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From Goethe to Gundolf

Essays on German Literature and Culture
William Shakespeare is a major figure of bearing, reference and identification in Heinrich Heine’s oeuvre and also the subject of a whole work, *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen/Shakespeare’s Girls and Women* (1838). The experts cannot agree whether it is a minor piece with major overtones, or perhaps a larger complex that remains fragmentary (a Shakespeare project) or even a kind of extension of his ‘Deutschland-Schriften’ which start around 1832. Certainly it has elements of all these, but above all it is an occasional piece, eclectic, pluralistic, open-ended,

1 An earlier version of this chapter was published as: ‘Heine and Shakespeare’, in *Heine und die Weltliteratur*, ed. by T. J. Reed and Alexander Stillmark (Oxford, London: Legenda, 2000), 51–63.


3 ‘Writings on Germany’.

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like so much of Heine’s own creation and his view of creation itself. It is also, as opposed to allusions, his last major statement on Shakespeare.

Under the disarming subtitle of *Erläuterungen/Explanatory Notes* and with Heine adopting the role of the guide to a kind of stately home, throwing open the various rooms, he manages to address subjects well known from the major works of the 1830s: the role of the poet as diviner or seer, standing above ‘mere’ history; the question of national literature and national appropriation; the monarchy of states and letters as against the *république*, and much besides. I do not wish to discuss all, or for that matter any, of these in any systematic way. Rather, I hope to enter into the spirit of improvisation that breathes through these pages.

It is a pity that *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* does not have a section on *The Winter’s Tale*. We know of course that Heine was aware of the connotations of ‘Wintermärchen’ when he chose that subtitle for his imaginary journey through Germany. As a nineteenth-century German Shakespeare edition defines it, a ‘Wintermärchen’ is ‘[e]ine schauerliche oder rührende Geschichte’. It is also a world encompassing antiquity and Renaissance, improbabilities and coincidences, oracles and bears, disguises and revelations. Above all, it is mythical and ends happily. It is not unlike his general view of Shakespeare, and, with the notable exception of that happy ending, it is not dissimilar to his view of Germany.

Our symposium has the overall theme ‘Heine and World Literature’. That notion of ‘world literature’ is by common agreement, if not necessarily a Goethean creation, certainly a coining of Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s, and is a reflection of the opening up, from the 1790s on, of perspectives across national, cultural, and linguistic borders, the ‘Kosmopolitismus des Blicks’ of which Jean Paul had spoken, the throwing open of windows in which the Romantics had had such a part. On a more modest scale it was fostered by Heine’s much-revered Wilhelm Müller. To all this, Heine is heir, but also to its controversies and polemics. One notes with what care Goethe chooses a paradigm

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5 See footnote 1.
for the process by which a foreign literary culture may transfer back
to its country of origin an insight and a penetration not yet available
at home. It is, of course, Thomas Carlyle’s Life of Schiller. The example
is right and proper and well chosen. One does note, however, that
Shakespeare (except in the very broadest sense) is less prominent in
this Goethean construct of ‘Weltliteratur’. The English Romantics almost
to a man — and one of them, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, coming mightily
close to plagiarism — were saying that it was now the Germans who
were leading the field in Shakespeare studies. Would that not also
constitute a prime example of those cosmopolitan border-crossings and
fructifications? But Goethe had chosen the model of Carlyle and Friedrich
Schiller because in addition it demonstrated that, while Schiller’s
reputation in Germany was slumping in the 1820s, it had entered into
the blood-stream of world literature, and that was what mattered. Who
was responsible for that collapse in German esteem? The Romantics,
of course. It is thus no coincidence that Goethe in 1828–29 published
his correspondence with Schiller, in the lifetime (just) of both Schlegel
brothers, whose critical machinations (as Goethe might perceive it) had
seen to it that Goethe’s reputation increased while Schiller’s decreased.

By giving such prominence to literary politics and controversy I
am perhaps distorting the many coincidences and areas of agreement
between these literary generations. Is this one of the bad habits
one picks up as a literary biographer? It is however observable that
Shakespeare — our subject, not Goethe or Schiller — is a divisive and
unruly force in the German republic of letters. One notes that three
of the most devastating annihilations of reputation and character in
German literary criticism occur in the context of Shakespeare or to
figures once involved in his reception: Gothold Ephraim Lessing’s of
Johann Christoph Gottsched, Schiller’s of Gottfried August Bürger,
and Heine’s of August Wilhelm Schlegel. The task was done with such
thoroughness that these names are all but expunged from the annals
of literature, the victims referred to in hushed embarrassment, like a
mad aunt or uncle in an otherwise respectable family. Take August
Wilhelm Schlegel: there has been no proper critical edition of his works
since 1846, no satisfactory critical edition to date of the world-famous
Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur/Lectures on Dramatic
Art and Literature (even the Düsseldorf Heine edition has recourse to
an unsatisfactory edition),\textsuperscript{7} no biographer, no scholarly reprint of the original Shakespeare translation of 1796–1810. His reputation has been subject to the continuing ‘destruction’ in the nineteenth century of the older Romantics (note the speaking title of Rudolf Haym’s \textit{Die romantische Schule}/\textit{The Romantic School} [1870]) in favour of the more accessible talents of Clemens Brentano, Arnim or Eichendorff. He is not even mentioned in Friedrich Gundolf’s \textit{Romantiker} of 1929. Did Heine’s infamous attack on Schlegel in \textit{Die romantische Schule} bring this about? Of course not: teleological reductionism makes for bad criticism and bad literary history. Schlegel’s reputation lived on in France and England. He was, besides, in later life singularly unattractive, and himself no mean controversialist. There is another answer. Siegbert Prawer, in his inaugural lecture of 1970, draws attention to the visceral image that Heine employs in \textit{Die romantische Schule}, of Indigenous peoples of North America killing their elders when they become old and decrepit.\textsuperscript{8} Like James Frazer’s potent image of the priests of Nemi, it reminds us, too, that the stiletto knife in the back is Heine’s ultimate sanction.\textsuperscript{9}

Leaving such severities, it is much more profitable to see Heine and Schlegel and Heine and Shakespeare in another and better perspective. As with so many internecine inter-generational relationships, there is more in common between Heine and Schlegel than what separates them. Surely Schlegel is an important model for the elegant style Heine so cultivates and which is one of the few qualities in the older man singled out for praise in \textit{Die romantische Schule}.\textsuperscript{10} More importantly, Schlegel’s critical method and historical perspective is close to Heine’s. Schlegel followed only to a limited extent Johann Gottfried Herder’s notion of organic development, change and decay, or revolution, in German culture. He is far happier setting up constructs, pairs of opposites (Classical and Romantic being the best-known) only loosely based on some kind of historical continuity and owing more to inner artistic or aesthetic qualities. The Heinean notions of ‘Romantische Schule’, set up

\textsuperscript{8} Prawer (note 1), 7.
\textsuperscript{9} Note of 2021: this was the case when I wrote this in 1997. Fortunately the situation has now much changed for the better, although it has taken 150 years to do so. See below, footnote 38.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{SS}, \textit{V}, 417.
against its cosmopolitan or Protestant or classical counter-equivalents, or even the notion of a ‘Kunstperiode’,\textsuperscript{11} are not alien to general Romantic thinking, Schlegel’s or others’. The Romantics’ term ‘universal’ could have embracing connotations similar to Heine’s ‘cosmopolitan’. Heine in \textit{Die romantische Schule} notes that Schlegel’s Shakespeare translation is hardly in keeping with his usual (perceived) Christian, Catholic, anti-cosmopolitan, mystical and Calderonian orientation.\textsuperscript{12} Of course, August Wilhelm’s embrace of Catholicism (as opposed to Friedrich’s) had been short-lived. More importantly, his Shakespeare translation is the work of a philologist, not an apologist, and the polarization of Schlegel and Voss in \textit{Die romantische Schule} is a critical device to tear apart two figures who basically converge on the same object from different corners, making ‘classical’ literature (in the fullest sense, antiquity and Renaissance) available to the educated German reader. Schlegel is also the only classical philologist of his day to face Johann Heinrich Voss on equal terms.

On the other hand, Heine may not have known how much Schlegel hated the English — as opposed to Shakespeare, of course. By and large, the German Romantics are not great anglophiles. Schlegel the Hanoverian cannot comprehend that ‘die frostigen, stupiden Seelen auf dieser brutalen Insel’\textsuperscript{13} could have produced such genius. Hence his lack of interest in the ‘Life and Times’ of Shakespeare. The greatest disappointment in Ludwig Tieck’s life was his trip to England in 1817. Heine could find in William Hazlitt the insight that the older English Shakespeare critics, Samuel Johnson especially, had failed to appreciate Shakespeare’s genius: but it was already there in Schlegel, and English readers duly noted and deferred to it. Heine, despite his fine poetic ear, is not a philologist or translator. We cannot take too seriously his plan for an illustrated prose translation in 1839. He is unfair to Schlegel the translator, but his unfairness is that of a younger generation that regarded rendering of Shakespeare into German as a process in being and not one already concluded. Not only do the various different sources

\textsuperscript{11} The epoch of art’. Heine’s ‘Ende der Kunstperiode’ can be applied historically to the long and daunting shadow of the Goethean achievement, to Shakespeare’s similarly.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 4n and 375.

\textsuperscript{13} ‘The frigid stupid souls on that brutal island’. \textit{Ludwig Tieck und die Brüder Schlegel}, ed. by Edgar Lohner (Munich: Winkler, 1972), 23.
for his quotations in *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* bear witness to that fact\textsuperscript{14} (as well as to his hasty improvisation). His generation by and large did not regard the positions reached by Schlegel or Tieck as fixed or final. Georg Herwegh and Ferdinand Freiligrath are examples, as is also the young Theodor Fontane, and it was only the adoption by the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft (founded in 1864) of the so-called ‘Schlegel-Tieck’ that conferred on this translation the classic status it still, rightly or wrongly, enjoys. In the final analysis, Schlegel and Heine are not so much divided over Shakespeare as over more concrete, personal factors: Schlegel had revived his noble title and had accepted preferment in the Prussian state. That was where Romanticism got you. Heine, despite being disrespectful and malicious to the old ‘Hofrat’ Tieck, is much more appreciative of his Shakespearean studies and his general contribution to ‘Capriccio’ and ‘Scherz’,\textsuperscript{15} certainly more than he deserved. He may not have known that it was Schlegel who put Tieck on to the idea of translating Cervantes while he got on with Calderón. Now, while Heine rightly sensed that he had knifed Schlegel the old priest in the sacred grove, he was aware that Schlegel’s colleague, Tieck, was still at large. One reason for his urgency in throwing together *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* is the fear that Julius Campe might turn to Tieck!\textsuperscript{16} In the event, Heine need not have feared. It is nonetheless right to see *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* in the wider context of German Shakespeare reception: of all those translations, of course, but also illustrated editions, biographies, life and works, analyses of plays, a huge activity predicated on the awareness that Shakespeare is German property and inheritance, a classic. In the words of Franz Horn, a figure much maligned by Heine, ‘wir wollen streben, daß Shakspeare ganz der unsrige werde’.\textsuperscript{17}

*Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* is, of course, different from Schlegel’s *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* of 1808 in that its concern, by and large (and when it does not allow itself to be side-tracked) is with character, not with plot structure, especially with character as it is realized both in its textual and dramatic development.

\textsuperscript{14} DA, X, 356.
\textsuperscript{15} SS, V, 421–31.
\textsuperscript{16} Heine, *Shakespeares Mädchen*, ed. Hansen, 221.
\textsuperscript{17} ‘We wish to do our utmost to make Shakespeare our own’. Franz Horn, *Shakespeare’s Schauspiele*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1823–31), I, 444.
In this respect, Goethe was of little assistance as an alternative to Schlegel. For *Shakespeare und kein Ende*/*Shakespeare and No End* (last part 1826) had postulated a Shakespeare above concerns of character and stage, a kind of ‘Urphänomen’ of creativity, a measure of the creative process itself. Schlegel’s lectures had held out the hope that a historical drama could now be within the Germans’ grasp, were poets but to use the historical past in respectful imitation of Shakespeare. Goethe (but this time more in private) had warned that Shakespeare was a great inhibitor of talent (a warning too little heeded in the nineteenth century).\textsuperscript{18} Christian Dietrich Grabbe’s *Über die Shakespearomanie*/On Shakespeare Mania of 1828 had set up danger signs for the would-be Shakespeareanizing dramatist and the pitfalls he might face. The stridency of Grabbe’s tone, his presumption in drawing attention to Shakespeare’s ‘faults’ (about which little had been heard since Herder banished them from the critical agenda), his pointing to other, safer models, are indications that, for him, Shakespeare might well cause a loss of national literary identity. Heine, too, has his word in season for Shakespearean imitators, but they again are not his major concern. Above all, the consistency, not to say stridency, of Grabbe’s essay is not his approach. He found much more common ground in Tieck’s *Dramaturgische Blätter*/Essays on Drama (1826), a loose concatenation of drama reviews that, as it were incidentally, also turned to deeper issues of character and interpretation (often controversially), allowing digressions and anabases and asides. The seeming outrageousness of Tieck’s reading of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* was an indication that he perceived a need to break with what were by then ‘standard’ interpretations. So as not to show too much deference to the old Romantic for whom he had a soft spot, Heine pushes one of Tieck’s less favoured authors, Hazlitt, into the foreground. It is Hazlitt in translation, of course, which made him sound more German. Thus Heine found Hazlitt’s attack on Johnson to his liking.\textsuperscript{19} It reminded him, perhaps, of his own dealings with August Wilhelm Schlegel, without of course the personal, scandalous and wounding aspects. The English


Romantics’ sense of literary continuity means that, while they may not like the Augustan age or Johnson the critic, they are nevertheless aware of the ‘debt of the past’ and sense acutely the ‘anxiety of influence’. Hazlitt (and to some extent Anna Jameson) escape the anathema Heine visited on the English. His account of French Shakespearean reception is however rather sketchier and more skewed. With few exceptions, he says, the French have read Shakespeare through a trivialized Romantic vision, have failed to distinguish atmosphere and stage-property from substance, have elevated plurality of style to an absolute without an understanding of Shakespeare’s subtleties, especially in his comedies. They are, as imitators, more like Christopher Marlowe or Thomas Heywood.  

Had Heine been reading Tieck’s Novelle *Dichterleben/The Life of the Poet*, where the so-called minor Elizabethans have an uncanny resemblance to the younger generation of poets of his own day. Only François Guizot, the historian and critic, receives Heine’s favour, as one who is able to see Shakespeare in a wider span of English history, something his contemporaries, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny and Alfred de Musset, with their uncreative frenzies, fail to do. Heine’s point is interesting. Doubtless it was the Shakespeareanizing Hugo, not so much Shakespeare himself, who influenced the young Georg Büchner (the translator of *Lucrèce Borgia* and *Marie Tudor*).

Guizot’s remarks on the several approaches to comedy by Aristotle, Molière and Shakespeare raise the discussion on to the level of the nature of the comic muse herself, in place and historical time. We are close here to Heine’s passing insight on Molière’s greatness from the first book of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland/On the History of Philosophy and Religion in Germany*: ‘Darum ist eben Moliere so groß, weil er, gleich Aristophanes und Cervantes, nicht bloß temporelle Zufälligkeiten, sondern das Ewig Lächerliche, die Urschwächen der Menschheit, persifliert’. It is the cosmic trope of a world theatre, the comedy of human history, in which these poets share. It is also the other distinction that Heine draws, between ‘Weltgeschichte’, with its disharmonies and clangour, and ‘Geschichte

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20 SS, VII, 283.
21 Ibid., 281–90.
22 ‘Molière is so great for that reason, because, like Aristophanes and Cervantes, he pokes fun not just at the casual matters of everyday life but at the ever-ridiculous, the inborn foibles of humanity’. Ibid., V, 535.
der Menschheit’,23 where in Heine’s image one can hear above the
din of human affairs the sweet eternal melodies of mankind. Heine’s
canonically ‘great poets’ inhabit these regions — and Shakespeare
is almost always to the fore because of the primacy of drama (here
we see Schlegel’s influence as well as Hegel’s). Does it matter that
Heine’s ‘core canon’ is essentially the Romantics’, itself formulated
embryonically by the Sturm und Drang (‘Storm and Stress’) generation?
Certainly, the Schlegel brothers in their Athenaeum incarnation would
not have dissented from the triumvirate (the ‘Dichtertriumvirat’)24 later
set up by Heine, of Goethe, Miguel de Cervantes and Shakespeare. It
remained essentially Tieck’s trinitarian position in his poetic doctrine.
Where Tieck spoke of ‘Erzpoeten’,25 Heine refers to ‘Urpoeten’26 (his list
is Aristophanes, Goethe and Shakespeare). These transcending figures
are of course wreathed in myth (the ‘Kunstperiode’ is one such), are
heroic, supernal, ‘Napoleonic’, if you will. They represent universals,
just as their names were associated in Romantic discourse with the
notion of ‘Universalpoesie’. They stand, not for thought, not for political
engagement, not even for ‘esprit’, but for ‘poetry’ or ‘art’. That, in the
final analysis, is the criterion of their canonicity. I used before the term
‘inhibitor of talent’, and indeed all of Heine’s ‘Urpoeten’ are that. The
image of the poet-genius standing above quotidian human concerns
is of course not new (think of the opening of Herder’s Shakespeare
essay). As there, it is also a metaphor of creativity. ‘Shakespeare gesellt
sich zum Weltgeist’,27 says Goethe in Shakespeare und kein Ende!, through
him we gain insight into the living processes of which we are part.
Heine, too, speaks of Shakespeare and the ‘Weltgeist’. In the Jessica
section of Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen, we read that Shakespeare,
in writing The Merchant of Venice, may have wished to write comedy, he
may have even wished to present us with ‘einen gedrillten Werwolf’28
in Shylock:

27 ‘Shakespeare allies himself with the world spirit’. Goethe, Gedenkausgabe der Werke,
XIV, 758.
Aber der Genius des Dichters, der Weltgeist, der in ihm waltet, steht immer höher als sein Privatwille, und so geschah es, daß er in Shylock, trotz der grellen Fratzenhaftigkeit, die Justifikation einer unglücklichen Sekte aussprach, welche von der Vorsehung, aus geheimnisvollen Gründen, mit dem Haß des niedern und vornehmen Pöbels belastet worden, und diesen Haß nicht immer mit Liebe vergelten wollte.

Aber was sag’ ich? Der Genius des Shakespeare erhebt sich noch über den Kleinhad zweier Glaubensparteien, und sein Drama zeigt uns eigentlich weder Juden noch Christen, sondern Unterdrücker und Unterdrückte [...].

Of course a little care is needed here, for this is not a subject about which Heine could be objective. It may be an astute rhetorical ploy to introduce that ‘Weltgeist’ and then smuggle under its accommodating wings a private reading of The Merchant of Venice. But so often, for so many different purposes, Heine is inviting us to see a problem from a universal, cosmic, mythical angle. It is essentially the device used to exculpate Jessica, the convert. Is she not, like Desdemona or Imogen, a ‘Tochter Evas’, willful, disobedient, unheeding — like the mother of us all? And so Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen ends with the grand cosmic conceit, indeed a plurality of worlds, with the sun (Miranda), the moon (Juliet), and the comet (Cleopatra), the three stages of civilization, from ‘unbefleckte[r] Boden’, ‘schauerliche Reinheit’, to the ‘Sinnenglut’ of the Renaissance, and ‘erkrankte Zivilisation’ and ‘Zerstörungslust’.

It follows that Heine is not really interested in the Shakespearean ideologies current in his time, such as the ‘Life’ and the ‘Man’, nor in what can be called ‘Shakespeare-Philologie’. Thus his learned reference to William Prynne’s Histriomastix is simply part of his anti-English agenda, the Puritan, Cromwellian, stolid, pragmatic streak of Albion that he so detests. A poet in touch with the ‘Weltgeist’ will be above
anecdotes, even above rigid genre distinctions (Heine subdivides the plays more than most critics). Above all, the critic may look behind any historical context of the plays or any possible intention on the part of the poet (as with *The Merchant of Venice*), and see things that are new, startling, perhaps even seditious.

Which brings me finally to *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* itself. Certainly it must rank as one of the most ‘occasional’ of Heine’s major works, in the sense that it came about in an improvised and hand-to-mouth fashion. As the only major work devoted to a single non-German author, it makes no pretensions to ‘mere’ objectivity; its strength is in details, not in encompassing arguments. It quite openly accommodates current ideologies inside its framework; indeed it welcomes them. Thus in a sense the whole work is responding to Karl Gutzkow’s promptings that there should be a Young German position in the wider debate on Shakespeare\(^33\) (the same Gutzkow, incidentally, who in 1864 will give the official tercentenary address in Weimar!). I have indicated unexpected fraternalities between *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* and other Shakespeare studies. It likes to confront, outrageously if necessary. Who, for instance, had ever begun a study of Shakespeare’s characters with *Troilus and Cressida*? (Anna Jameson does not even refer to this play.) Its loves and hates are plain for all to see, although it is a pity that Heine is so uncomplimentary about the French in their second great wave of Shakespeare reception, but that of course had been initiated by Schlegel’s companion, Madame de Staël. Perhaps there is more than a hint of rivalry. At least there is no sign yet of those later proprietary claims by German nineteenth-century Shakespearean scholarship which deny the French houseroom altogether. Naturally, it owes much to Anna Jameson (in translation),\(^34\) and it defers not a little to the unfortunate Franz Horn, whose gentle soul had expired the year before. In 1831, Horn wrote this:

> In Shakespeare’s Werken finden wir die vollständigste Galerie der Frauen, die, wenn wir sie Jahre lang und mit Genauigkeit und Liebe betrachtet haben, uns endlich überzeugen muß, daß nie ein Dichter gelebt, der dem weiblichen Geschlechte so reine Huldigung dargebracht hat wie er. Es

\(^33\) Heine, *Shakespeares Mädchen*, ed. Hansen, 221.


giebt in seinen Werken keinen männlichen Charakter, in welchem der Verein des Guten und Schönen, des Freien und Nothwendigen, der Tiefe und Klarheit, der Anmuth und Würde zu einer ganz vollendeten Einheit gebracht worden wäre [...].

This ‘Galerie der Frauen’ Heine supplies in 1838, in the form of the series of English lithographs which accompany his text. And the less said about them the better, except that they are very much of their time.

Many of the most memorable passages in *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* are only tenuously about Shakespeare himself: the assassination of the English character, the mouse dialogue, the lament for the Jewish people which goes far beyond Jessica (or even Shylock) and extends in a great parabola before ending on that ‘Jessika, mein Kind’.[36] Let me take that wonderful mouse vision as an example.[37] Note that these mice are the device employed to introduce the Histories, the plays that Schlegel calls a ‘historisches Heldengedicht’, and to which he gives an attention never hitherto granted them. Heine does not even subdivide the plays into Histories as such, grouping instead their heroines chronologically. That is of course not the same as writing about history itself. Historical drama is however another matter. ‘Ein alter Mauserich’, with long experience of human affairs, is Heine’s witness. It is essentially a catalogue of ‘eine nur maskierte Wiederkehr derselben Naturen und Ereignisse’;[40] ‘man amüsiert sich mit weiser Gelassenheit’.[41] The historical drama as such (not least Ernst von Raupach’s ‘Hohenstaufenbandwürmer’, in Friedrich Hebbel’s dismissive phrase) tells us about theories of history...
(hence the account of the ‘Souffleur’ with Hegelian overtones), but not about man’s ‘progress’ as such. And Heine is using his mice to tell us that it is not the business of historical drama to do so. By following Anna Jameson’s device of selecting *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* — female characters — he is automatically downgrading the Histories; for the heroines are only there ‘weil die darzustellende Historie ihre Einmischung erforderte’,\(^43\) not because they are part of the integral portrayal of historical events. But the opportunity afforded by historical examples or incidents is quite another matter. Shakespeare knows more than we do. With due respect to Friedrich Schlegel, he becomes ‘ein in die Vergangenheit schauender Prophet’;\(^44\) he does not depict history itself but fills ‘die Lakunen der Historie’.\(^45\) Our attention is seized by his historical figures because they bear out our own experience with kings and rulers in our own times. Knowing Heine as we do, we must expect some unflattering parallels. We have one in the sustained comparison of Bolingbroke in *Richard II* and Louis Philippe: ‘ein schlauer Held, ein kriechender Riese, ein Titan der Verstellung, entsetzlich, ja empörend ruhig, die Tatze in einem samtten Handschuh, und damit die öffentliche Meinung streichelnd [...]’\(^46\) Although this is supposed to relate to the section on Lady Gray from *Henry VI*, we leap from *Richard II* to *2 Henry IV*, to the usurper king’s last words to his son, ‘die Shakspeare schon längst für ihn [i.e. Louis Philippe] aufgeschrieben’.\(^47\) Thus, too, the Joan of Arc section (*I Henry VI*) insists on the multiform injustices of the English towards the French, from the Maid of Orleans — to Napoleon.

Heine had of course been reading some history, the ‘geniales Buch’ of Jules Michelet.\(^48\) Heine is not interested in Michelet’s basic thesis that English literary culture is anti-Christian. He does not utilize Michelet’s rather cheap point that the Shakespearean legends depict the Bard beginning as a butcher. But he cannot resist Michelet’s sustained account of English commercialism, mercantilism and hard-headedness, the

\(^{43}\) ‘Because history, as it was to be presented, required them to be involved’. *SS*, VII, 218.

\(^{44}\) ‘A prophet able to look back into the past’. Ibid., 230.

\(^{45}\) ‘The gaps in history’. Ibid., 229.

\(^{46}\) ‘A cunning hero, a creeping giant, a Titan at deception, calm to a terrible, even outrageous degree, his claws in a velvet glove, stroking public opinion with it.’ Ibid., 231.

\(^{47}\) ‘That Shakespeare had long since written down for him’. Ibid.

technical superiority by which their foot-soldiery at Crécy destroyed the ‘fine fleur’ of French chivalry. Immediately Heine sees the opportunity for another image: the battle between prose and poetry. We almost believe that he is going to fall for the French ‘Ritterromantik’ that Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père so eloquently represent. But his return to ‘objectivity’ is half-hearted: ‘Die Triumphe der Engländer sind immer eine Schande der Menschheit, seit den Tagen von Crécy und Poitiers, bis auf Waterloo. Klio ist immer ein Weib, trotz ihrer parteilosen Kälte, ist sie empfindlich für Ritterlichkeit und Heldensinn; und ich bin überzeugt, nur mit knirschendem Herzen verzeichnet sie in ihre Denktafeln die Siege der Engländer’.  

I believe it is also essentially from Michelet that Heine introduces into Shakespeare discussion the notion of ‘Renaissance’. At least I am not sure of its use before him. By introducing it into his account of Portia (also at the end, in his description of Juliet) he places the Christian-Jewish contrast into even sharper relief, between ‘Glück’ and ‘Mißgeschick’, between the ‘Nachblüte des griechischen Geistes’ and the claustrophobic restrictions of Judaism. I need not tell this company that this is a conflict unresolved in Heine himself. For nineteenth-century Shakespeare studies at large, the notion of Renaissance is a means towards situating his work historically and culturally inside a framework that involves France, Italy and England. And that in itself shows how *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* succeeds — if that is the right expression — in remaining outside institutionalized German Shakespeare reception.

49 ‘Chivalric Romanticism’.  
50 ‘The triumphs of the English are always a scandal to humanity, from the days of Crécy and Poitiers to those of Waterloo. Clio is always female, and despite her cold even-handedness, she has a soft spot for chivalry and heroics, and I am convinced that she only lists the victories of the English in her annals through gritted teeth’. *SS*, VII, 229.  
51 Ibid., VI, 262.  
52 Ibid., VII, 292.  
53 ‘Fortune’ and ‘calamity’. Ibid., 262.  
54 ‘Late flowering of the Greek spirit’.