

*The sixteenth-century poet-playwright*

*Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* offers a new explanation for approaching one of the perennial problems in Shakespeare criticism: just how to relate Shakespeare's poems to his plays. While Shakespeare wrote many more plays than poems, he nonetheless combined the two forms during a professional career that spanned nearly twenty-five years. As modern scholarship reveals, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated on forty-two known plays, but he also penned five substantial poems and a number of shorter ones (many of them extant), as well as over one hundred songs written for the plays; he also found himself the author of a printed book of poems that he did not wholly write or authorize.

While Shakespeare's work in the new English theatre most likely stretched from the late 1580s until about 1614, his poems were published between 1593 and 1609 – or 1612, if we include the third edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim* (important to the present argument). In addition to such famous plays produced in the genres of comedy, history, tragedy, and "romance" as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *1 Henry IV*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*, he bequeathed to us three major poems of longstanding value and two shorter poems of genuine recent interest. In the very middle of his career, he was so popular a writer, both in poetry and in drama, that he could have a volume of poems pirated under his name. Not simply does he write much of his drama in blank or rhymed verse (as is well known), but habitually he punctuates his plays with the recording of original songs, the singing of popular ballads, the composition of original poems, and the quotation of popular verse from his day, including of such contemporaries as Christopher Marlowe and Sir Philip Sidney. At the same time, he relies on the Renaissance notion of imitation to carry on a dialogue with such poets from antiquity as Virgil and Ovid, and such poets from England as Chaucer and Spenser.

Indeed, from the beginning to the end of his career, Shakespeare stages dramatic characters who turn out to have poetry on their minds – sometimes

in places we might not expect, as this from Lorenzo to Jessica under the glistening night sky of Belmont:

therefore the poet  
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;  
 Since nought so stock fish, hard, and full of rage,  
 But music for the time doth change his nature.  
 The man that hath no music in himself,  
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
 And his affections dark as [Erebus]:  
 Let no such man be trusted.

(*Merchant of Venice*, 5. 1. 79–88)

Lorenzo is trying to rationalize the mystery of the music he and Jessica are hearing – an “air” (76) that seems as much “in” them as outside them. He expresses at once a romantic form of discourse to his beloved and a penetrating defense of poetry to the theatre audience. And this art he and his creator understand to have psychological, social, religious, and national value: poetry can represent music as creating the very “spirit” of mental balance, interpersonal faith, and patriotic duty. To explain the mystery and outline the defense, Lorenzo turns to an unnamed poet and his verse-feigning of the story of Orpheus, the Renaissance archetype of the poet who used his art for such a civilizing power (Cain, “Orpheus”).

For Shakespeare, we should not be surprised to discern here an important energizing idea central to his canon as a whole: the poet is a figure of “trust,” his poetry an art of faith, an external artifact that secretly secures the most intimate bonds of life and culture. For his part, the playwright is the keeper of this bond, the play the cultural ceremony responsible for disseminating faith to the public at large.<sup>1</sup> This scene at Belmont is thus not isolated but exemplary, arguing for a more sustained interlock of poetry and theatre than recent classifications of Shakespeare as an early modern author allow. We can witness this interlock both within the representations of his fictions (as here) and in the actual forms of his professional production. Together, the representations and the forms constitute the ground of discussion underlying this book.

In 1593, Shakespeare interrupts his dramatic career to publish his first book of verse, *Venus and Adonis*, a poem of 1,194 lines in the popular and

<sup>1</sup> On Shakespearean art as a deep probe of trust, see Schwartz, “Contemporary Psychoanalysis.” On Shakespeare’s “epistemological optimism about access to otherness,” see Krier, *Birth Passages*, 69. On Shakespeare as a godly playwright with a sacramental art, see Knapp, *Shakespeare’s Tribe*.

erotic Elizabethan genre of the Ovidian epyllion or minor epic (Hulse, *Verse*). This “first heir” of his “invention,” as he calls it (*Riverside*, 1799), is complete with a prose dedication to Henry Wriothesley, the young earl of Southampton, and is signed by “William Shakespeare,” in what turned out to be his most popular printed work during his lifetime (*Riverside*, 1798). In 1594, he followed with *The Rape of Lucrece*, a 1,855-line poem also in the genre of minor epic, again prefaced by a dedication to Southampton, and signed “William Shakespeare,” in what also became one of his most popular works printed during his lifetime. Accordingly, in 1599 William Jaggard tried to capitalize on Shakespeare’s popularity by publishing a book of verse titled *The Passionate Pilgrim* with Shakespeare’s name on the title page, a volume that includes some poems known to be by Shakespeare and some still un-attributed poems that could be by him, especially a group on the myth of Venus and Adonis (Roe, ed., *Poems*, 1, 54–60). Shortly thereafter, in 1601 Shakespeare wrote the enigmatic sixty-seven-line philosophical poem, “The Phoenix and Turtle,” as a special contribution to Robert Chester’s *Love’s Martyr*, for reasons to which we are still not privy (Roe, ed., *Poems*, 1–2, 41–54). Even more enigmatically, in 1609 Thomas Thorpe published a work titled *Shake-speares Sonnets*, dedicated to one “Mr W. H.,” in a volume that includes 152 Petrarchan sonnets, two Anacreontic sonnets, and the 329-line *Lover’s Complaint* – with the first work in this collection, the Sonnets, today “regularly outsell[ing] everything else he wrote” (Evans, ed., *Sonnets*, 1).<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to popular opinion, the publication of Shakespeare’s poems coincided throughout his career with the staging of his plays and even the printing of his plays in quartos (see Figure 3). Around 1600, Spenser’s friend Gabriel Harvey intimates as much: “The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis; but his Lucrece, and his tragedy of Hamlet . . . have it in them to please the wiser sort” (*Shakspeare Allusion-Book*, 1: 56). Harvey here divides Shakespeare’s works not between poems and plays (the way modern editions of Shakespeare’s works popularly do) but rather by audience appeal or moral effect. During Shakespeare’s lifetime, Harvey appears quite comfortable conjoining one of Shakespeare’s printed minor epics, *Lucrece*, with one of his stage tragedies, *Hamlet*, and in then seeing both works as opposed to another minor epic, *Venus*. The early

<sup>2</sup> In Norton, Cohen remarks that Shakespeare’s “Various Poems” were “composed from the early 1590s until shortly before Shakespeare’s death” (1991; emphasis added). These poems, some of which may or may not be by Shakespeare, include “Shall I die?” discovered by Gary Taylor (see S. Wells, *Life* 31, 126–27); “Verses upon the Stanley Tomb at Tong”; “On Ben Jonson”; “An Epitaph on Elias James”; two epitaphs on John Combe; “Upon the King”; and an “Epitaph on Himself.” None of these poems bears significantly on the topic at hand, and so will not be discussed further.

Year	Plays	Poems
1593		Q1 <i>V &amp; A</i>
1594	Q1 <i>Tit.</i> , Q1 <i>2H6</i>	Q1 <i>Luc.</i> Q2 <i>V &amp; A</i>
1595	O1 <i>3H6</i>	Q1 <i>V &amp; A</i> (?)
1596	Q1 <i>E3</i>	O2 <i>V &amp; A</i>
1597	<u>Q1 <i>LLL.</i></u> , Q1 <i>R2</i> , Q1 <i>R3</i> , Q1 <i>Rom.</i>	
1598	Q1, Q2 <i>1H4</i> , <u>Q2 <i>LLL.</i></u> , Q2, Q3 <i>R2</i> , Q2 <i>R3</i>	O1 <i>Luc.</i>
1599	Q2 <i>Rom.</i> , <u>Q3 <i>1H4</i></u> , Q2 <i>E3</i>	<u>Q1</u> , O2 <i>PP</i> , O3, O4 <i>V &amp; A</i> ,
1600	Q1 <i>H5</i> , Q2 <i>2H4</i> , Q1 <i>Ado</i> , Q1 <i>MND</i> , Q2 <i>2H6</i> , Q1 <i>3H6</i> , Q2 <i>Tit.</i> , <u>Q1 <i>MV</i></u>	O2, O3 <i>Luc.</i>
1601		Q1 <i>Love's Martyr</i>
1602	Q1 <i>Wiv.</i> , Q3 <i>R3</i> , Q2 <i>H5</i>	<u>O5</u> <i>V &amp; A</i> (?)
1603	<u>Q1 <i>Ham.</i></u>	
1604	<u>Q2 <i>Ham.</i></u> , Q4 <i>1H4</i>	
1605	<u>Q4 <i>R3</i></u>	
1606		
1607		O6 <i>V &amp; A</i> (?), O4 <i>Luc.</i>
1608	Q1 <i>Lr.</i> , Q4 <i>R2</i> , Q5 <i>1H4</i>	O7 <i>V &amp; A</i> (?)
1609	<u>Q1 <i>Tro.</i></u> , Q1, Q2 <i>Per.</i> , Q3 <i>Rom.</i>	Q <i>Son.</i>
1610		O8 <i>V &amp; A</i> (?)
1611	Q3 <i>Tit.</i> , Q3 <i>Ham.</i> , Q3 <i>Per.</i>	Q2 <i>Love's Martyr</i> [ <i>Britain's Annals</i> ]
1612	Q3 <i>Tit.</i> , <u>Q3 <i>Ham.</i></u> , Q3 <i>Per.</i> , Q5 <i>R3</i>	Q3 <i>PP</i>
1613	<u>Q6 <i>1H4</i></u>	
1614		
1615	<u>Q5 <i>R2</i></u>	
1616		<u>O5 <i>Luc.</i></u>
1617		O9 <i>V &amp; A</i>
1618		
1619	<u>Q3 <i>2H6</i></u> , <u>Q2 <i>3H6</i></u> , <u>Q4 <i>Per.</i></u> , <u>Q2 <i>Wiv.</i></u> , <u>Q2 <i>MV</i></u> , <u>Q2 <i>Lr.</i></u> , Q3 <i>H5</i> , <u>Q2 <i>MND</i></u>	
1620		O10 <i>V &amp; A</i>
1621		
1622	<u>Q1 <i>Orh.</i></u> , Q6 <i>R3</i> , Q7 <i>1H4</i> , Q1 <i>Rom.</i> (?), <u>Q4 <i>Ham.</i></u> (?)	
1623	<u>F1</u>	

Figure 3. Shakespeare's poems and plays in print 1593–1623.

Notes: The present book concentrates on the years 1593 to 1612. All editions that advertise Shakespeare's authorship are underlined. When the title page contains Shakespeare's initials, dotted lines are used. Dotted lines also indicate works where there are two title pages (one of which contains Shakespeare's name) or an entire edition is lost.

modern critical mind appears to differ considerably from the scholarly mind today.

Shakespeare's major poetic works emerged in three primary printed installments. One installment occurs early in his writing career, between 1592 and 1594, when he composes and publishes *Venus and Lucrece*; one occurs in the middle, between 1599 and 1601, when others print poems on his behalf, sometimes to his dismay; and one occurs later, between 1600 and 1609, when he composes many of the Sonnets and *A Lover's Complaint* and witnesses their publication (with or without his consent; see chapters 7 and 8). Scholars even believe that Shakespeare worked on the Sonnets throughout his career: "several of the Sonnets are very likely to have been composed at the start of Shakespeare's career, and the whole sequence should be thought of as something approaching Shakespeare's life's work" (Burrow, "Life," 17). This provocative idea deserves pause, because it discovers Shakespeare's "life's work" not where we might expect it (in the plays) but in one of his "non-dramatic" works. Equally of note, Shakespeare's interest in narrative poetry spans the two halves of his career: his "concern with the writing of narrative poems did not abort with *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594) but extended through the time of *The Phoenix and Turtle* (1601) to within four years of the end of his career as a dramatist [through *A Lover's Complaint*]: he was occupied with writing non-dramatic poetry for a much longer time than we have imagined" (Hiatt, Bishop, and Nicholson, "Rare Words," 220). The repercussions of this idea are also worth pausing over, because it tries to get at an important yet neglected historical phenomenon.

Following up on such ideas, we might begin by looking into what would today seem to be a paradox at the core of Shakespeare's career: he is the consummate "man of the theatre" who simultaneously produces some of the most remarkable poems in the English language. While serving for nearly twenty-five years as a committed playwright, actor, and shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men and later the King's Men, he maintains a second or shadow career in the art of poetry. How are we to explain this paradox?

Clearly, it could be no paradox to Harvey. Yet it has become one to many subsequent generations. Between the late seventeenth and the early twenty-first centuries, the prevailing historical explanation has been prone to look back at the poems through the lens of the plays. Relying on a posterior lens, scholars have approached the poems in one of three principal ways. First, they have largely neglected the poems, producing that overwhelming bulk

of studies devoted exclusively to "Shakespearean drama." In this approach, Shakespeare is virtually equated with drama – his writing with theatre – so much so that his poems quickly lose their voice, as this from a recent catalogue published by a prestigious university press: "Shakespeare was essentially a man of the theater who intended his words to be spoken and acted out on stage. It is in this context of dramatic realization that his plays are best understood and experienced."<sup>3</sup> Much recent criticism and textual scholarship emphasizes the *constructedness* of "Shakespeare," including the texts we read and perform, but rarely does it acknowledge that the situation is more complicated than we might imagine: the "Shakespeare" that scholarship constructs for the world-audience today is fundamentally a "dramatic" Shakespeare.

In a 1986 essay strategically printed in Stanley Wells, edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, Harry Levin helps us to understand the profession-wide energy required to produce this modern version of Shakespeare, when announcing the successful completion of the twentieth-century project: "Our century . . . has restored our perception of him to *his genre, the drama*, enhanced by increasing historical knowledge alongside the live tradition of the performing arts" (228; emphasis added). In announcing the success of this restoration project, Levin is responding to what he considers an earlier phase of modern Shakespeare criticism (the actual topic of his essay): the Restoration, Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian reduction of Shakespeare's performative genre to "Dramatick Poesy."<sup>4</sup> If critics from the late seventeenth century through the nineteenth tended to read Shakespearean drama as poetry (while largely neglecting the poems themselves), critics in the twentieth century finally succeeded in detaching Shakespearean drama from poetry, preferring to view it purely as theatre. During the thundering applause, the poems could find little room, if any. Indeed, the *dramatic, performative* model of Shakespeare as a "man of the theatre" has recently been institutionalized in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, where the most influential critic of his generation,

<sup>3</sup> *Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge UP, 1999). Cambridge University Press has just published Erne's *Literary Dramatist*, which argues that Shakespeare was not simply a playwright who wrote theatrical texts for the stage but also a literary dramatist who produced reading texts for the page. Several recent books take up the cue of Berger, *Imaginary Audition*, to combat or sometimes complement performance criticism: Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle*; Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare*; Bednarz, *Poets' War*; Freinkel, *Shakespeare's Will*; S. Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems*; Hyland, *Introduction*; Schalkwyk, *Performance*.

<sup>4</sup> Dryden, reprinted B. Vickers, ed. *Critical Heritage*, 1: 136. Evidently, this first phase does extend into the twentieth century, since Mullaney for one reports that he has been "trained . . . to regard plays as poems, and drama as . . . a literary phenomenon" (6–7).

Stephen Greenblatt, opens his General Introduction by speaking of "Shakespeare the working dramatist."<sup>5</sup>

Occasionally, scholars following this first approach do acknowledge the poems, but almost always they see *Venus, Lucrece*, and the Sonnets as the product of forced circumstance: the exigencies of time and the misfortunes of chance compelled Shakespeare to become something that he was not.<sup>6</sup> The most famous specific version of this approach has become one of the most stubborn yet unexamined staples of Shakespearean biography, endlessly repeated yet rarely pursued: Shakespeare wrote *Venus, Lucrece*, and a draft of the Sonnets because the theatres closed due to plague in 1592–93.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see, the story behind Shakespeare's poems is more complicated than this popular formulation allows. Biographers have been content simply to approach Shakespeare's writing of poetry during the plague years in terms of a principle of authorial intention. They thereby have neglected not so much the recent contradiction of this principle, "social construction" (generally recognized now as equally simplistic), but even a more balanced principle that acknowledges both authorial intention and social construction as contributing to the production of literary work.<sup>8</sup>

Like the first approach, the second one asserts Shakespeare's standing as a working dramatist, but it argues that Shakespeare came to London to be a poet. Scholars following this approach see the poems as the abandoned genesis of Shakespeare's career in the theatre, with the most detailed argument coming from Gary Schmidgall in his 1990 study, *Shakespeare and the Poet's Life*: Shakespeare "cease[d] in his efforts to combine the professions of courting poet and dramatist, and turn[ed] more exclusively to the world of the theater" (1). Scholars who subscribe to this approach thus tend to view the poems as a "dramatic" apprenticeship – "a proto-sketch for . . . [the] drama" (Vendler, ed., *Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 3) – so that "connections [among *Venus, Lucrece*, and the Sonnets] suggest . . . how this group of works came to be the foundation of the mythic form of the Tragic Equation as it appears in the mature plays" (Hughes, *Goddess of Complete Being*, 50). The most recent, authoritative statement comes from Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, who reports that he is "writing against the current, since

<sup>5</sup> *Norton*, 1. The phrase "man of the theatre" comes from *Oxford*: "he was himself, supremely, a man of the theatre" (xxxvi).

<sup>6</sup> For Shakespeare as a "playwright and occasional poet," see Thomson, *Professional Career*, 106.

<sup>7</sup> For the commonplace, see McDonald, *Bedford Companion*, 15–16. For recent consolidation of such *plague theory*, see Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle*, 54–81.

<sup>8</sup> See Dubrow, "Twentieth-Century Shakespeare Criticism," *Riverside*, 38.



for many years now we have been urged to think of Shakespeare as above all a professional man of the theatre who was required to be a poet because in his time plays were mostly written in verse" (3): "it seems at least as reasonable to suggest that he arrived in London intending to make his way as a poet not of the theatre but of the page" (17).<sup>9</sup> Kermode's demonstration of Shakespeare's dramaturgy in *Titus Andronicus* as fundamentally that of a working poet imitating an Ovidian text (the Philomela story) is persuasive, but it does not explain why Shakespeare resurrects this same text twenty years later in *Cymbeline*. Finally, then, this second approach supports the first in its fundamental assumption of a Shakespearean dramatic paradigm, with the distinction that it gives to the poetry a primacy in the origin, structure, and motives of Shakespeare's professional career.

Both approaches, however, are fundamentally anachronistic, because they peer back at the few surviving poems through the overwhelming "genius" of some forty plays – a quite unnatural perspective to Harvey, to Shakespeare, and to their contemporaries. By putting history backward, these approaches posit a misleading set of nonhistorical relations between Shakespeare's poems and plays. Neglecting the coincidence of plays and poems throughout his career, they do not examine the simultaneity of cultural pressures and personal ambitions that together most likely produced the precise, peculiar contours of Shakespeare's actual career.<sup>10</sup>

The third approach has been by far the most valuable, for during the last few years an intrepid band of editors and critics has been searching for a more accurate classification of Shakespeare as an early modern author – one that accounts affirmatively for the presence of the poems. Recently, for instance, in his important Chatterton Lecture on Poetry, Colin Burrow assembles "facts" that "give strong grounds for putting the poems at the front of our thinking about Shakespeare, and perhaps even at the front of collected editions of his works. It also should prompt us to ask why we do not think of Shakespeare as primarily a non-dramatic poet" ("Life," 17).<sup>11</sup> The recent proliferation of editions of Shakespeare's poems, supported by a surge of important monographs and articles, has done much to put the poems back in the professional and even the public eye, with most of

<sup>9</sup> Earlier versions can be found in Cruttwell, *Shakespearean Moment*, 38; Hubler, ed., *Songs and Poems*, xii.

<sup>10</sup> De Grazia, *Verbatim*, argues that our Shakespeare is foundationally a late eighteenth-century construct of Malone; Stallybrass, "Sexing," argues that "Shakespeare is a central nineteenth-century author" (130).

<sup>11</sup> Others who have also been instrumental to the recuperation of the poems include Fineman, Kerrigan, Duncan-Jones, Dubrow, De Grazia, Roe, D. Kay, Cousins, S. Roberts, Hyland, and Schalkwyk (see works cited).

the effort arguing for the value, complexity, and relevance of the poems. While this third approach has been an important historical counter to the "dramatic" Shakespeare, it nonetheless joins the first two approaches in needlessly separating the poems from the plays and thus in removing the poems from their vital context within Shakespeare's professional career. Overwhelmingly, that is, the defenses, for all their intrinsic merit, appear in editions, books, and articles devoted exclusively to the poems; structurally, they end up reinforcing the very separation they resist.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, the opening of the twenty-first century seems a ripe occasion to take the enterprise one step further, to its next Hegelian step: to probe the precise equation of poems to plays in Shakespeare's career, and to do so by recalling the original historical moment in which this equation emerged. As indicated previously, however, the vastness of the topic has necessitated an originally unforeseen design feature: the use of the poems to specify the larger argument about Shakespeare's standing as an author of both poems and plays. Space and time warrant this decision, but further justification comes from the structural principle, employed throughout, of attempting to embed the poems in the context of Shakespeare's dramatic practice; from the need of a full study of the poems along these lines, including analysis of both poetry and theatre in the discourse of the text; and from the critic's plan to follow up with a volume devoted to the plays. One advantage to concentrating on the poems here is to enter this part of the corpus more centrally into the ongoing conversation about Shakespeare and nationalism.

#### EARLY MODERN "PLAYS AND RHYMES"

Rather than attempting to sever the poems from the plays, or seeing Shakespeare initially as a poet but finally as a playwright, or viewing his poems anachronistically through the lens of the drama, we might peer through what is best characterized as an anterior lens. This lens follows the twin arts of Shakespeare's production – both poems and plays – as they originate in antiquity, migrate through the Middle Ages, and enter early modern Europe in the 1590s.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The notable exception is Schalkwyk, *Performance*, which has just appeared.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bristol, *Big Time Shakespeare*, who identifies "two different and in some sense fundamentally opposed forms of production [in Shakespeare's career]: theatrical performances and printed books" (30). The printed books he has in mind tend to be plays, so he says little about Shakespeare's poems (cf., e.g., 3–4). Nonetheless, Bristol's chapter on the theatre and the print shop (30–58) sketches out the social, political, and economic context within which we might situate Shakespeare's works.

The intertwined-production of these two arts does not trace to the Greek dramatists but to the Greek poets, Homer and Hesiod; it includes the Greek dramatists, but it insists on the combination of poems and plays especially in classical Rome (Virgil as well as Seneca, Horace as well as Plautus). This double-production emphasizes the closing of the Western theatre in late antiquity and the subsequent authorizing of a largely poetic profession during the late Middle Ages, most famously articulated in its leading writers, none of whom specialized in the writing of plays: Dante, Jean de Meun, Chaucer, Petrarch, Boccaccio.<sup>14</sup> While acknowledging the survival of the theatrical tradition in the medieval plays (mystery, miracle, morality), the double-production I follow emphasizes the rupture of the mainstream medieval poetic profession by that decisive dramatic event of the 1560s and 70s: the re-opening of the commercial public theatres in England and Spain (see Cohen, *Drama*). This rupture joins another, the sixteenth-century consolidation of the printing press, to play a decisive role in the birth of a new Western author who is both a poet and a playwright. The new historical model that I propose witnesses the formation of a distinct sixteenth-century phenomenon neglected in modern scholarship: the emergence around Europe – in England, Italy, France, Spain, and elsewhere – of a new type of author who pens both poems and plays as part of a single literary career: an author we might call a poet-playwright.<sup>15</sup>

By “poet,” I mean simply a writer of poems; by “playwright,” I mean simply a writer of plays. In distinguishing between poet and playwright, I am introducing terms that Shakespeare may not himself use. He and his colleagues are more likely to use the term “poet” to designate the writer of both poems and plays; they frequently call a play “a poem,” as Polonius does when he speaks of theatre as a “poem unlimited” (*Hamlet*, 2. 2. 399–400); and they are more likely to emphasize another distinction: between the writer of a play and the actor of a play, as Hamlet does when he speaks about “the poet and the player” going “to cuffs in the question” of “money” during the allusion to the War of the Theatres (2. 2. 354–55).<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Shakespeare

<sup>14</sup> Petrarch did write one play (Germaine Warkentin, personal communication, 23 March 1999). William J. Kennedy says that Petrarch “did fess up to having written a Latin comedy at Avignon in his 20’s, sometime between his return there from the university at Bologna (1326) and his first trip to Italy (1336). It was called *Philologia*, but it is now lost. We know about it from a letter . . . in Aldo Bernardo’s translation of the *Familiars* 7.16” (personal communication, 15 January 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Critics use the term “poet-playwright” to talk about the playwright as a poet; see Goddard, *Meaning*, 1: 55–67; Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 720; Dutton, *Licensing*, 111. In a brief statement, Wilbern, *Poetic Will*, comes closest to my model of Shakespearean authorship (94).

<sup>16</sup> See Bednarz, *Poets’ War*. Cf. Maguire, who distinguishes between poem and play within drama itself, relying on Webster’s preface to *The Duchess of Malfi* (155); and Weimann, who concentrates on writing and playing in Shakespeare’s plays (see esp. 61).

would have been unwilling to distinguish between the writer of poems and of plays for many of the same reasons that critics today are: he writes much of his drama in verse, thereby automatically rendering plays “poetical” (to borrow a term from Viola in disguise as Cesario [*Twelfth Night*, 1. 5. 195]); he even enfolds about 130 songs into his plays, some of them original, some borrowed; and he lends to his poems a corresponding “theatrical” mode, as in the opening to Sonnet 23, when Will imagines himself “As an unperfect actor on the stage, / Who with his fear is put besides his part” (1–2; see chapter 7).<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the line of investigation I am outlining has escaped notice because we have been too unwilling to see Shakespeare’s writing career as a historically important ratio between poems and plays – or, to borrow Thomas Dekker’s phrase for Ben Jonson’s compound production, “Plays and Rhymes” (*Satiromastix*, 5. 2. 292; quoted in Bednarz, *Poets’ War*, 216). Admittedly, the ratio in Shakespeare is balanced in favor of plays, but it does not follow that we should erase the poems or the idea of a ratio altogether. If we do, we efface a literary history that plots Shakespeare along a continuum featuring such important contemporary rivals as Marlowe and Jonson, both of whom produced canons with more balanced ratios, with Jonson even printing his poems alongside his plays in the folio edition of his works the year Shakespeare died (*Works*). In the present book, the intent is not to argue that Shakespeare wrote more poems than plays, or to assert that his poems are more important than his plays, or even to claim that we should give poetic credit where poetic credit is due. Rather, the intent is to plot Shakespeare historically, in his own contemporary moment, as a writer of his time producing both poems and plays for complex cultural reasons, and then to express as accurately as possible this particular version of the Shakespearean factor. The aim, in other words, is not to deny Shakespeare’s standing as a “man of the theatre” but to *complete* it: he is a supreme theatrical man who wrote poems of matchless value, for his time as for ours.<sup>18</sup>

Once we re-classify Shakespeare in this compound form, we are free to distinguish between Shakespeare’s poems and plays while simultaneously

<sup>17</sup> Thus, I use *poetical* primarily to refer to the mode and form of Shakespeare’s poems, and *theatrical* to refer to the mode and form of his plays. In no way do I wish to deny the “theatrical” quality of the poems or the “poetic” quality of the plays, but recall that these qualities are much discussed elsewhere.

<sup>18</sup> Shakespeare’s work in the theatre and in print culture is not all of a piece (see Dutton, *Licensing*, 110–11). Moreover, there are larger institutional reasons for the divide today between “poetry” and “drama,” since critics tend to specialize in one or the other, supported by various rubrics of the Modern Language Association, as well as by university curricula and other institutions and practices.

seeing poetry and theatre as an intellectual dyad vital to his signature as an author. This critical operation has a long tradition. The *locus classicus* remains the *Republic*, wherein Plato writes,

there is one kind of poetry and taletelling which works wholly through imitation . . . tragedy and comedy, and another which employs the recital of the poet himself, best exemplified, I presume, in the dithyramb, and there is again that which employs both, in epic poetry. (*Republic*, 3. 394c)

Here Plato divides literature into three “kinds”: drama, which itself divides into tragedy and comedy; the dithyramb, which today corresponds to lyric poetry; and epic poetry. To distinguish among the three kinds (two of which are “poetic,” one “dramatic”), Plato relies on the principle of narrative technique or voice: drama works through imitation of an action or mimesis; lyric poetry works through the poet’s “recital” of his own (first-person) voice; and epic poetry combines the two. Poetry and drama are distinct kinds yet simultaneously interlocked: separate yet alike. Hence, in the *Poetics* Aristotle can distinguish between “Epic Poetry” and “Tragedy” in terms of their objects of imitation, privileging the latter over the former, yet simultaneously viewing them as twin forms “imitat[ing] . . . serious subjects in a grand kind of verse” (1449b. 9–11). By calling Shakespeare a poet-playwright, then, I am constructing a critical abbreviation, necessary in today’s critical climate, for distinguishing between Shakespeare’s poems and plays, for classifying his career dyad as a signature achievement, and for taking the cue of critics such as Burrow to put the poems at the “front” of our thinking about Shakespeare the working dramatist.

The primary purpose of this book, then, is to argue that we can most accurately historicize Shakespeare’s achievement as an early modern author – and more satisfactorily account for the presence of both poems and plays in his writing production – by attending to the historical model of the newly emergent European poet-playwright as it enters sixteenth-century England. As we shall see, Shakespeare’s generation was the very first to consolidate this new type of author, when it capitalizes upon a complex cultural dynamic that includes the emergence of both a print and a theatre culture.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> On the sixteenth-century emergence of print culture, see especially Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*; Wall, *Imprint*. On Shakespeare, see de Grazia and Stallybrass, “Materiality.”

## THE OVIDIAN POET-PLAYWRIGHT

The new European poet-playwright is a reinvention of an older or Roman writer, and for Shakespeare’s contemporaries this writer traces to the author traditionally glossed as “the poet” of the Orpheus story rehearsed by Lorenzo to Jessica in *Merchant*: Ovid. Studies of “Shakespeare’s favorite poet” (*Riverside*, 1797) have been so numerous during the past hundred years that one can proceed here only with trepidation. Ovid is indeed “the poet” of “Shakespeare’s favorite book,” the *Metamorphoses* (McDonald, *Bedford Companion*, 160); but Ovid is also the poet of several other poems, especially the *Ars amatoria* and the *Heroides*, referred to and quoted from as early as *Two Gentlemen*, as well as the poet of the *Amores*, which Shakespeare quoted for his epigraph to *Venus and Adonis*. Yet Ovid was not merely a poet who wrote poems; he was also a dramatist, the author of *Medea*, a tragedy that is extant in two lines, that was famed in antiquity as the measure of Ovid’s true genius, and that was known at least since the Renaissance to be the principal origin of Seneca’s *Medea* (chapter 2). This last idea is important, because it suggests how naturally Shakespeare’s contemporaries could “Ovidianize” the sixteenth-century Senecan movement so important to Elizabethan tragedy. Accordingly, Renaissance writers from Angelo Poliziano to Jonson identified Ovid as more than the author of erotic elegy or national epic; for them, he is also the author of dramatic tragedy. Thus, Poliziano includes the *Medea* in his inventory of Ovid’s career, while Jonson opens *Poetaster* by presenting Ovid as the author of both *Amores*, 1. 15 and *Medea* (chapter 2). This “Ovid” – the poet and playwright, the author of light erotic verse and high tragedy – contributes a missing chapter to the story of the “Renaissance Ovid” and specifically of “Shakespeare and the Renaissance Ovid” (*pace* Bate, *Ovid*, 1–47).

I hypothesize that humanist scholars working on the recovery of classical learning during the European Renaissance became interested in Ovid the poet-playwright. Recurrently for them, he functions as a primary source of information on the Roman theatre – more widely cited than Horace – and nowhere better on display than in Thomas Heywood’s 1612 *Apology for Actors*, which lionizes the light Ovid rather than the heavy Seneca as the great tragedian. That Renaissance writers believed Ovid to have actually written a tragedy could only have lent credibility to the authenticity of his theatrical knowledge in such works as the *Ars amatoria*.



Further research on the role of this Ovid needs to be done, especially in the countless arcane Latin texts of humanists around Europe.<sup>20</sup> But initial research allows us to hypothesize that Ovid could be seen to function as a primary classical model for the new early modern author who pens both plays and poems – certainly for Shakespeare, but also for such disparate European authors as Marlowe in England, Tasso in Italy, Marguerite de Navarre in France, and Cervantes in Spain, all of whom combine poetry and drama within a single writing career.<sup>21</sup> In the wide gap of time, such a phenomenon, exhibited in so many authors over such a large geographical space, had never been witnessed, not even in antiquity, where its appearance was merely intermittent and today sadly fragmented, initially in Ovid's two great predecessors, Livius Andronicus and Ennius (Farrell, "Careers"; see chapter 2). Historians and literary historians have yet to identify the sixteenth-century Ovidian poet-playwright as a salient contribution of the Renaissance as a period concept (cf. Burckhardt, *Civilization*; W. Kerrigan and Braden, *Idea*; and Burrow, "Sixteenth Century").

#### "SCALD RHYMERS" AND "QUICK COMEDIANS"

Evidence from within Shakespeare's works suggests a secondary purpose to the present book: to examine Shakespeare's poems and plays for his own idiosyncratic register of the relation between the two literary forms, between poetry and theatre, and between the poet and the playwright. In general, we shall discover that he inscribes the poetry-theatre dyad in his ingrained thinking process, and in the myriad-minded way that Coleridge for one has long led us to expect. Consequently, we can extend more recent work (of Joel Fineman, "Shakespeare's Will," for instance) in looking into Shakespeare's language for evidence of his authorial "signature."

Shakespeare inscribes the poetry-theatre dyad most simply in single utterances within a work, as this encrusted deep in the discourse of *Antony and Cleopatra*, spoken by the Eastern Star herself, angry yet poised near the sign of her total eclipse:

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the several recent books on Ovid in the Renaissance, which tend to focus on the body, subjectivity, and so forth and do so usually with reference to the *Metamorphoses*: Stapleton, *Harmful* (which alone is on the *Amores*); Enterline; Lync; A.B. Taylor, ed.; Stanivukovic, ed. By contrast, classicists are now viewing Ovid as an author along the lines laid out in Cheney, *Profession*; see Hardie, ed., *Cambridge Companion*, Hardie's introduction, and S. Harrison, "Ovid and Genre."

<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that such authors self-consciously modeled themselves on Ovid. In this group, I am confident only that Marlowe did.

scald rhymers [will]  
Ballad 's out a' tune. The quick comedians  
Extemporally will stage us, and present  
Our Alexandrian revels: Antony  
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness  
I' th' posture of a whore.

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, 5. 2. 215–21)

Recent criticism has made a good deal of the splendid metadrama concluding the utterance, but typically it effaces the curious conjunction with metapoetry.<sup>22</sup> Cleopatra imagines her literary afterlife with Antony back in Rome, and she divides their joint representation into two forms of persecution: ballads and comedies; verse and drama. What is noteworthy in Cleopatra's utterance is the white space between the "scald rhymers" and the "quick comedians": there is no transition, for there is no need of one. The Eastern Star appears to fear each, for both are modes of public discourse that she considers dangerous to the representation of her dignity and the exhibition of her integrity.<sup>23</sup> While Cleopatra may fear the "quick comedians" more than the "scald rhymers," as the overbalanced ratio of discourse between the two forms implies, we would not be wise to forget that her discourse does record a ratio. Perhaps the discourse should compel us to look again at the play as a whole. Once we do, we may re-imagine Shakespeare's complete professional discourse as voicing an intriguing ratio between the more famous discourse of theatre and a less-noted discourse of poetry: "Hoo, hearts, tongues, [figures], scribes, bards, poets, cannot / Think, speak, cast, write, sing, number, hoo," thunders Enobarus (3. 2. 16–17). The "story" that he and others in this play are so self-conscious to "earn" a "place" in (3. 13. 46) is surely history itself, but also both drama and the "number" of the "poet."

*Poets, bards, scribes, rhymers / number, sing, write, ballad*: there is a lexicon here, and we need to see it jostling with the lexicon of those quick comedians who boy the greatness of Roman history's greatest queen. In particular, Cleopatra's fear of the scald rhymers singing their ballads turns out to

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Sprengnether, "Boy Actor"; Cook, "Fatal Cleopatra," 245–46. Schmidgall ends his book by discussing this passage but he neglects the "scald rhymers" (*Poet's Life*, 202).

<sup>23</sup> Cleopatra also fears "Saucy lectors," who will "catch" at her and Antony "like strumpets" (214–15), but she evidently puts the lawyers in the audience of her imagined spectacle. Cf. Nashe, *Pierce Penilese* (in McKerrow, *Thomas Nashe*, 1: 197). Sir Thomas Hoby calls *The Song of Songs* a "book of ballats" (Rollins and Baker, eds., *Renaissance in England*, 534), suggesting that a ballad can mean more than the popular definition afforded by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.



haunt the Shakespearean dramatic corpus as a whole, and well it should, since recent scholarship emphasizes not simply the distinction between plays and ballads but their absolute interpenetration (see Maguire, *Suspect Texts*, 122). While the performative similarities help explain the recurrent presence of ballads and songs within Shakespearean drama, we also need to distinguish between them. On the one hand, ballads can be seen to perform a synecdochic role as theatre, but on the other they sound a synecdochic voice as poetic song.<sup>24</sup>

This last principle is important. Unless there is good reason not to do so, I shall take the texts' own cues to interpret song in Shakespeare as a form and metaphor for lyric poetry. There is critical, textual, and bibliographical warrant for doing so. Among critics, Heather Dubrow emphasizes the intimacy between song and lyric, music and poetry, during the sixteenth century: "connections between the Renaissance lyric and courtly music clarify debates about the workings of lyric in general, reminding us that in some important instances it is indeed linked with song – and, more significantly, linked as well with performance and courtly ritual" ("Lyric," 186). Indeed, the Shakespeare canon entreats us to see the intimacy of lyric and song that Dubrow articulates, making it a short step to seeing song as itself a form of lyric, as Spenser's glossarist E. K. does when foregrounding the concept of authorship for the poet-musician Colin Clout, who recites "a proper song, whereof [he] . . . was Author" (*August*, Arg.), the words "song" and "Author" here only appearing to be in opposition.<sup>25</sup> Luckily, Shakespeare makes the step himself; periodically, he represents an artistic process by which poetry turns into song. In *Twelfth Night*, for instance, he can be seen to represent the primary example of the courtly poet-musician to which Dubrow refers, when Feste sings lines from "an old song, a version of which is attributed to Sir Thomas Wyatt" (*Riverside*, 468): "Hey, Robin, jolly Robin" (4. 2. 72). Is this simply a song in a play, or a song recorded from a printed poem for rehearsal in a staged play, which itself we read in a printed work?

Earlier, Viola in disguise self-consciously echoes a Spenserian Orphic tradition of the pastoral "green cabinet," when she tells Olivia that if she herself were in love, she would

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Freinkel, *Shakespeare's Will*: "the lyric . . . [as] irreducibly theatrical" (70) is not early modern but Romantic and New Critical (71).

<sup>25</sup> The poet as a musician-singer is an Elizabethan convention, employed famously by Spenser to open his Virgilian career (*Calender*, "To His Booke," 8–9). For an "Ovidian" origin to the link between song and written poetry, see Enterline, *Rhetoric*, 188–97.

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,  
And call upon my soul within the house;  
Write loyal cantons of contemned love,  
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;  
Hallow your name to the reverberate hills,  
And make the babbling gossip of the air  
To cry out "Olivia!"<sup>26</sup>

(*Twelfth Night*, 1. 5. 268–74)

The details of Viola/Cesario's artistic process are precise (leaving aside here the comical tones and the homoerotic undertones). Note, for instance, the generic indicators; since the site of her imagined desire appears right on the divide between "willow cabin" and "house," she (or is it he?) moves the pastoral locus amoenus close to the epic domain, here the court world. Making her wood cabin at Olivia's "gate," she would miraculously "call upon" her own "soul within the house" – a considerable daemonic maneuver, it would seem. During the day, she would write a faithful canto of unrequited love, and then during the night she would sing her composition aloud, echoing Olivia's sacred name back to the pastoral hills. Viewed strictly as a representation of authorship, this is astonishing, not least because it so cleverly shows the harmony between "house" and "hills," court and country, epic and pastoral. Yet there is more. Shakespeare's own echoing of Spenser here reinforces the representation of poetry as an art form, even as the poetry conjoins subtly through transposition back with theatre during performance, rendered self-consciously again, for Viola plays before Olivia the part of Cesario.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in nearly every work, poems as well as plays, Shakespeare inserts such compelling representations conjoining a discourse of poetry with a discourse of theatre.

Furthermore, recent work permits us to see a bibliographical rationale. Once we grant that Shakespeare wrote theatrical texts for the stage and reading texts for the page (Erne, *Literary Dramatist*), we can suggest that Shakespearean song in the plays more pristinely functions as lyric poetry in the printed versions of the text. When we read Shakespeare's songs on the page of the book, we experience song as lyric poetry: we literally see song laid out on the page as lyric; we read it as a textually marked off lyric unit.

<sup>26</sup> For Spenser's self-presentation as Colin Clout singing a "rurall song" in the "greene cabinet," see *December*, 17–18. For the green cabinet as "the *locus amoenus* of Greek pastoral poetry," see Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet*, vii. For the Orphic dimension of Spenser's self-presentation, see Cheney, *Flight*, 23–76.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Two Gentlemen*, 1. 2. 76–77. On the "tension . . . between lyric and dramatic" in drama of the period, see Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare*, 56, 75–76; D. Henderson, *Passion Made Public*.

While it might be difficult to see song as lyric on the stage, it is perfectly natural to read song as lyric in the text. In fact, we might venture to say that readers do not experience song in the printed texts as anything other than lyric poem.

Thus, it is a special discovery that many of Shakespeare's cherished characters resemble the authorial poet-playwright himself. Recurrently, they turn to song and disguise, poetry and theatre, to transact their comical, historical, tragical, or romantic plots. Hamlet is *not* "the English Renaissance's greatest tribute to the theatrical man" (Helgerson, *Laureates*, 159); rather, he is the English Renaissance's greatest tribute to the poet-playwright. Certainly Hamlet writes "some dozen or sixteen lines" (2. 2. 541–42) for *The Mousetrap*, but he also writes a love poem to Ophelia (2. 2. 116–19), and he typically complicates his famous discourse on the theatre with references to such poetic genres as the epitaph. In fact, it is remarkable to discover just how many characters resembling the poet-playwright people Shakespearean drama, in all four genres, from the beginning to the end of his career. The most significant include Joan of Arc in the first tetralogy; the collectivity of the four courtiers in *Love's Labor's Lost*; Bottom, Puck, and Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the bastard Faulconbridge in *King John*; Iago in *Othello*; Falstaff in his several plays, but especially *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing*; Viola and Feste in *Twelfth Night*; the Duke in *Measure for Measure*; Edgar and the Fool in *King Lear*; Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*; and Prospero and Ariel in *The Tempest*. Throughout Shakespeare's works, we can indeed discern a recurrent fiction about the making of the new Ovidian poet-playwright in England. To my knowledge, the story of this fiction has never been told. The evidence of the works themselves suggests not simply that Shakespeare was a poet-playwright but also that he was deeply self-conscious about being one.<sup>28</sup>

Generally speaking, in the history plays, the tragedies, and all of the major poems, Shakespeare represents ambivalence about the prospect of combining two careers and arts into one. In the comedies and romances, however, he appears more playful and detached, as perhaps we should expect. Throughout, we can observe the progress of the poet-playwright representation, through the poems and each of the four dramatic genres, from the early part of his career to the later part. While genre clearly affects all of the representations in important ways, the major inference to be

<sup>28</sup> This does not argue that Shakespeare intended to be an Ovidian poet-playwright, only that his works register a conflict between the two forms and roles.

drawn comes to this: early on, Shakespeare appears to have discovered the cultural importance of the Elizabethan competition between poetry and theatre, and thereby he made the two media the primary modes for his characters' thought, speech, and behavior. In Shakespearean art, poetry and theatre become primary expressions of identity, the principal forms of subjectivity, and thus the basic grid for one of the major dominants in the canon: the relation between "inner" and "outer."

For instance, in an earlier scene from *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare alerts us to this important relation, at the same time that he shows us the genesis of Viola's interest in song and disguise. Here she is, first broaching her collaborative art to a new friend:

There is a fair behavior in thee, captain,  
And though that nature with a beauteous wall  
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee  
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits  
With this thy fair and outward character.  
I prithee (and I'll pay thee bounteously)  
Conceal me what I am, and be my aid  
For such disguise as haply shall become  
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke;  
Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him,  
It may be worth thy pains; for I can sing  
And speak to him in many sorts of music  
That will allow me very worth his service.  
What else may hap, to time I will commit,  
Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

(*Twelfth Night*, 1. 2. 47–61)

In this remarkable speech, we catch Viola in the process of gauging the Captain's trust. She is reading him, and making judgments about his "character." This turns out to be crucial, because here an individual deploys Shakespeare's characteristic paradigm of *inward* and *outward* to seal the bond of faith so vital to a human relationship. Clearly, this is what Shakespeare wants his audience to see.

Viola begins the process of perception by noting the "beauteous wall" or material reality of the Captain's physical "nature" – what she terms his "fair behavior." Acknowledging the grim probability for such physical beauty to "close in pollution," she thus takes a real risk in her sudden leap of faith, choosing to "believe" that the Captain "has a mind that suits" his "fair and outward character." *Suits* is an exquisite pun, detectable perhaps mainly to the (re-)reader or to those who have come across it elsewhere (*A Lover's*

*Complaint*, 79; chapter 8). Viola's leap of faith leads her literally to dress the Captain's "mind" – his inwardness – in the beauty of his "character" – his "outward[ness]." In him, she discerns a perfect *fit* between inner and outer beauty, mind and behavior, intellect and morality, psychology and ethics. The pun, however, turns out to be structural, for it leads Viola to the first part of her plan and request: to have the Captain "Conceal" her in a "disguise" in order to help her "become / The form of . . . [her] intent": to fulfill her purpose – "serve this duke." In her thought-process, that is, Viola establishes a connection between her own belief in the "suit" between the Captain's physical and moral beauty, on the one hand, and her strategy of service, on the other. On the surface, Viola's plans for deceptively disguising her own "nature" contrast with the evident probability for hypocrisy that in the Captain's case she wisely over-rules. She puts a personal technique of character-reading to work on the other, and then she reverses that technique with respect to the self.

Since a female is to disguise herself as a male to serve another male, the representation of subjectivity and identity quickly shifts into a gender register. Viola makes this explicit in her plan to disguise herself as "an eunuch." Not simply does she cross-dress her gender, but she then castrates her (performed) male sexual identity and relocates her power a bit higher up in her physiognomy, in her tongue and voice: "I can sing / And speak to him in many sorts of music." The gloss in the *Riverside Shakespeare* is conventional but hardly satisfying: "i.e. as a *castrato* or male soprano singer; thus her high voice will not be incongruous with her male disguise" (443). While Viola may select the disguise of a eunuch to "Conceal" the feminine nature of her high-pitched voice, Shakespeare is careful to show Viola as a strange hermaphroditic figure in the dual role of one who can "sing / And speak" in more than one form of "music." She will both sing songs to Orsino and perform a role before him in order to carry out her plan to survive on foreign soil after her unfortunate shipwreck. Viola concludes her speech when she requests the Captain to "shape" his "silence" to her "wit" – in yet a third application of her principle of correspondence, the suiting of outer to inner. Later, Viola will stage this theatre of song before the Duke's beloved, Olivia, writing and singing loyal cantons of condemned love, in what becomes one of the most recurrent representations of authorship in Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's use of disguise, costume change, and role-playing as a form of "metatheater" – "the study of how drama comments on itself" (Dubrow, "Twentieth-Century Shakespeare Criticism," *Riverside*, 41) – no longer needs much explanation, since it has been a regular feature of Shakespeare

criticism from the 1960s forward (see, e.g., Righter, *Idea of the Play*) to the present day, including in the influential work of Stephen Greenblatt, and most famously in his essay on the Henriad, "Invisible Bullets" (*Negotiations*, 46–47, 64–65). One way to re-envision Shakespeare's sustained metadrama is to see it recurrently conjoined with a less discussed topic, his recurrent metapoetry.<sup>29</sup> Just as we shall frequently see song as metapoesis (when the text warrants it), so we shall see disguise, costume change, and role-playing as metatheatre (again, when the text warrants it).<sup>30</sup> In *Twelfth Night*, it is Sir Andrew Aguecheek who first alerts us to this conjunction as performed by the great comedic figure who gets the play's final word, the clown Feste, who turns out to be the most important representation of the poet-playwright figure in *Twelfth Night*. "I had rather than forty shillings I had such a leg," says Sir Andrew,

and so sweet a breath to sing, as the fool has. In sooth, thou wast in very gracious fooling last night, when thou spok'st of Pigrogromitus, of the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus . . . Excellent! Why, this is the best fooling, when all is done. Now a song. (*Twelfth Night*, 2. 3. 20–30)

As Sir Andrew reveals, Feste turns from his theatrical "fooling" to the singing of his first "song," the "love-song" (35) "O mistress mine, where are you roaming" (39–52). This clearly structured progression recurs in many variations throughout the Shakespearean dramatic corpus.

Yet, as Park Honan allows us to see, Shakespeare's representation of song and fooling, poetry and theatre, or the poet-playwright figure, is not static during Shakespeare's career but intricately dynamic; it changes over time, due to certain exigencies that sometimes we can trace, sometimes not. For instance, Honan suggests that Act 4 of *Love's Labor's Lost* "seems to point Shakespeare away from a dramatic career and towards a lyric poet's one" (*Life*, 167), and he situates the change in terms of the early 1590s plague that closed the theatres and Robert Greene's famous attack on the upstart crow, which prompted Shakespeare's shame about his status as an "actor-poet," discussed in Sonnets 110–12 (161), and which prompted his turn to the publication of *Venus and Lucrece*. Perhaps more than any play in Shakespeare's corpus, *Love's Labor's Lost* takes as its topic the relation between lyric poetry and staged theatre, but it is important to recall that specific events may lie behind the representation. By contrast, *The Comedy*

<sup>29</sup> On poetry and the poems in Shakespeare's plays, see Hyland, *Introduction to Shakespeare's Poems*, 35–41; Schmidgall, *Poet's Life*, 123–60; Faas, *Poetics*; Schalkwyk, *Performance*.

<sup>30</sup> The text does not warrant seeing every representation of music as poetry; sometimes Shakespeare means music; see *Richard II* 5. 5. 41–66.



of *Errors*, which Shakespeare probably composed before the 1592–93 plague, is the only play in his canon that has no substantive representation of the dyad, concentrating as it does on the exuberance of Plautine theatre – an anomaly so puzzling it begs attention (although, alas, not here). *Richard III*, written just before the theatres closed, includes the dyad, but tends to split it up, introducing Richard as a man of the theatre but reserving the discourse of poetry for his brother, Clarence.<sup>31</sup> The switch from *The Comedy of Errors* to *Richard III* to *Love's Labor's Lost* via *Venus* and *Lucrece* thus appears to constitute a phase of Shakespeare's career, recording his developing interest in the relation between poetry and theatre, the career of the print poet and that of the stage dramatist: "With *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, he made a strong bid to be recognized as a poet by refined society" (Honan, *Life*, 169).

Subsequently, Honan adds, Shakespeare's Sonnets "partly account for a new lyricism in his plays, and also for the more individuated verse that he uses to give depth to his dramatis personae, and so, especially, in the 1590s, for his stunning progress as a dramatist": the Sonnets become a "rehearsal time" for Shakespeare's "theatre of the mind" (185). Thus, in *Hamlet*, "the first great tragedy to be written in two thousand years" (275), Shakespeare used "sonnet-writing" to solve "what has been called the most taxing problem in writing a revenge tragedy, or how to fill in the long interval between the commission of the crime which calls for vengeance, and the carrying out of revenge in Act V" (281). Effectively, Shakespeare brings the sonnet to the stage in a large-scale way. Not simply a literary form to be spliced into the drama, as in *Love's Labor's Lost* (or more famously, *Romeo and Juliet*), the sonnet becomes a central space for rehearsing psychological turmoil (Schalkwyk, *Performance*). With rare exceptions, poetry and theatre are not separate enterprises in Shakespeare's career or art, to be cordoned off as occasion warrants; they are ongoing interpenetrations, from beginning to end.

#### A TYPOLOGY OF INTERTEXTUALITY: MARLOWE'S OVID, SPENSER'S VIRGIL

If we look more closely into Shakespeare's representation of the poet-playwright, we discover another paradox, to which we have only alluded and in which we can locate a tertiary aim. Within both his dramatic and his poetic fictions, Shakespeare presents the figure of the Ovidian author

<sup>31</sup> In fact, 4. 4. 507 and 5. 3. 306 intimate that poetry finally becomes the theatrical Richard's enemy.

singing songs and performing plays along a Virgilian path connecting the pastoral world to the world of epic. We should expect this paradox to be at the core of any Ovidian art, since Ovid himself casts his erotic poems of seduction, metamorphosis, and complaint in order to de-authorize the imperial power of Virgil.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, Ovid counters the Virgilian progressive *cursus* of pastoral, georgic, and epic through a *cursus* of amorous poetry, tragedy, and epic. This Ovidian career path is what we might imagine, playfully complex in ways that Virgil's is not, since it proclaims to be progressive in its mature trajectory even while it confesses to youthful oscillation.<sup>33</sup> Within Ovid's counter-Virgilian career, his inaugural work, the *Amores*, is important because it presents the fiction of an Ovidian author trying to write elegy, tragedy, and epic in order to counter the tripartite career of Virgil (see 1. 1, 2. 1, 2. 18, 3. 1, 3. 15).

Shakespeare often structures his fictions on the famed classical opposition between an Ovidian poetics and a Virgilian one. Yet he manages this structure with an early modern principle that I term the typology of intertextuality. According to this principle, a writer uses a clear imitation of texts from a preceding literary system in order to veil and target his rivalry with colleagues from his own literary system.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the clearest instance of this typology in the Shakespeare canon occurs in *The Merchant of Venice*, when Shylock speaks an aside during the trial scene of Act 4:

These be the Christian husbands.  
I have a daughter –  
Would any of *the stock of Barrabas*  
Had been her husband rather than a Christian!  
(*Merchant of Venice*, 4. 1. 294–97; emphasis added)

Here is the gloss in the *Riverside Shakespeare*: "Barrabas" is "a criminal (whose name is properly spelled *Barabbas*) whom the Jews asked Pontius Pilate to release in preference to Jesus (see Mark 15: 6–15); also the villainous chief character (*Barabas*) of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*" (312). Shakespeare's double-voice requires pause. In the fiction of the play, Shylock refers to the biblical Barabbas, but outside the fiction Shakespeare uses his character's

<sup>32</sup> Ovid's critique of Virgil is a commonplace; see Hardie, *Epic Successors*. W. R. Johnson calls the Ovidian principle of critique "counter-classicism" ("Counter-Classical"): "Where classical poetry [such as Virgil's or Spenser's] attempts affirmations of man's capacities . . . counter-classical poetry attempts to stress man's limitations" (126).

<sup>33</sup> The information in this paragraph and the next is indebted to Cheney, *Profession*, 19–25, 31–48, 49–67.

<sup>34</sup> See Cheney, *Profession*, 18–19, 272–73n36. The principle mediates Bloom's focus on a single strong poet misreading a strong precursor and Roland Barthes' focus on multiple anonymous traces.

biblical reference to refer to a famous character in a rival's play, on which his own play is so clearly based (see, e.g., Charney, "Jessica's Turquoise Ring"). The literary working of the typology of intertextuality is supported by three features in the passage. First, Shakespeare's speech occurs in a self-reflexive theatrical moment, when a character on the stage steps forward to address the audience. Second, as the continuation of the *Riverside* gloss indicates ("Here and in Marlowe the name is pronounced with main stress on the first syllable"), Shakespeare uses meter to move the biblical reference into a Marlovian allusion – a feature that would quite literally be pronounced in performance. Third, Shakespeare's witty phrase "stock of Barrabas" refers to those in the blood-line of criminal Jews, but simultaneously it alludes to those in the literary line of Marlowe's Jew, with Shylock himself standing in the front. In a passage about origin and succession, parent and child, Shakespeare uses Shylock's aside to process his own complicated relation with a literary rival.

Similarly, Shakespeare's recurrent allusions and references to Virgil and Ovid work not just to evoke past writers from a preceding literary system but specific writers from his own system. No doubt Shakespeare's imitative practice coheres with one that Douglas Bruster calls, borrowing a term from Lévi-Strauss, "*bricolage*" – a system of un-cited quotation from a large and often heterogeneous collection of works and forms of cultural media (*Quoting Shakespeare*, 22). Yet, as Bruster emphasizes, within the complex texture of quotation we can still trace threads from recognizable authors and texts. Bruster himself places this practice within a massive scholarly project that has worked long to identify various "sources" and resources for Shakespearean intertextuality. Since so much work has been done on a large number of early modern authors – e.g., Nashe, Sidney, Daniel, Drayton, Marston, Jonson, and Fletcher – the present book acknowledges the *bricolage* of Shakespearean "quotation" even as it attends to those authors most pertinent to the topic of English nationhood and Shakespeare's writing of it: the Ovidian Marlowe and the Virgilian Spenser.<sup>35</sup>

Spenser, the New Poet, was the Elizabethan leader in the fictional writing of nationhood, called by Nashe "the Virgil of England" (McKerrow, ed., *Thomas Nashe*, 1: 299). Yet Spenser was followed by a group of patriotic or

<sup>35</sup> Most readers would accept the classification of Marlowe as Ovidian. But increasingly scholars are emphasizing Spenser as Ovidian (e.g., Hulse, *Verses*, 242–78). Nonetheless, even though we today may see the Ovidian dynamic of Spenser's poetry, a rival like Marlowe stubbornly did not (Cheney, *Profession*, 15). Such a notion is a specific version of what Bloom calls "misprision" – the strong author's inevitable "misreading" of his precursor (*Anxiety*, 7, 5).

"laureate" poets, principally Daniel, Drayton, and Chapman – later, modeling himself on Horace, by Jonson (Helgerson, *Laureates*). It was in opposition to Spenser that Marlowe presented himself as the Ovid of England. Probably in the mid-1580s he produces the first complete translation of the *Amores* into any European vernacular language. Thereby, he makes the counter-Virgilian Ovidian career fiction available to English contemporaries. Marlowe translates the Ovidian *cursus* not simply to participate in the Renaissance recovering of classical texts, but more particularly to contest the national authority of England's Virgil. Not surprisingly, Marlowe imitates Ovid in penning both poems and plays: "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and *Tamburlaine; Hero and Leander* and *Doctor Faustus; Lucan's First Book* and *Edward II*. Marlowe uses the two forms to write a counter-nationhood, a non-patriotic form of nationhood that subverts royal power with what Ovid calls *libertas* (*Amores*, 3. 15. 9) and Marlowe translates as "liberty" (*Ovid's Elegies*, 3. 14. 9). Thus, what Leo Braudy says of Ovid, we may extend to his great Elizabethan translator: "the poet begins to assert himself as the true nation" (135). In other words, what is at stake in Marlowe's competition with Spenser is the writing of English nationalism itself, the form the national poet is to take.

While recalling other resources where pertinent (e.g., Lodge and Daniel in Shakespeare's three narrative poems, Sidney and Daniel in his Sonnets, Kyd and Marlowe in *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*), we need to foreground Shakespeare's debt to Spenser, because it is this intertextual relationship (more than any other) that decisively helps us complete the profile of Shakespeare as a man of the theatre: in his rivalry with England's Virgil, we can witness the great theatrical man competing with the author Richard Helgerson calls Renaissance England's first national poet (*Laureates*, 100). While it is well known that Shakespeare competed with Marlowe, the many studies on this topic neglect Spenser in the competitive equation. Especially overlooked is the idea that Marlowe rivaled Spenser before Shakespeare did, as well as that Shakespeare soon became implicated in his colleagues' rivalry. In practice, this means that a criticism seeking to understand the historical narrative about the printing of Shakespeare as national poet-playwright must come to terms with the authors who competed so forcibly for national authority, primarily Spenser, then Marlowe (and after these, the rest).

As an aspiring Elizabethan author of the 1590s, I believe, Shakespeare inherits the competition between Marlowe and Spenser, but among contemporaries he alone appears to have made this rivalry into something like the main frame of his art. Thus, there is an intimate link between his

double-production of poems and plays as literary forms, his representation of the poet-playwright and of the poetry-theatre dyad generally, and his rivalry with these two leading writers.

To date, we possess numerous short studies that examine Shakespeare's intertextual rivalry with either Marlowe or with Spenser, with Ovid or with Virgil, but not a single book-length study of both English authors or both Roman writers – and certainly none that combines all four.<sup>36</sup> The state of criticism on Shakespeare's dual rivalry with Spenser and Marlowe is especially surprising, since Shakespeare's fictional representation of the poet-playwright is so clearly indebted to both these leading authors – but initially to Spenser. In *What is Pastoral?*, for instance, Paul Alpers observes in passing that “All the court figures in *As You Like It* can be seen as playing out Spenser's metaphor for himself as a pastoral poet: ‘Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske, / As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds’ (*Faerie Queene*, 1. Proem 1)” (74). This idea is worth exploring, especially in the context of two neglected points.

First, in the Proem to *Faerie Queene*, 1, Spenser does not simply use the metaphor of the theatrical mask to present “himself as a pastoral poet”; he situates his donning of the pastoral mask as the first stage of a career pattern that begins with pastoral and then turns to epic; the lines following the two that Alpers quotes read: “Am now enforst a far unfitter taske, / For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds, / And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds.” Spenser thus presents himself as a court figure who at first dons the disguise of a shepherd to write pastoral but who then takes off that disguise to write epic. Herein lies an Elizabethan genesis to the Marlovian and Shakespearean author as theatrical agent, the Ovidian author who moves along the Virgilian path, playfully disguising himself in order to move through a generic hierarchy as part of a self-advertised literary career.<sup>37</sup> In his story of the Redcrosse Knight in Book 1 and of Calidore in Book 6 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser frames his Virgilian epic on precisely this narrative structure. Redcrosse begins as “a tall clownish young man . . . unfit through his rusticity for a better place,” but then he manages to persuade Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, to let him “put upon him the dew furniture” or armor of “kighthood” (*Letter to Raleigh*). By contrast, Calidore begins as

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Shapiro, *Rival*; Helgerson, *Lawreates*; Bate, *Ovid*; Bono, *Literary Transvaluation*; D. Hamilton, *Virgil and “The Tempest”*; Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen*; Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson*; James, *Shakespeare's Troy*; Bednarz, *Poets' War*.

<sup>37</sup> On Spenser and the Ovidian *cursus* in the *October* eclogue, see Cheney, *Profession*, 61–65. On Ovidian drama in the *Amores*, see Davis, *Fictus Adulter*, on performance in the *Metamorphoses*, see Wheeler, *Wonder*.

a knight of Gloriana, but then, “doffing his bright armes, himselfe adrest / In shepherds weed” (6. 9. 36. 3–4). In framing *The Faerie Queene* on this Virgilian-based plot with its Ovidian “maske,” Spenser is certainly taking cues from Philip Sidney in the *Old and New Arcadia*; but Sidney, in turn, is most likely taking cues from Spenser in *The Shepherdes Calender*. In that Virgilian pastoral, Spenser presents himself as “Colin Clout,” a shepherd who is an antic or clown (as his name advertises) but also, paradoxically, the “sovereigne of song” (*November*, 25). Thus, Spenser recurrently uses the figure of the clown to represent pastoral in preparation for epic: “Abandon then the base and viler clown, . . . / And sing of . . . Knights” (*October*, 37–39). Spenser's colleagues, such as his friend Harvey, typically represent the New Poet in these terms, even picking up the theatrical metaphor of the “maske”:

Collyn I see . . . thy new taken taske [writing *The Faerie Queene*] . . .  
leades thy muse in haughtie verse to maske,  
and loath the layes that longs to lowly swaynes.  
That lifts thy notes from Shepherdes unto kings.

(*Commendatory Verse*, 3. 1–5 to 1590 *Faerie Queene*)

Among his contemporaries, Spenser was famous for having disguised himself as a shepherd-king and for narrating fictions in which characters “play out” the role that he had assigned to himself.

Second, Marlowe was the first Elizabethan author to stage dramatic characters playing out the Virgilian role that Spenser had assigned to himself (cf. Greenblatt, *Fashioning*, 224). This is virtually the topic of the two *Tamburlaine* plays, whose protagonist is a “Scythian Shepherd” who becomes a “Mighty Monarch” (1590 title page to *Tamburlaine*); however, the Ovidian Marlowe turns to this Spenserian narrative fiction in nearly all of his plays and poems, from *Dido, Queen of Carthage* to “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (Cheney, *Profession*, 18–19). Marlowe's Ovidian appropriation of Spenser's Virgilian persona helps explain why both Marlowe and Ovid show up so directly in the Spenserian landscape of *As You Like It*. In Act 3, scene 3, Touchstone tells Audrey about “honest Ovid” (8) during an exchange that alludes to Marlowe's death: “a great reckoning in a little room” (15) – a clear imitation of a famous line from *The Jew of Malta* (“Infinite riches in a little room” [1. 1. 37]). In scene 5, Phoebe then eulogizes Marlowe as the “Dead shepherd” and quotes the “saw of might” from *Hero and Leander*: “Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?” (81–82; see the Play Scene to Part 3). Significantly, Shakespeare dresses Marlowe in Spenser's pastoral “maske” yet imitates works that reveal Marlowe to be the



writer of both a play and a poem – a revelation reproduced in *The Merry Wives* through both quotation of “The Passionate Shepherd” and reference to *Doctor Faustus*. We can profitably investigate the intertextual rivalry in the shepherd-king figure among Shakespeare, Spenser, and Marlowe.

From Julia in *Two Gentleman of Verona* and Venus in *Venus and Adonis* through the young courtier in *A Lover's Complaint* and Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare forges his writing career in the following way: onto a fiction of Spenser's Virgilian pastoral and epic, he superimposes a fiction of Marlowe's Ovidian poetry and drama. Repeatedly, that is, characters sing songs and perform roles along a narrative path connecting court to country. This intertextual representation forms the primary frame for Shakespeare's attempt to authorize himself as one of England's leading authors. Shakespeare's representation is fundamentally new, at least for the Elizabethans. Certainly, it has origins tracing to Odysseus in Homer's epic, but we cannot find it so lucidly or recurrently displayed in other works of literature – most importantly for our purposes, those by Spenser or Marlowe.<sup>38</sup> Because the origin of this characterization lies in the authorial self-presentations of his two Elizabethan rivals, we can discover here a valuable Shakespearean authorial representation. In today's critical conversation, such a representation is important to recognize, because it counters the notion that Shakespeare was a businessman so preoccupied with theatrical affairs that he had no time for the luxury of a literary career. To the contrary, the narratological frame derives from Renaissance notions of a literary career and is itself a literary representation of a career principle.

Shakespeare's frame may recur from *Love's Labor's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*, but as this list of plays indicates, the figure of the Ovidian poet-playwright moving along the Virgilian path tends to appear in Shakespearean comedy and romance. In the history plays and in tragedy, the Ovidian poet-playwright most often moves along what we might call a displaced Virgilian path. Instead of a shepherd-courtier, the poet-playwright tends to appear in the guise of an antic-prince. Rather than leaving the court for the world of pastoral by donning the costume of a shepherd, a prince figure puts on the “antic disposition” (*Hamlet*, 1. 5. 172) of a fool, madman, or clown. Hamlet is certainly the most famous antic-prince in the canon, but it is astonishing to discover how many figures in the history plays and the tragedies participate

<sup>38</sup> Odysseus, in disguise as a beggar, narrates his marvelous adventures so that his song becomes virtually identical with Homer's. Virgil imitates this representation in the *Aeneid*, while in *Dido* Marlowe appropriates Spenser's Virgilian or shepherd-king fiction to provide intimations of the Ovidian singing player.

in this figuration. Like Hamlet, for instance, Edgar dons the theatrical disguise of an antic or madman, Poor Tom, in order to survive the tyranny of Lear's and Gloucester's world. Similarly, in the Henriad Prince Hal dons the disguise of a tavern wastrel in order to make his “reformation” more “wond'ered at” (1 *Henry IV*, 1. 2. 213, 201). Thus, in *Henry V* the Constable of France permits us to see a link between this political ploy and that in Shakespeare's poems: “And you shall find his vanities forespent / Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus, / Covering discretion with the coat of folly” (2. 4. 37–38). The historical reference is important, for it recalls the conclusion to *The Rape of Lucrece*, wherein Lucius Junius Brutus “Began to clothe his wit in state and pride, / Burying in Lucrece's wound his folly's show” (1809–10). Not merely does Brutus anticipate Henry, Edgar, and Hamlet, but he models Shakespeare's portrait of Will in the Sonnets. Whereas in Sonnet 29 Will says, “I scorn to change my state with kings” (14), in Sonnet 110 he confesses, “Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there, / And made myself a motley to the view” (110. 1–2) – the word “motley” meaning “clown” (*Riverside*, 1863).

Shakespeare's recurrent representation of the antic-prince certainly betrays class consciousness, ambitions, and fantasies – his own perhaps but also those of most members of his writing generation, such as Spenser and Marlowe – but we might also recall that Shakespeare alone among his contemporaries quite literally wrote Ovidian poems and plays along the Virgilian path. As the son of a father who kept real sheep and real cows in a rural Warwickshire town, he left for the city of London to become a principal shareholder, actor, and writer for what later became The King's Men. Neither Spenser nor Marlowe could claim such Ovidian/Virgilian authenticity.<sup>39</sup> This biographical template and its manifestation in the poems and plays has never been articulated or probed as a major contribution to modern authorship.

To see Shakespeare structuring all four of his dramatic genres and all four of his main poetic genres on a primary frame relating Marlowe's Ovidian career with Spenser's Virgilian one is to alter our classification of Shakespeare as an early modern author. Evidently, he discovered in this frame a fundamental and versatile plot device, a rich technique of individual characterization, a shrewd intertextualizing strategy of literary imitation, and finally a powerful cognitive idea through which to foreground the concept of human metamorphosis, mapped within artistic, sexual, political, and

<sup>39</sup> On Shakespeare's knowledge of the “wool trade,” see Honan, *Life*, 37. In *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, which Honan calls “virtually a rape of Shakespeare” (158), Shakespeare is called “a country Author” (159).

religious domains. While his plays and such poems as the Sonnets may obscure Shakespeare's intentions toward his art, this book finds an author with more interest in Renaissance ideas of a literary career than is usually acknowledged.<sup>40</sup>

#### THE MAKING OF THE NATIONAL POET-PLAYWRIGHT

During the past decade or so, critics have slowly been filling in the history behind what Michael Dobson calls the making of the national poet. As the subtitle to Dobson's book reveals – *Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660–1769* – these histories tend to start after Shakespeare's death, including such important studies as Jonathan Bate's *Shakespearean Constitutions*; Margreta de Grazia's *Shakespeare Verbatim*; Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare*; Hugh Grady's *Modernist Shakespeare*; and Richard Halpern's *Shakespeare among the Moderns*. The present book takes us back to the beginning of such a history, to the very making of the national author. It looks at Shakespeare during his active writing career, emphasizing the printing of the sixteenth-century Ovidian poet-playwright, and reads the double printing of Shakespeare's poems and plays through the lens of this historical moment. Central to the story about the printing of the "national poet" is Shakespeare's rivalry not simply with the dissident dramatist Marlowe; if Shakespeare eventually becomes the national poet, as so many recent literary historians observe, he does so by fulfilling ambitions he aired initially in his rivalry with England's Virgil, Spenser. The genesis of Shakespeare's emergence as national poet, that is, does not lie simply in later critical constructions but originally in his own literary practice.

At issue in the above literary histories – and in Shakespeare studies more broadly – is the question of just what kind of national author Shakespeare is. Does he write the nation along popular, royal, radical, or even commercial lines?<sup>41</sup> We can look profitably into this question by concentrating on Shakespeare's own representation of the poet-playwright, his most sustained

<sup>40</sup> Recent work by Suzuki, James, Hamilton, Bono, Bate, and others on Shakespeare's interest in Troy, Virgil, Ovid, and Rome can profitably be re-routed from matrices of politics, sexuality, religion, and general aesthetics to the Renaissance frame for this cultural project: the idea of a literary career. Cf. Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 9. I am grateful to Professors Colin Hardie and Helen Moore for inviting me to present a lecture titled "Did Shakespeare Have a Literary Career?" at the Third Passmore Edwards Symposium on "Literary Careers," at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 2–4 September, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> See Patterson, *Voice*, on people power; Helgerson, *Forms*, 195–245, on royal power; Dollimore, *Radical*, 189–230, on radical power; and Bristol, *Big Time Shakespeare*, on commercial power. For the most recent overview, see Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Political Culture*, who foregrounds a

representation of authorship within a national frame. What emerges is an anxious yet finally genial portrait of an English author, not so much with a clear and consistent political stance as with a quiet confidence about his own powers, able to use poetry and theatre to "frame" our "mind to mirth and merriment" (*Taming of the Shrew*, Ind. 2. 135), to "Mind . . . true things by what their mock'ries be" (*Henry V*, 4. Chor. 53), or simply to "obey" the "weight of this sad time" (*King Lear*, 5. 3. 324).<sup>42</sup> In this model, freedom is neither the monarchical problem that Spenser imagines in his role as England's Virgil, nor the political solution Marlowe inherits from Ovid (and Lucan), but rather an authorial space of released consciousness created by the communal dynamic of art itself: "As you from crimes would pardon'd be, / Let your indulgence set me free" (*Tempest*, Ep. 19–20). In other words, what finally emerges from the canon of plays and poems is Shakespearean authorship itself, a literary voice of national authority, a form of national language.

#### THE LEGACY OF THE RENAISSANCE

Finally, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* suggests that the emergence of the poet-playwright in the literary careers of Shakespeare and his English and European contemporaries forms a hitherto missing part to the story about the Renaissance as a period concept. In his introductory essay on "The Sixteenth Century" in the recent *Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1500–1600* (edited by Arthur F. Kinney), Burrow suggests that the "chief legacy" of the period was the "development of a form of authorship which was located in London life and articulated through the medium of print" (26). This is a lucid judgment – worth extending. The chief legacy of the English Renaissance may be the development of a double form of authorship articulated through the medium of both printed poetry and staged theatre: a compounded form of literary production, both poems and plays, *Lucrece* as well as *Hamlet*, which we may find legibly registered in the fictional representation of the Shakespearean poet-playwright. Resembling Will in such sonnets as 23, Feste presents himself to the beleaguered

republican author during the Elizabethan era. On Marlowe as the inaugural author of the Elizabethan republican imagination, see Cheney, "Introduction," *Cambridge Companion*. The complex dialogic presence of both Spenser and Marlowe as mighty opposites in Shakespeare's art may help account for the debate about the political working of his poems and plays.

<sup>42</sup> This view of Shakespeare as author is consistent with that of Bednarz, *Poets' War*, 18.

Malvolio by using one of his endearingly witty songs as the printed figure of performed theatre:

I am gone, sir,  
And anon, sir,  
I'll be with you again;  
In a trice,  
Like to the old Vice,  
Your need to sustain;  
  
Who with dagger of lath,  
In his rage and his wrath,  
Cries, ah, ha!  
(*Twelfth Night*, 4. 2. 120–28)



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