

Epilogue: Ariel and Autolykus: Shakespeare's counter-laureate authorship

The year 1623 saw two quite different testaments to the life and work of William Shakespeare. Seven years after the author's death, the First Folio presents "Mr. William Shakespeare" as a man of the theatre who produced "Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies" (*Riverside*, 91). In that same book, however, Leonard Digges refers to the "Stratford monument" at Holy Trinity Church (*Shakspeare Allusion-Book*, 1: 318), where the author alternatively appears as a wise philosophical poet in the great European tradition.¹ By looking briefly at these two posthumous testaments, we may bring the present book to its own conclusion.

The least discussed of the testaments, the Stratford monument, exhibits two features worth observing here: the bust of the author and the inscription beneath it (Figure 7). This particular kind of monument, writes Katherine Duncan-Jones, was "designed to commemorate a talented individual, not the head of a family," since it sculpts a "scholar's type' half-length front-facing effigy" (*Ungentle*, 272). The bust shows a likeness of Shakespeare holding a quill in his right hand as a writing implement, while his left rests comfortably upon a sheet of paper spread open on a cushion. In other words, the bust remembers Shakespeare as an author, not as an actor.² Even so, the bust of the author does retain some residue of the theatrical man; not simply does he wear the costume of a scholar's gown, he also performs the dramatic role of poet, "for his mouth is open to declaim his just-composed verses" (Schoenbaum, *Life*, 254).³ Effectively, the bust portrays William Shakespeare as a poet-playwright figure, the immortal author of his last performance.

¹ We do not know when the monument was built, but Schoenbaum is representative: "It had been installed by 1623" (*Life*, 256).

² Cf. Honan: "in the parish church he was to be fixed in effigy not as an actor, but as a poet" (*A Life*, 292).

³ Schoenbaum adds that it is "possible that [Gheerart] Janssen [the Southwark sculptor], working as he did on Bankside, benefited from the suggestions of Shakespeare's former colleagues in the King's Men" (*Life*, 254).



Figure 7. Shakespeare monument with bust and inscription (inscription appears beneath) at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon.

The inscription beneath the bust divides in two, the first part in Latin, the second a six-line verse in English couplets:

IUDICIO PYLUM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM:
TERRA TEGIT, POPULUS MAERET, OLYMPUS HABET.⁴

Stay Passenger, why goest thou by so fast?
Read if thou canst, whom envious Death hath plast
Within this monument Shakspeare: with whom
Quick nature died: whose name doth deck this tomb
Far more than cost: sith all that he hath writ
Leaves living art, but page to serve his wit.

(reprinted in Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle*, 272)

In the English poem, "Death" is not simply "envious" but miraculously generous, since he has given "Shakspeare" *life* "Within this monument." Still, there is loss, for "Quick nature" herself has "died"; the ambiguous phrasing equates the "name" of Nature with that of Shakespeare, and thus rather skillfully represents theatrical cross-dressing. The name itself is invaluable, more so than the materials making up the monument, for all subsequent writing is the "page" to the "wit" of "all that he hath writ." Duncan-Jones finds the pun on the word *page* "slightly lumbering" (*Ungentle*, 272), but it does create an authorial typology, with "Shakspeare" typologically prefiguring "living art."⁵ Moreover, the pun transacts a sly typology between poetry and theatre: the "page" of the printed poem transposes into the mini-drama of a servant-messenger or page working for the author. One wonders, then, whether the inscription glances not merely at the Sonnets but at Ariel's relation with Prospero in *The Tempest*, the play printed first in Heminge and Condell's folio edition.

On the monument, the Latin lines preceding the English poem script an authorial process of a (rather socialized) apotheosis: the earth covers the body of the dead man; above ground, the "people" mourn him; and finally Olympus holds his spirit immortally. In this formulation, "Shakspeare" arises from the sullen earth, receives applause from the populace, and enters a pagan pantheon, where he performs the divine judgment of Nestor, the philosophy of Socrates, and the literary skill of Virgil. He possesses the

⁴ "The earth covers, the people mourn, Olympus holds [a man who was] a Pylus [= Nestor] in judgement, a Socrates in wisdom, a Virgil in literary skill" (reprinted in Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle*, 272). Duncan-Jones speculates that Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall, may have composed both sets of verses (272).

⁵ Hall's comparison between masonic mortality and poetic immortality further suggests that he was thinking of the Sonnets, perhaps Sonnet 55.

kind of practical judgment exhibited by Homer's Nestor, not simply in military matters at Troy (the *Iliad*) but more precisely at Pylos in affairs of the family (the *Odyssey*). Yet Shakespeare complements such social judgment with the deep philosophical wisdom rehearsed by Plato's Socrates – a wisdom, we may assume, about the supreme value of the spirit. Finally, Shakespeare suits his judgment and wisdom to the kind of technical skill so well versed by Rome's great national poet, Virgil: "Arte Maronem." Shakespeare, not Spenser (the Stratford monument seems to cry out from rural Warwickshire) is the authentic Virgil of England: the wise and just national poet. Since long ago George Steevens speculated (tantalizingly) that the scribe originally wrote "Sophoclem," not "Socratem" (*Shakspeare Allusion-Book*, 1: 267), we might wonder whether the Stratford monument originally presented its distinguished citizen as an English poet-playwright in the Greco-Roman tradition.

Be that as it may, the First Folio ends up presenting its own version of this compound literary identity despite its theatrical agenda. While Heminge and Condell clearly portray Shakespeare as a man of the theatre – specified by Jonson in his memorial poem as a playwright surpassing Greek and Roman tragedians and comedians – the three-part generic structure of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* imitates a Virgilian textual model, "consciously followed," adds Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, "by Spenser amongst others" (*Jonson*, 4). The book accommodates the Roman poetic progression of pastoral, georgic, and epic to an English dramatic progression, from the lower genre of comedy, to the middle genre of history, to the higher genre of tragedy.⁶ During the sixteenth century, Tudeau-Clayton reminds us, schoolboys like Shakespeare encountered Virgil in a three-part educational sequence that moved them through the three poetic genres, the *Eclogues* first, the *Georgics* second, and the *Aeneid* last: this "career [was] assiduously followed by Spenser . . . and echoed in the first folio organization of the Shakespearean corpus" (54).

In differing ways, then, the First Folio and the Stratford monument together immortalize Shakespeare as a national poet and playwright. Whereas the First Folio uses a Virgilian, Spenserian poetic model to present "Shakespeare" primarily as a playwright, the monument presents him primarily as a poet performing the role of author. Although different, the two posthumous testaments take cues posed in Shakespeare's own poems and plays, the forms of which often dramatically traverse

⁶ Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson*, cites Bullman on the histories as occupying the position of Shakespeare's georgics.

Spenser's Virgilian landscape. Nowhere is the conjunction of poetry and theatre more intense than in the plays from the last phase of Shakespeare's professional career. For this phase, the *Oxford Shakespeare* lists six works:

The Winter's Tale
Cymbeline, King of Britain
The Tempest
Cardenio
All Is True (Henry VIII)
The Two Noble Kinsmen.

The first three plays are traditionally grouped with *Pericles* as "romances" or "tragicomedies," while both *Kinsmen* and (probably) the lost *Cardenio* qualify as well (both written with John Fletcher), with *Henry VIII* the lone history. Yet even this national narrative of the late queen's father exhibits the musical masque form characteristic of the Jacobean romances: "*Hoboyes. Enter King and others as Maskers, habited like shepherds*" (1. 4. s.d. after line 63). Together, the six plays complete what we know of Shakespeare's combination of the three dramatic forms advertised on the Folio title page. Yet of the four phases of plays we have examined, this is perhaps the least stable; one of the six plays is lost and two of the others are collaborations, leaving only three thought to be fully by Shakespeare. Nonetheless, the salient feature emerging is how constant the author is in composing these forms throughout his career. He is also constant in writing theatre through with poetry, and in continuing his national dialogue with the Virgilian Spenser and the Ovidian Marlowe.

Cymbeline, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* all require detailed analysis, but even the others inspire comment. Poet-playwright figures in this phase include Jachimo, Posthumous, and to an extent Imogen in *Cymbeline*; Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*; and Prospero and Ariel in *The Tempest* (who are parodied in Stephano and Caliban). Not surprisingly, books and performance often come into close alignment, including syntactically, as when Posthumous awakens from his sleep to behold both a theatrical dream of the pagan deities and a book lying on his chest: "What fairies haunt this ground? A book? O rare one, / Be not, as is our fangled world, a garment / Nobler than it covers" (5. 4. 133–35).

Moreover, Shakespeare's three major romances are all known to be cut along Ovidian/Virgilian axes. The Virgilian landscape of pastoral country and epic court is played out most obviously in *The Winter's Tale* but recurs in the court and country scenes of *Cymbeline* and in the contrast between

Prospero's island and his original home, the court of Milan.⁷ These plays continue to refer to Virgil's *Aeneid*, and not merely *The Tempest* with its famous discussion of "wido Dido" (2.1.77).⁸ In *Cymbeline*, Imogen tells Pisano,

True honest men being heard, like false Aeneas,
Were in his time thought false; and Sinon's weeping
Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity
From most true wretchedness. (3. 4. 58–61)

In *The Winter's Tale*, Florizel is among Shakespeare's most important representations of the shepherd-king figure, while perhaps more surprisingly even the masking shepherd Henry VIII qualifies; in *Cymbeline*, Belarius and Arviragus are displaced versions, as are Stephano and Caliban. A play like *Kinsmen* does not simply put Chaucer on the stage; it puts on that part of Chaucer understood by Spenser to be an epic, "The Knight's Tale," which Spenser imitates in *The Faerie Queene* when he completes "The Squire's Tale."⁹

The Spenserian dynamic of the late romances has become a commonplace of criticism.¹⁰ Periodically, we encounter priceless echoes: "I'll bring a bevy, / A hundred black-ey'd maids that love as I do," the Wooer in *Kinsmen* tells the Jailer (4. 1. 71–72), conjuring up (and playfully discoloring) Colin Clout's Dance of the Graces in the Legend of Courtesy: "A hundred naked maidens lilly white" (6. 10. 11).¹¹

Yet the late plays are even more noteworthy for their staging of Ovid: *The Tempest*, for Prospero's great rehearsal of Ovid's Medea in his farewell to magic (5. 1. 33–57); *The Winter's Tale*, for Paulina's re-deployment of Pygmalion's statue (5. 3); and *Cymbeline*, for its re-enactment of the *Metamorphoses* itself as a stage prop, with "the leaf's . . . turn'd down / Where

⁷ Bruster's analysis (see *Quoting Shakespeare*) of the Jailer's Daughter as a figure of the country (ch. 5), in opposition to the noble figures of Palamon, Arcite, and Theseus, suggests that *Kinsmen* is about the historic cultural shift from an ideology of court to one of country, represented in the professional transition from the drama of Shakespeare to that of Fletcher, the collaborating authors who simultaneously evoke the relation between pastoral and epic.

⁸ For details on Virgil, see, e.g., D. Hamilton, *Virgil*; Bono, *Transvaluation*; Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson*; James, *Shakespeare's Troy*.

⁹ Cheney, "Spenser's Completion," "Novells."

¹⁰ On Spenser in *The Winter's Tale*, see Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 204, 221. For a recent view of how Spenser underpins the late plays, see Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, 14, 36–37, 109, 113–14; O'Connell, "Experiment," 221. For a specific moment in *The Tempest*, see D. C. Kay, "Source."

¹¹ On this unusual numerical iconography, see Cheney, "Spenser's Dance." The *Riverside* assigns this scene to Fletcher, but the work on the Jailer's Daughter by Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare* (in particular) complicates this authorial scenario.

Philomele gave up" (2. 245–46).¹² This last phrasing intimates a complex intertextual scene, complete with an early seventeenth-century glance back not simply to Shakespeare's first printed play, *Titus Andronicus*, which also puts the *Metamorphoses* on stage, but to that other 1594 book, *The Rape of Lucrece*: "Our Tarquin thus / Did softly press the rushes ere he waken'd / The chastity he wounded" (2. 2. 12–14). Perhaps for this reason, the play ends with a speech containing the word we have emphasized in the conclusion to Shakespeare's second minor epic: "Publish we this peace / To all our subjects" (5. 5. 478–79; emphasis added).

Shakespeare's Ovidianism is occasionally evocative of Marlowe, with *The Tempest* long understood to be a response to *Doctor Faustus* (and Jonson's *Alchemist*).¹³ Less conspicuously, in this late play we witness a displaced shepherd who would be king, calling up "The Passionate Shepherd to His love": "Wilt thou go with me?" Caliban asks Stephano and Trinculo (2. 2. 172).¹⁴ Yet perhaps it is in the Iago-like Wolsey from *Henry VIII* in whom the Marlovian overreacher most returns with a vengeance:

I can see his pride / Peep through each part of him . . .
If not from hell, the devil is a niggard,
Or has given all before, and he begins
A new hell in himself.

(1. 1. 68–72; cf. *Faustus* A text 2. 1. 123–25)

Yet Shakespeare's intertextuality is more complex than this, for the Lord Chamberlain calls Wolsey "This bold bad man" (2. 2. 43). The phrase quotes Spenser's description of the black magician Archimago: "A bold bad man, that dar'd to call by name / Great Gorgon" (*Faerie Queene*, 1. 1. 37). Spenser's description of Archimago here reads like a portrait of a Marlovian and Faustian overreacher – and Shakespeare's use of the Spenserian phrase to portray the Marlovian Wolsey suggests he read Archimago just this way.¹⁵

Yet it is in *The Winter's Tale* that Shakespeare stages perhaps one of his most splendid authorial figures: Autolycus. This engaging figure routinely sings erotic songs and acts out parts in dramas of his own device. The first time we see him he is singing an erotic song, "When daffadils begin to

¹² For details, see Bate, *Ovid*, ch. 6: "In the last plays, as Shakespeare tried out a more mythic mode of composition, Ovid returned to the surface of the drama" (215).

¹³ See, e.g., Mebane, *Magic*.

¹⁴ Cf. Shapiro, *Rival*: "in the Faustian moments of *Macbeth* or *The Tempest* we find no verbal recollections, or parodies, of Marlowe's play" (96).

¹⁵ See Cheney, *Profession*, 300n16. The English Online database identifies Spenser as the first to use the phrase, and Shakespeare the second, with an intriguing afterlife in centuries following, starting with Massinger.

appear," which he tells us "Are summer songs for me and my aunts, / While we lie tumbling in the hay" (4. 3. 1–12). Immediately following, however, Autolycus tricks the Old Shepherd's son, the Clown, by playing the part of one who has been robbed by a "servant of the Prince" (87) – a figure at court who has "compass'd a motion of the Prodigal Son" (96–97) – as we have seen, staged a puppet show – and who has now taken Autolycus' clothes and dressed him in his own "garments" (of course, this figure is Autolycus himself). While Autolycus routinely combines such theatrical trickery with erotic singing, Shakespeare situates this Ovidian generic activity in a locale that is distinctly Virgilian: first, the pastoral landscape of Bohemia; and later, the courtly kingdom of Sicilia. Quite literally, the Ovidian Autolycus sings songs and puts on plays along the Virgilian path of pastoral and epic. He is at once an Ovidian poet-playwright and a Virgilian shepherd-courtier.

As a professional thief, Autolycus begins the play committed to his own will power, as he tries to rob the simple Bohemian shepherds of their money, as he himself confesses to the audience at the outset: "My traffic is sheets . . . With die and drab I purchas'd this comparison, and my revenue is the silly cheet" (4. 3. 23–28). Yet, as the strange and wondrous action of the play unfolds, Autolycus finds himself mysteriously swept along by events he no longer can control, until he is forced to admit: "I have done good . . . against my will" (5. 2. 124). Of self-conscious literary origin – "litter'd under Mercury" (4. 3. 25) – this superlative trickster, who often quite literally steals the show in performance, looks conspicuously like a careful parody of his witty creator. Specifically, both Shakespeare and Autolycus, during their respective careers of creation and crime, enact a fundamentally sixteenth-century form of authorship, not seen since the closing of the theatres in antiquity, and only then in intermittent form: the sustained combination of poetry and drama within a single career.

Such a representation raises the question of agency – especially authorial agency. Unlike that other famous clown caught in an epic world of royalty and nobility, Spenser's Colin Clout, Autolycus does not retreat to the pastoral space of Mount Acidale to pipe alone his serene, ephemeral vision of mysterious grace. In fact, what seems required to gambol with Autolycus is precisely an interpretive model of authorship that allows for both intentionality and social forces.¹⁶

As the case of Autolycus intimates, the late plays self-consciously foreground the theatre, and not simply because of the dramatic Jacobean flair

¹⁶ For a similar view of Autolycus, see Pitcher, "Some Call Him Autolycus." On the central importance of Mercury in the poetics of Spenser, see Brooks-Davies, *Mercurian Monarch*. These comments appear in slightly different form in my introduction to *European Literary Careers*.

for masques and machines. According to Harold C. Goddard, "one of the supreme spiritual utterances of England's supreme poet, and, by that fact, of England," emerges in Posthumous' self-consciously theatrical speech opening Act 5, where we witness "the all-importance of the soul and its power to conquer death," much as in Sonnet 146, "which comes as close as anything he ever wrote to being a personal religious creed" (*Meaning*, 2: 259–60):

Let me make men know
More valor in me than my habits show.
Gods, put the strength o' th' Leonati in me!
To shame the guise o' th' world, I will begin
The fashion: less without and more within.

(*Cymbeline*, 5. 1. 29–33)

Yet here we can historicize the religious and political origin of such a creed, Queen Elizabeth's Protestant policy (especially important to Catholics), which required, says Peter Lake, only "outward . . . behavior," not "inward conviction":

This . . . opened up a gap between the inward and the outward, the real inner convictions of a person and his or her outward behavior, a space which . . . could be exploited for all sorts of dissimulation and pretence by the faithless and the unscrupulous. Here, rather than in some nebulous practice called 'Renaissance self-fashioning,' may be a major source of the contemporary dissimulation and the *de facto* atheism of the Machiavel. ("Religious Identities," 64)

As Posthumous makes clear, however, one did not have to be a Machiavel to tap into the terms of Elizabeth's chief religious policy.

Moreover, in these late plays there are intimations that something besides a pure theatre of outward behavior and inner conviction is afoot. In the duet sung by Guiderius and Arviragus over the apparently dead body of Imogen, we find "quite possibly the most resonant lyric lines Shakespeare ever composed" (H. Smith, intro. to *Cymbeline*, *Riverside*, 1568):

Fear no more the heat o' th' sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages,
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

(*Cymbeline*, 4. 2. 258–63)

Supplying more detail, Goddard pieces together an informed narrative that some today would recognize as infused with too much Romantic sentiment: "From *The Comedy of Errors* to *Antony and Cleopatra*, the story is one of

the gradual subjection of the theatrical to the poetical" (*Meaning*, 2: 203). If Goddard has not quite got the "story" right, he at least sets its terms with characteristic eloquence and insight.

Goddard is correct about the arch-theatricality in *The Comedy of Errors*, but something more complex organizes Shakespeare's late dramatic art than the purifying of theatre through poesis. Goddard himself brings us to a momentous event with *The Tempest*: "When it is he [Ariel] who whispers the hint in Prospero's ear and Prospero obeys *him*, the wonder of a spiritual miracle occurs. Music replaces magic; Ariel's songs achieve what is beyond the scope of Prospero's wand" (*Meaning*, 2: 284; Goddard's emphasis). *Ariel's songs, Prospero's wand*: this is an important dynamic. Nearly unanimously, critics associate Prospero's wand with the art of theatre, and much in the play encourages this identification, as revealed famously in his "Our revels now are ended" speech, with its technical reference to "actors" and the Globe Theatre (4. 1. 148, 152). Yet, as Goddard reminds us, Prospero typically lets Ariel perform the magic for him: "The higher the nature of the miracle sought, the more Prospero seems to entrust its execution to Ariel's improvisation" (*Meaning*, 2: 282). To Prospero's playwright, Ariel functions as lead actor.¹⁷ Yet not merely does the sprite conjure up theatrical shows, as in the grim banquet of the harpies (3. 3) or the wedding masque of Juno and Ceres (4. 1); Ariel repeatedly turns to lyric song to perform his miracles, sounding some of the most profoundly childlike poetry in English:

Full fadom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made:
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Burthen [within]. Ding-dong,
Hark how I hear them – ding-dong bell.
(*The Tempest*, 1. 2. 397–405)

The crystalline presence of Ariel's six recorded songs constitutes a virtual poetics, and requires acute detail to articulate. In "Full fadom five," for instance, he performs a lyric of life beyond death, the imagination's power to pluck immortality from the black beyond. As the auditor of the song,

¹⁷ Recent critics continue to recoil from the "colonialist *Tempest*," as does Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare*, in "the Playhouse in *The Tempest*" (ch. 4 title), which argues for a "theatrical *Tempest*" (see 119–120). Cf. Burnett, who turns from "colonialist paradigms" (125) to the "spatial chorography" of the Jacobean "fairground" (*Monsters*, 126).

Ferdinand, puts it, "The ditty does remember my drown'd father. / This is no mortal business, nor no sound / That the earth owes. I hear it now above me" (1. 2. 406–08). Certainly, technical developments and tastes in Jacobean culture, especially on display at the Blackfriars Theatre, encouraged Shakespeare to intensify his commitment to the performance of lyric song. Yet this commitment, here at the close of his career, does not suddenly appear, but is, as Goddard knew, the apex of his achievement.

In 1995, Alvin B. Kernan summed up a long-standing critical tradition about the authorial temperament producing this achievement: "Shakespeare was not an autobiographical poet, not at least in any simple, direct sense. Anything but. He remains, in fact, the most anonymous of our great writers – we seem always to glimpse only the back of his head just as he slips around the corner" (*King's Playwright*, 179). In the present book, we have attempted to bring the back of the authorial head into focus – to get the author to pause, turn around, and show his face, before he slips around the next corner.¹⁸ The Shakespeare we have tried to glimpse indeed resembles the picture engraved by William Marshall in John Benson's 1640 edition of the *Poems*: as seen at the outset, he is the supreme theatrical author who dramatically holds the leaves of the laureate poet (see Figure 2 above).

If we look around the literary scene during Shakespeare's career, we see a rather large group of laureate-like authors, from Sidney, Spenser, and Daniel to Drayton, Chapman, and Jonson, all of whom are making loud claims for the national value of literary art to England. In the vanguard was England's New Poet himself, Renaissance England's "first laureate" (Helgerson, *Laureates*, 100), whose legacy extended beyond the age of Jonson to that of Milton. Caught up in the power was Marlowe, who, amid his thundering threat, could not extricate his art from the spell of the laureates, and so produced what we have termed a counter-national art. Shakespeare inherits the opposition between Marlowe and Spenser, but he stands above it, precisely to bridge it. He uses the received authorial frame of self-promotion to invent a frame of self-effacement.¹⁹

¹⁸ In "Personal Shakespeare," W. Kerrigan identifies "three clues" to "the personality of the author" (175): "a deep attunement to acting, a fascination with improbable couples, and an uneasy vulnerability to a peculiarly sexual or genital form of misogyny" (185). The last two traits clearly group under gender; to augment Kerrigan's first trait, we could well address a deep attunement to *poesis* (for support, see Schalkwyk, *Performance*, on "the imaginary space of theatrical and poetic production" [49]). Kerrigan sees *Antony and Cleopatra* as "a tragedy in which acting and improbable love triumph over sexual disillusionment, which turned out to be the same thing as staging a counterepic that absorbs and subordinates the imperial drives of his age" (190). Missing in Kerrigan's account are the authors who most helped Shakespeare accomplish this feat: Ovid, Spenser, and Marlowe.

¹⁹ For a similar view of Shakespeare, see Bednarz, *Poets' War*, 257–64.

Rather than asserting his voice as a national author, Shakespeare chooses to *displace* his voice, and nowhere more eloquently than in the poem many consider “Shakespeare’s best poem” (Everett, “Golden Bough,” 13). “The Phoenix and Turtle” is well known to have origins in Chaucer’s *Parlement of Foules*, and indeed Spenser’s Old Poet may be the primary model for Shakespeare’s authorial self-effacement. In Book 3 of *The House of Fame*, the definitive Chaucerian moment occurs: “Frend,” asks Aeolus of Chaucer himself, “what is thy name? / Artow come hider to han fame?” / “Nay, for soothe, frend,” says the poet, “I came nought hyder, graunt mercy, / For no such cause, by my hed!” (1871–75).²⁰ Like Spenser, Shakespeare engaged with Chaucer in intriguingly measurable ways, from *Love’s Labor’s Lost* to *Troilus and Cressida* to *Two Noble Kinsmen*.²¹ Unlike Spenser, however, Shakespeare never claims to participate in the process Spenser calls “traduction” (*Fairie Queene*, 4. 3. 13), a Pythagorean principle of metempsychosis through which Chaucer’s “spirit . . . survive[s]” in him (4. 2. 34). Milton told Dryden that he considered Spenser his great original, while Blake said the same of Milton, but Shakespeare stands outside this authorial genealogy of English poetry, linking the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries.²² While both Shakespeare and Spenser in particular may in the end “revive” the “labours lost” of Chaucer’s “sacred happie spirit” (*Fairie Queene*, 4. 2. 34), they represent radically different ways of positioning the author’s cultural authority.

We know well enough what to call Spenser’s laureate authorship, but we seem to have trouble characterizing Shakespeare’s. We might call it a *counter-laureate authorship*, because it has the clear national ambitions of the Spenserian laureate without its dominant strategy of artistic self-crowning.²³ Throughout this book, we have seen how the man from Stratford joins print culture in presenting a dramatic author with pen in hand. We have accounted for the presence of both poems and plays in his professional career by recalling the sixteenth-century poet-playwright around Europe, as well as in England, principally in the Ovidian Marlowe, in dialogue

²⁰ Thanks to Robert R. Edwards for this reference (personal communication, 5 April 2003). On Chaucer as “a poet of indirection,” see Edwards, “Dreamwork.”

²¹ The two most authoritative studies are by Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan*, and Thompson, *Shakespeare’s Chaucer*.

²² As we have seen, Meres re-routes Pythagorean metempsychosis to Shakespeare’s relation with a classical author, Ovid.

²³ See Hattaway, “History Play”: in the history plays, Shakespeare responds to Homeric, Virgilian, and finally Spenserian epic. Whereas Spenser in *October* announces the poet’s need to turn from pastoral to epic to celebrate national fame, “Shakespeare implicitly asserts that if a poet is to address the ancient topics of heroism and return to the depiction of knights fighting for fame and honour, it is necessary to eschew the pieties of romance epic that emerge in *The Faerie Queene*” (10).

with the Virgilian Spenser. In Shakespeare’s hands, intertextuality becomes a premier technique and principle of authorship itself.

We have concentrated on the poems, and tried to see them as a corpus in its own right that complements the larger body of plays. No doubt Shakespeare’s poems form part of a generational project, initially centered around Sir Philip Sidney and finally championed most decisively by Spenser and then by Jonson, to create a patriotic body of English literature that can rival the vernaculars of Europe, especially Italy and France.²⁴ For the most part, however, the poems of Shakespeare, unlike many of his plays, seem to challenge and even to explode this very project. In *Venus, Lucrece*, the Sonnets, and *A Lover’s Complaint* (as in *The Passionate Pilgrim*), desire is in grave trouble, and even in “The Phoenix and Turtle” the married chastity of the avian principals ends up *dead*. For reasons to which we are not privy, for Shakespeare the penning of poetry seems to have been a fundamentally somber affair; in terms of narrative shape, there is no romantic comedy, and little chance among the living to survive. Desire is death, even though occasionally this turns into something of a laughing matter, as it does with Venus, whose body is a deer park for a grazing deer, or with Will’s mistress, whose eyes are nothing like the sun. Yet, despite the humor, and the sadness, Shakespeare’s poems decisively enter the authorial list, in what constitutes one of the most impressive early modern typological competitions with English and European poetry on record, from Virgil and Ovid to Spenser and Marlowe. Perhaps what makes Shakespeare’s poems challenging as a body is their unusual combination of absolute literariness with disconcerting “scandal” – the key term surfacing in modern commentary on the Sonnets in particular (e.g., de Grazia, “Scandal”).

The poems are not the plays, and lack their very range of sentiment and mode, but the poems’ existence precisely calls into question our dominant view of Shakespeare as the working dramatist. In the end, he bequeathed to posterity England’s most extraordinary literary canon, spread across the dramatic genres of comedy, history, tragedy, and romance and the poetic genres of minor epic, sonnet sequence, philosophical hymn, and complaint. As such, we need to extend a favored conclusion from the past century: “only once in the history of Western drama, not in fifth-century Athens but in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, has a playwright given living warrant to the proposition,” articulated by Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, that the genius of comedy coheres with the genius of

²⁴ See Hyland on this important context for Shakespeare’s poems (*Introduction to Shakespeare’s Poems*, 47).

tragedy (Danson, "The Comedies," 239). In this book, we have tried to give living warrant to a slightly different proposition: not merely that comedy and tragedy are possible to conjoin in a single career, but that these twin dramatic forms are possible to combine with an array of poetic forms. Shakespeare's world-class standing derives from his achievement not only in tragedy and comedy but also in sonnet and lyric. Without question, he is the first European author to produce sustained and enduring masterpieces in both poetry and theatre, for both the nascent printing press and the new commercial theatre.

While Shakespeare's sonnets are the high watermark for achievement in the European Petrarchan form, and "The Phoenix and Turtle" perhaps the most perfect poem in any language, *Venus, Lucrece*, and *A Lover's Complaint* constitute his most sustained print practice in a single poetic form, from the early 1590s through the first decade of the seventeenth century. Shakespeare, we might conclude, may have turned to "narrative poetry" so recurrently because he discovered in this form an absolute fusion of theatre to poetry.

We have tried to account for the erasure of this fusion in the principal story our culture has told about the literary corpus of this beloved author. What we have not yet reported here is the curious way in which this erasure occurred palpably to the monumental body of "Shakspeare" himself. Not long after 1623 the quill held by the poet in Holy Trinity Church quite naturally disappeared (and would continue to do so over the centuries), so that when Sir William Dugdale arrived in 1634 to make the first known sketch of the monument, the author virtually disappeared, including his paper and writing cushion, leaving in his place "a commodity dealer" (Price, "Function of Imagery," 168), a Falstaff-like holder of an actual sack. Subsequently, Wenceslaus Hollar used the Dugdale drawing for his influential engraving, published in the 1656 (and later the 1730) edition of Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (Figure 8), which made its way into Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare. Without being able to see the pen, Diana Price speculates, Dugdale "may have simply missed the paper" (172), and thus easily distorted the cushion into a rather lumpy bag, effectively metamorphosing the great Virgilian poet into a simple "sackholder." Significantly, she adds, in 1748–49 a "monument beautification project" removed the impersonating commodity dealer and returned "the literary effigy" (174) – not too far in advance of Edmund Malone's pioneering restoration of the poems alongside the plays in his monumental editions (especially 1790).

At the same time – and in contradistinction to recent scholarship (de Grazia, *Verbatim*; Alexander, "Province of Pirates") – we might wish to say

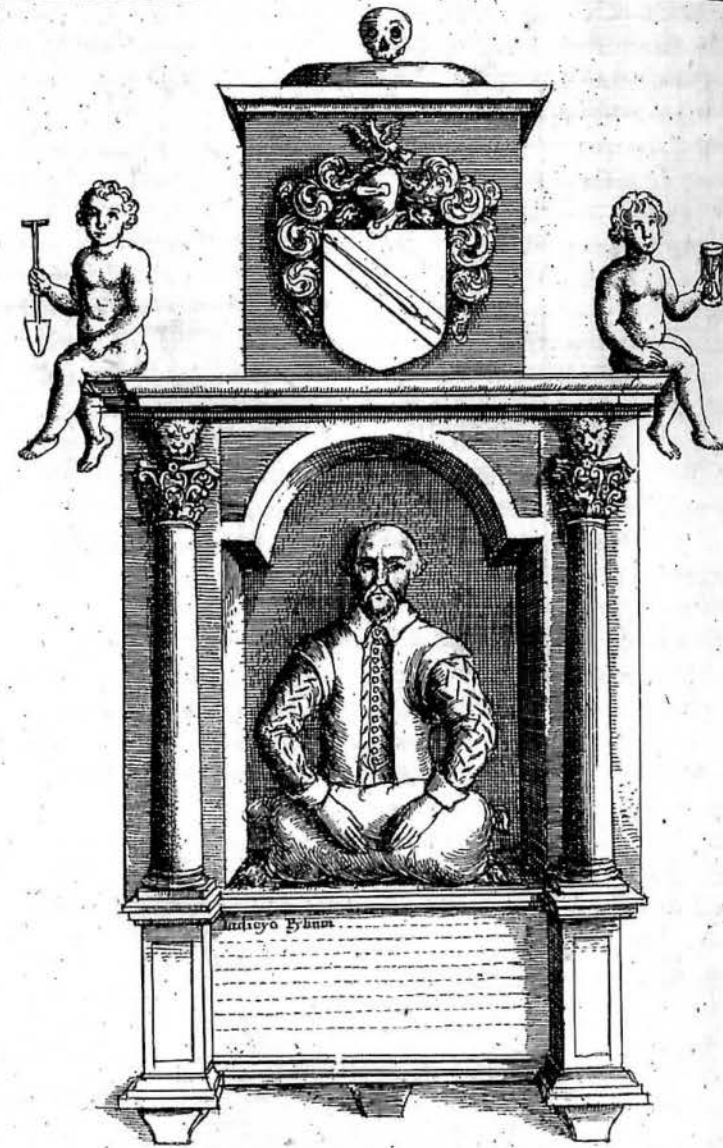


Figure 8. Wenceslaus Hollar's 1656 engraving, published in the 1656 (and later the 1730) edition of Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*.

that for all his achievement Malone ends up *institutionalizing a problem*, which prevails today: caught up in the cultural process of authenticating "Shakespeare" as an author, Malone ends up falsifying the historical record by printing the poems as merely a "Supplement" to the plays. Despite both the textual and the pictorial beautification projects, at the beginning of the twenty-first century we have not fully restored Shakespeare's poems to their rightful position beside his plays. Accordingly, we may wish to reverse the practice exhibited between Malone and the *Riverside Shakespeare*, alternatively placing the poems, not at the back, but at the front, fully printing Shakespeare in his original stature as national poet-playwright.

Authoring a nonpareil corpus of poems and plays, Shakespeare goes on to perform a leading role in the founding of a new English and European author. Presumably, the closing of the English theatres in 1642 created a challenge to the life of this author, but what seems safe to say is that from Milton and Dryden, to Shelley, Byron, and Goethe, to Yeats, Eliot, and Auden, no author could ignore the authority of the Shakespearean poet-playwright. In fact, it may be important to look at the plays of these fundamentally gifted poets in terms of the anxiety of Shakespearean "dramatic" influence. At the same time, we might wish to emphasize how unique the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are in the English tradition, because at no time in England's history did the author as a poet-playwright flourish as intensively and extensively as it did then. For the most part, the leading authors of the English Augustan age, the Romantic period, and the Victorian era were all poets or novelists, not dramatists (major exceptions include Dryden, Shelley, and Byron), while even in the twentieth century the plays of Yeats, Eliot, and Auden had less influence than had their poetry – an influence that continues to be heard today (in Derek Walcott, for instance, or Sam Shepard). A fuller study of this fascinating evolution remains to be written, but scholars in early modern studies may wish to re-define at least one segment of the traditional story about the Renaissance as an age of rebirth, as well as Shakespeare's seminal place in the story. After such well-documented cultural events as the discovery and recovery of classical texts, the invention of the printing press, the transition from a feudal to a capitalist society, the return to a purified Church, the building of the new commercial theatres, the advent of modern science, and the discovery and colonization of the Americas, we may wish to include as a notable literary event the emergence of the author as a poet-playwright.

When Ariel comes to sing his last song, he does not simply draw on an ancient trope of the poet as an imitative artist, employed famously by Jonson, who would succeed Spenser and Marlowe as Shakespeare's greatest

rival: "to draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the bee, and turn all into honey" (*Discoveries*, 3057–81, in *Ben Jonson*, ed., Parfitt). Nor does Ariel only locate the naturalist *telos* of Shakespeare's art of spiritual immanence. The page of Prospero releases the art of poetry into the theatre:

Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.
(The Tempest, 5. 1. 88–94)

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