to construct a plot, an observation that might be made of that notorious plagiarist, Shakespeare’; R. C. Churchill contends that ‘no writer of any distinction at all has ever produced so much rubbish’ as Dickens did, but ‘Shakespeare himself wrote some rubbish’; Lauriat Lane, Jr finds that in creating characters with psychological, social, ethical, and ‘spiritual’ meanings ‘Dickens, like Shakespeare, often succeeds or fails by attempting all’; George H. Ford defends Dickens from charges of sensationalism and the use of violent emotions in *Oliver Twist* by an appeal to *Othello*; and P. J. M. Scott counteracts John Carey’s ‘observation that Dickens is only too evidently excited by the rioting’ in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* with the opinion that ‘This seems to me to have the critical lucidity of, say, viewing Shakespeare askance for being only too convincing in the inward realisation of *his* murders’.²⁰

These contemporary and modern views linking Dickens and Shakespeare are just a sample intended to illustrate the range of similarities noticed over the past century and a half, to which many more might be added. Although some of these comparative statements provide useful ways of characterizing aspects of the novelist’s style and may imply indebtedness, they do not attempt to establish Dickens’s familiarity with Shakespeare’s works, let alone any influence upon his writing. The second category of critical studies, those treating Dickens’s references to Shakespeare in passing, may be further subdivided into those which are dismissive of their importance and those which recognize some deeper significance than a mere literary curios-

¹⁹ Adam Gillon, ‘Joseph Conrad and Shakespeare’, *Conradiana* 1.3 (1969), 25. Barbara Hardy, *Charles Dickens: The Writer and His Work* (Windsor: Profile Books Ltd., 1983), 7. John Speirs, *Poetry Towards Novel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 289.

²⁰ Alfred Austin, ‘Charles Dickens’, *Temple Bar* 29 (1870), 559. A. E. Brookes Cross, ‘The Fascination of the Footlights’, *The Dickensian* 23 (1927), 246. R. C. Churchill, ‘The Genius of Charles Dickens’, Boris Ford (ed.), *Dickens to Hardy*, 117. Lauriat Lane, Jr, ‘Dickens and Criticism’, George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr (eds.), *The Dickens Critics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 9. George H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of Novel Criticism Since 1836* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 40. P. J. M. Scott, *Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 101–2.

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ity or auctorial quirk. One of the studies most dismissive of Dickens's allusive habit is Sylvère Monod's influential *Dickens the Novelist*, in which several pages are devoted to contending that Dickens did not 'know Shakespeare's works inside out' nor did he 'feel the true Shakespearean reverence'. Citing the comments of Mrs Witterly (*NN* 27) and Mr Pip (*MC* 28), Monod grants that 'the two passages are unequivocal caricatures' yet asks, 'wouldn't an "ardent Shakespearian" have regarded such attitudes as unworthy even of being caricatured?'. One might invoke in Dickens's defence Michael Slater's assessment of the essay 'Thousand and One Humbugs' as 'brilliant' parody of a class which could 'only be written by those who have a real love for, and great inwardness with, the text' if Slater did not seem to espouse opposing critical views: he generalizes in another study that Dickens 'really seems to have found [Hamlet] an irresistibly comic character' who 'excited derisive laughter in Dickens'.²¹ Monod also presents quotations from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* used by a few other characters to support his contention that Dickens's 'Shakespearean knowledge is not strikingly wide' and that he fails to 'borrow from Shakespeare the shade of a single idea'.²² Philip Collins thinks 'Monod argues convincingly that he [Dickens] was not particularly knowledgeable about or sensitive to Shakespeare'.²³ These and similar assertions regarding the breadth and depth of Dickens's knowledge of Shakespeare's works and its manifestation in his fiction will be refuted in subsequent chapters.

Collins's acceptance of Monod's argument is surprising because he is one of the scholars whose work falls into the second subdivision, those who treat Dickens's references to Shakespeare in passing but recognize a deeper significance than mere verbal embellishment. Although many of Collins's remarks are of the comparative type, such as his assessment that little Paul Dombey 'has the privilege of inexperience, and thus operates much like ... Shakespearean Fools, whose "folly" gives them a similar licence', in *Dickens and Crime* he devotes several pages to an examination of how 'whenever Dickens thought about murder, echoes of *Macbeth* came into his mind'.²⁴ Whereas the brief commentary provided by Collins is thought provoking, the primary focus of his work necessarily precludes the extended

²¹ Michael Slater, 'Dickens in Wonderland', Peter L. Caracciolo (ed.), *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 140 and his 'Some Remarks on Dickens's Use of Shakespearean Allusions', *Studies in English and American Literature in Honour of Witold Ostrowski* (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1984), 142.

²² Sylvère Monod, *Dickens the Novelist* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 41–4.

²³ Philip Collins, 'Dickens's Reading', *The Dickensian* 60 (1964), 138 n. 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Dickens and Education* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 201 and his *Dickens and Crime* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 275–9, 299–300.