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Individuating Shakespeare's Experience:  
Biography, Chronology, and the Sonnets

John Singleton Copley's painting of Charles I's entry into the House of Commons has relevance for this chapter as well as the last, suggesting how a commitment to authenticity encouraged the differentiation not only of a specific period but of individual identities. An authentic depiction of the chosen historical event required accurate representation not only of architecture, furnishings, and dress, but also of the fifty-eight participants in the event: Charles I, Prince Rupert, and the fifty-six members of the House.<sup>1</sup> We have seen how Copley, with Malone's guidance, delved into antiquarian publications and private collections in order to locate contemporary likenesses of the participants, making the necessary adjustments if they had been taken earlier or later than 1642. In the painting, each member is differentiated no less than the King and Prince by his appearance and, in so far as the available sources made possible, by his position in and reaction to the event depicted. Moreover, the differentiation is based not on formal considerations dictated by the composition of the painting, but rather on the particulars registered in documents. Each member is an identifiable individual possessing a distinct physiognomy and participating, from a specified position, in a unique experience that distinguishes him further still.

As Copley's painting individuated historical figures, so too Malone's textual and scholarly practices individuated Shakespeare. Yet it must be stressed at the outset that the individuality the painting confers on each of the fifty-six members depends on their common identity as Members of Parliament, the identity asserted at the very moment the painting represents by the Speaker's famous reply to the King's demand: 'I have, sire,

<sup>1</sup> For an identification of the portraits, see Julius David Prown, *John Singleton Copley in England 1774-1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), fig. 600; see also Ch. 3 above, nn. 1 and 2.

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neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me.<sup>2</sup> In the painting, each member remains indivisible from the parliamentary group to which he belongs—and, in the case of the Speaker, which he represents. In contrast, by Malone's practices Shakespeare's individuality emerged independently of any collective body; it issued instead from his unique and self-contained genius. Like 'authenticity' and 'period', the key words respectively of the previous two chapters, the word 'individual' provides a semantic focus for the general change implicit in Malone's practices, in this case a decisive shift from individuation predicated on corporate political solidarity to individuation predicated on personal artistic complexity and growth.<sup>3</sup>

We will return to Copley's painting again in the next chapter to consider in what respect the individuation of persons implied both the privilege violated by the King's entry and the right to representation asserted by the Speaker. This chapter concerns how one extraordinary person, Shakespeare, came to be individuated through three of Malone's major Shakespearean projects: a biography, 'The Life of William Shakespeare'; a chronology, 'An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which The Plays of Shakespeare Were Written'; and an edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets.<sup>4</sup> All three projects broke abruptly with traditional treatments. His documentary 'Life', not published until 1821 but occupying Malone throughout his career, replaced Rowe's unfactual 'Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespeare' which, as we have seen, had become the standard biography through the eighteenth century. His essay on chronology, first published in 1778 but revised for the 1790 and 1821 editions, was the first chronology of the works to be published.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Roy Strong, 'And When Did You Last See Your Father?' *The Victorian Painter and British History* (London, 1978), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York, 1961), pp. 75-8 and *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> All three works are included in Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*.

<sup>5</sup> In the three-volume *Notes and Various Readings* (the first volume appearing in 1774 and all three volumes in 1783) to his edition (1767-8), Edward Capell scattered references to dates within plays; he also provided a list of their 'succession' based on the dates of the earliest impressions of the plays, Stationers' Register entries, and outside references to the plays: ii, 83-6. For recent assessments of Malone's chronology, see S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lines* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 166-71, and Gary Taylor, *Re-inventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (New York, 1989).

And his edition of the 1609 Sonnets conclusively supplanted John Benson's 1640 *Poems: Written by Will. Shake-shpere, Gent.*, the hybrid edition in which Shakespeare's Sonnets had been read in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and permanently secured the sequence a position within the corpus of Shakespeare's works.<sup>6</sup> From all three works Shakespeare's identity was constituted, or rather reconstituted: on the basis of new factual materials, according to a new temporal structure, with a new focus on previously unprobed interiority. The biography collected the facts distinguishing Shakespeare's life, the chronology arranged the works to display the course of Shakespeare's development, and the edition of the Sonnets emphasized their importance as writing in Shakespeare's own person.

After completing his annotations of Rowe's 'Account' for the 1790 edition, Malone resolved to write his own biography of Shakespeare, integrating new materials with those he had compiled for the annotations and weaving them all into 'one uniform and connected narrative'.<sup>7</sup> Through the examination of documents for the biography, he attempted both to recover information that his predecessors had neglected and to test the veracity of the reports which they had passed down. In Malone's mind, the facts he compiled compensated, however imperfectly, for the 'penury of [Shakespeare's] contemporaries' who had failed to transmit 'any particulars of his private life or dramatick history'. In the absence of their testimonies, Malone extracted the information he considered relevant from parish and theatrical registers, title-pages, legal instruments, and publications of the period. Research provided new criteria by which to evaluate reports that had circulated in various compendia, many of which Rowe had gathered. A large part of the biography was devoted to the kind of scrutiny to which we have seen the deer-stealing anecdote subjected. Reports were credited or dismissed after having been tested against what could be gleaned from

<sup>6</sup> John Benson, *Poems: Written by Will. Shake-shpere, Gent.* (London, 1640). See Ch. 2 n. 1 above.

<sup>7</sup> 'Prospectus for an entirely New Life of Shakespeare compiled from original and authentick documents, published separately and with *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments*, 1795.

documents contemporary with Shakespeare. Both processes, introducing new materials and reassessing the old, yielded a wealth of factual details that more thoroughly and finely articulated Shakespeare's life. Before Malone's undertaking, the facts about that life could be summarized in one sentence: 'All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare, is—"that he was born at Stratford upon Avon, married and had children there, went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays,—returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried"'.<sup>8</sup> Investigation into all available documents expanded that single sentence into a 525-page 'Life of Shakespeare' with a 175-page appendix 'compiled from Original and Authentick Documents'. What was known about Shakespeare was amplified by information concerning such particulars as his ancestry, the profession and status of his father, the number of children in his family, and the precise terms of the legal instruments in which he was named. This is not to say that Shakespeare's parentage, family, profession, and legal transactions were previously of no concern, as a glance at the anecdotes current earlier demonstrates. One anecdote identified Shakespeare's father as a butcher, another implied an adulterous relationship between him and a vintner's wife, numerous accounts involved him in theatrical production, and still another subjected him to prosecution and whipping.<sup>9</sup> It was not, as Malone supposed, that there had been no earlier interest in Shakespeare's life, but rather that it was not then to be satisfied by uncovering and scrutinizing documents.

The majority of the materials featured in Malone's biography documented the bettering of Shakespeare's literary, social, and economic status. No less than three accounts established that Southampton, Elizabeth, and James had all bestowed special

<sup>8</sup> *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays Published in 1776 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens in Two Volumes* (London, 1780), ii, 653.

<sup>9</sup> The anecdotes discussed in this chapter are all included in Nicholas Rowe's 'Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespeare' (1709), in *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. D. Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1963), 1–22. Subsequent references to Rowe will be from this edition, as will those to the prefaces of Pope (1725), Theobald (1733), and Johnson (1763). Earlier versions of these accounts, as well as excerpts from Rowe, can be found in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1930), ii, appx C, 'The Shakespeare-Mythos', 238–302. Schoenbaum comments on them in *Shakespeare's Lives*, part 2, 'Shakespeare of the Legends: The First Biographers', pp. 75–143.

attention and favour upon him. In proving that the encomium to 'Willy' in Spenser's 'Tears of the Muses' was not addressed to Shakespeare, Malone determined that Spenser did none the less revere and honour him, as did all men elevated by either class or literary accomplishment: 'The gentle Shakespeare enjoyed the favour of all the most accomplished men that adorned the period in which he lived'; 'The patronage of Lord Southampton, the valour of the court, his own splendid genius and amiable manners, must have made his company sought after by all who were distinguished for their rank or literature'.<sup>10</sup> The only figure of note who did not seek him out was, according to Malone, Ben Jonson; but this very hostility testified further to Shakespeare's success, for it was precisely that success which kindled Jonson's resentment and envy.<sup>11</sup> Nor did Shakespeare's familiarity with the gifted and powerful interfere with his domestic attachments, for in addition to associating with the most powerful and accomplished, he also 'must have been perpetually engaged in amicable discourse with his family'.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that he acquired a reputation for himself, Shakespeare also gradually increased his wealth and rank. He began his career, according to Malone, not to escape criminal prosecution for deer-poaching, 'not under the degrading circumstances which unauthorized tradition had handed down', but under financial duress, his father being 'in pecuniary difficulties'; by the time of his death, however, he was able to leave his family 'in a state of comparative affluence'. Thanks to his distinguished patrons, as well as to his own prudence, he quickly 'placed himself in circumstances of ease and comfort'. Malone had scrupulously examined documents to determine exactly 'the pecuniary benefit which he derived from [his] situation'. Among thousands of documents in the Stratford archives, he had discovered a letter to Shakespeare requesting a loan of thirty pounds, 'no inconsiderable sum in those days'; 'such a request could not have been made to a person who has not possessed of means...'.<sup>13</sup> The coat of arms 'obtained by his

<sup>10</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii, 487.

<sup>11</sup> Malone's treatment of both Jonson's character and his work was so consistently disparaging that Boswell felt obliged to apologize for it (*Ibid.* i, xxxi-xlvii) and revise it (xlviii-1).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* ii, 486.

<sup>13</sup> On the discovery of this document, see Schuchman, *Shakespeare's Lines*, p. 247.

father in consequence of the poet's celebrity' testified to another form of achievement. At the conclusion of the biography, calculations determined how much his share in the King's Men was worth at his death, what his earnings were during his lifetime, and the value of his estate—taking into consideration 'the relative value of money, the mode of living in that age, the luxury and taxes of the present time, and various other circumstances'. Because his home in Stratford housed the Queen and her company for three weeks during the Civil War, 'we may reasonably suppose it then was the best private house in the town'. In so far as the biography can be said to be woven into the 'uniform and connected narrative' Malone intended, it tells a story of the gradual acquisition of fame, wealth, and status as documented by legal instruments and official records. While temporal progression as charted by dated documents strung the factual bits and pieces together, the gradual attainment of prosperity provided the rationale for the whole: 'He had the good fortune to gather an estate equal to his occasion'.<sup>14</sup>

To some degree, the emphasis on Shakespeare's finances reflected the limitation of the documentary sources—largely records of Shakespeare's assets and purchases. Yet there was another sustained emphasis through the whole for which there was no warrant in factual materials. In applauding the success of the biography, Boswell named the one overarching verity assumed and confirmed by the entire account: 'The greatest genius which this country has produced, maintained, from his youth upwards, that respectability of character which unquestionably belonged to him in after life'.<sup>15</sup> In every instance, the traditional accounts that conflicted with Shakespeare's respectability were rejected as factually inaccurate while those which confirmed it were validated. Yet, as we have already seen, the anecdotes regularly featured Shakespeare in indecorous or transgressive acts: versifying in a butcher's shop, poaching deer, pre-empting his colleague's tryst, begetting William Davenant of a vintner's wife, offending an usurious friend with a stinging epithet. In utter contrast to the anecdotes that cast Shakespeare as thief, adulterer, and carouser, Malone's 'Life of

<sup>14</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii, 484-7, 518-20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 472.

Shakespeare' from beginning to end uniformly displayed Shakespeare's 'respectability of character'.

Malone takes particular pains to refute two of the accounts that appeared in Rowe. In the first, already discussed in Chapter 2, Shakespeare committed a legal infraction—he stole deer; in the latter, he committed a social, moral, and religious one—he wrote a scathing and damning epitaph in anticipation of a friend's death. When reports preserved Shakespeare in respectable activities, however, they were documented and credited. Southampton was proven to have munificently rewarded Shakespeare, although the degree of his generosity needed to be reduced from 1,000 pounds to a more plausible 100, and the purpose must have been not, as the anecdote specified, to fund a large purchase (of which a record would have remained) but as a gift in return for dedicating works to him (of which records did remain in the dedications to Shakespeare's two narrative poems).<sup>16</sup> Nor did Malone question the accounts illustrating that Shakespeare had 'enjoyed the approbation and favour of two successive monarchs',<sup>17</sup> even though the only authority for the reports of the King's admiration was Rowe's assurance that Davenant had communicated it, and for those of the Queen's attention the prefatory epistle to John Dennis's 1702 adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Malone credited another account maintaining that Shakespeare had based the constable's character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on that of a constable encountered during his regular trips between London and Stratford; the account was accepted in part because it featured the dramatist exercising his singular dramatic gift of observing human nature and in part because the frequent trips home testified to his affectionate nature which could not have endured prolonged separation from friends and family. That the constable appeared in *Much Ado About Nothing* and not *A Midsummer Night's Dream* did not detract in the smallest degree from the credit of the fact itself.<sup>18</sup>

Malone's narrative followed Shakespeare along a novelistic trajectory of increasing prosperity and respectability that could not accommodate the inculpatory accounts. Yet the earlier

<sup>16</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii, 480.  
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 478.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 490–1.

accounts all shared a structure that made them compatible: whether inculpatory or laudatory, they had in common the theme of reformat, in contrast to the biography's theme of gradual attainment and acquisition. Both types of early anecdote represented Shakespeare in commercial, sexual, or verbal exchanges that resulted either in punishment and disapprobation or reward and favour. What characterized these exchanges was not their effect on Shakespeare's moral, professional, social, or economic position, but rather their effect on his relation to others: to neighbours, colleagues, friends, family, nobility, and royalty. The account of Shakespeare's first literary effort, for example, consisted of a series of exchanges: Shakespeare's deer-poaching was followed by the owner's prosecution which prompted Shakespeare to write his first formal work, a vindictive ballad that sparked the plaintiff's redoubled prosecution which the defendant avenged by a satiric reference in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.<sup>19</sup> An account of what may have stood for Shakespeare's last literary effort also followed a structure of returns. Shakespeare's friend, John Combe, a usurer who by definition takes in more than he gives out, received more than he asked for when in anticipation of the final reckoning he asked Shakespeare to write him an epitaph and received one that left him no hope of atonement and that he could never forgive.<sup>20</sup> In these two accounts, Shakespeare's verse involved him in vindictive rather than productive exchanges that prompted not gratitude or service but punishment and anger. The account of Shakespeare's relation to Ben Jonson followed a similar pattern of exchange, in this case of rejection and acceptance: the unknown Jonson, according to Rowe, offered one of his plays to the Players who would have returned it with 'an ill-natur'd Answer' had not Shakespeare been so impressed that he recommended the author and his work to the public; whether Jonson ever reciprocated in kind remains undetermined at the end of the account — 'I don't know whether the other ever made him an equal return'.<sup>21</sup> Even the two theatrical parts that tradition assigned Shakespeare, one comic and the other tragic, cast him in the same retributive configuration. Shakespeare was remembered as having acted Adam in *As You Like It* and the Ghost in

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays*, pp. 3, 10.  
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

*Hamlet*,<sup>22</sup> both old men dramatizing modes of discharging debts to a master, one through antique service, the other through revenge under the old law.<sup>23</sup>

In the traditional accounts, both those accepted and those rejected by Malone, transactions occurred in which Shakespeare's talents were caught up in continuing circuits of exchange that took either the positive form of patronage, in which favour prompted renewed service, or the negative form of revenge, in which offence prompted retaliation. Rather than assessing what Shakespeare accumulated throughout his career, the accounts displayed the various networks of exchange, compensatory and retaliatory, in which his talents engaged him. Thus it was not the inculpatory and the laudatory accounts that were incompatible, but the traditional accounts and the documentary biography. The latter shaped Shakespeare's identity through records of various forms of personal profit and prosperity through which he gradually established himself; the former defined it in terms of his relations to others in systems based on reciprocity and requital. In the factual biography, Shakespeare ended up with his *own* shares, *own* house, *own* coat of arms, *own* monument, and descendants more affluent than his ancestors: a gradual triumph of personal aggrandizement. In the anecdotes, it was his impact on others rather than his own development that mattered: he either compliantly stabilized or defiantly offset diverse transactional relations for which he was publicly answerable. Documentary facts individuated Shakespeare through an inventory of the notice, status, and wealth that he had earned through his own poetic and dramatic genius; anecdotal occasions encoded social, political, and institutional relations that were fractured or ratified by a genius under obligation to render itself into some form of responsible public exchange. Shakespeare's moral conduct is central to both Malone's biographical progress and Rowe's anecdotal transactions: in the former Shakespeare himself embodies uniform virtue that is both confirmed and rewarded by the trajectory

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> While Rowe recorded Shakespeare's performance as the Ghost, his performance as Adam was first noted by William Oldys, who traced it back to some Restoration actors who had learned it of one of Shakespeare's younger brothers; Capell accepted the account in his notes on *As You Like It*. See Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, pp. 90–1.

of increased prestige and profit structuring his life; in the latter it is Shakespeare's erratic actions or transactions that are instructive, demonstrating the uses and abuses of talent as measured by communal standards.

The anecdotes about Shakespeare provided no dates. Rowe's life contained only the date of Shakespeare's birth and his age at death. While his 'Account' was loosely organized around Shakespeare's early, middle, and late years, no attempt was made to place the various reports in precise temporal sequence. Malone's biography, on the other hand, provided the dates of all the documents from which it was compiled. The chronological organization of his information was a crucial element in Malone's attempt to accomplish his aim of weaving 'the whole into one uniform and connected narrative'. However, he never completed the biography. Having completed his consideration of the 'scanty information' relating to Shakespeare's roles and merits as an actor, he broke off just at the point where a discussion of Shakespeare's dramatic career would have begun. Boswell picked up the account at the point where that career had just ended, Shakespeare's retirement to London, regretting that the task had fallen upon him after Malone's death to arrange the facts collected from Malone's papers and from the notes Malone had affixed to Rowe's 'Account' for his 1790 edition. Thus no narrative connected the beginning of his career with its conclusion, Shakespeare's initial arrival at London with his final return to Stratford, the very twenty-three years, by Malone's calculation, during which he wrote the works that made him deserving of a biography. Instead, a separate work first published in 1778 and then included in the 1790 edition was inserted to fill the gap: Malone's 'Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakespeare Were Written'. In the place of information relating to the central years of Shakespeare's life, the biography supplied a chronology of all the Folio plays (with the exception of *Titus Andronicus*, which Malone believed to be only partially by Shakespeare). No changes were made to fit the chronology into the biographical narrative that preceded and followed it: except for a few revisions, it was printed precisely as it had appeared when published as an independent work. Separate entries for each

play were given indicating how the date for it was determined, from *The First Part of King Henry VI* in 1589 to *The Tempest* in 1612. While Boswell in his preface doubted that Malone had intended the chronology to be inserted into his narrative, he thought 'the life of a writer must be strangely defective which contained no account of his works; and I have, therefore, ventured to give it a place as one of the sections of Mr. Malone's Biography'.<sup>24</sup>

It is not only an 'account of his works' that the biography would have lacked without the chronology, but any kind of account of the years in which Shakespeare wrote the plays which made his life of interest. The documents pertaining to the dates of the plays came to represent the crucial years of his life. Although Boswell considered it a makeshift arrangement, the substitution nevertheless served to forge a continuity based on dates between the biography and the works. The life gave way to the works which passed back into the life, all on a single temporal continuum. In lieu of archival documents, the plays were positioned to serve as the primary sources for information about Shakespeare's life during his years in London. The arrangement itself suggested that only by scrutinizing the plays exhaustively, as if they were archival documents, could Shakespeare's life in its entirety—from the beginning through to the end—be known.

In attempting to determine the dates of the plays, Malone relied primarily on entries in the Stationers' Register and allusions in contemporary publications. Yet he also inspected the plays as if they too were archival repositories, culling them for references that could be matched up with datable events or situations. Regardless of the time in which they had been set, the plays contained 'frequent allusions to the circumstances of the day'. The Porter's references to 'a farmer', that hang'd himself 'on the expectation of plenty' when matched with the College of Eton's audit-book, suggested the date of 1606: the records revealed that the price of wheat, 'the great criterion of plenty or scarcity', was unprecedentedly low that year. Such research was seen to provide not only the date in which a given play was written but also the content of Shakespeare's mind at the time

of that play's writing. If the Nurse's reference, 'now since the earthquake eleven years', referred to the earthquake recorded as having occurred on 6 April 1580, it would then refer to Shakespeare's memory of 'an earthquake which had been *fell* in his youth' (emphasis added). At the point where Henry IV assures his brothers that 'This is the English, not the Turkish court, | Not Amurath Amurath succeeds, | But Harry Harry,' Shakespeare 'probably had here in *contemplation* the cruelly practised by the Turkish emperor Mahomet, who after the death of his father, Amurath the Third, in Feb. 1596, invited his unsuspecting brothers to a feast, and caused them all to be strangled'. Sir Andrew's unwillingness to give 'my part for a pension of thousands to be paid by the Sophy', revealed that Shakespeare 'was perhaps *thinking* of Sir Robert Shirley' whose service to the Sophy of Persia was well known in England in 1607, as could be established by a contemporary play and also by later documents. The identification of topical references in dating the plays disclosed the particulars presumed to exist in Shakespeare's mind at the time of their writing. The plays thus functioned as repositories of Shakespeare's thoughts and feelings as stimulated by contemporary events.<sup>25</sup>

Another type of datable event served Malone in devising his chronology: the registration and publication of books. By looking at the dates on title-pages or in the Stationers' entries for works he found echoed in the plays, he obtained further evidence for his determinations. This procedure opened up a new realm of Shakespeare's supposed experience, revealing what he was encountering in his reading as well as in natural and historical occurrences. Because there are two allusions to 'Hero and Leander' in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Malone conjectured that Shakespeare had in 1591 recently read Marlowe's poem—in manuscript, since no copy of the poem was known to exist before 1598 and the Stationer's entry was 1593; similarly, he assumed that it was around 1591 that Shakespeare had read the translation of Plautus's *Menaechmi* on which *The Comedy of Errors*' plot was based, again in manuscript before its publication in 1595.<sup>26</sup> From several passages in Act V of *Romeo and Juliet*, 'it is manifest, I think that Shakespeare had recently read, and

<sup>24</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, I, xx.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. II, 384, 407, 349, 359, 444.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 320, 322, 348, 452.

remembered, some of the lines in Daniel's Complaint of Rosamund,' for which there was an entry in 1591-2. Malone's dating of *Gymbeline* rested on his assumption that before writing both *King Lear* and *Gymbeline* Shakespeare had been reading Sidney's *Arcadia* which provided both the model for Edgar and the name for Leonatus: 'Shakespeare having occasion to turn to that book while he was writing *King Lear*, the name of Leonatus adhered to his memory, and he has made it the name of one of his characters in *Gymbeline*.' Another book supported this conjecture: 'The story of *Lear* lies near to that of *Gymbeline* in Holinshed's Chronicle,' and the fact that Duncan and Macbeth are mentioned on a nearby page draws that play into the same approximate period of Shakespeare's consciousness. The possibility that Shakespeare might have read the text in question many years after its publication or many years before in manuscript, gave rise to areas of uncertainty in the dating project; so too did the possibility that particular topical references might have been added after the original writing of the play. What is important for our purposes, however, is not the validity of Malone's inferences, but rather that in the process of dating the plays, Shakespeare's experience was postulated: what he had observed and what he had read.

The nature and range of the impressions Malone could claim to have been made on Shakespeare was necessarily limited to the kind of public and historical events that had been in Shakespeare's time deemed suitable for documentation. Furthermore, the thoughts Malone assigned to Shakespeare, however specific, hardly individuated him from any other person who experienced the same phenomena. Slurs against Puritans in *The Winter's Tale*, for example, were not peculiar to Shakespeare, as Malone allowed in noting that both King James and the theatrical population at large shared his 'hearty detestation'.<sup>27</sup> Nor were the impressions left by the earthquakes, plagues, wars, and coronations to which Malone found allusions in the plays. Because it drew its content from shared perceptions of commonly experienced phenomena, Shakespeare's inner life as represented in these comments could not vary significantly from those of his contemporaries. Nor could his reading of

<sup>27</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, i, 463.

available manuscripts and printed texts distinguish him from other readers of the same materials. Yet once all the plays were arranged by date, a new possibility for differentiating Shakespeare emerged, for this arrangement formed a discrete serial unit of its own that began to look self-determined and self-contained. Possessing its own complete and integral design, the sequence could be detached from the ties to history by which it had initially been formed. The chronology provided more than a way of identifying isolated memories, feelings, and thoughts; it provided a temporal structure by which to organize not only the plays but the lifetime in which they had been written.

Once arranged in time, the plays charted out a progression that enabled the reader 'to mark the gradations by which [Shakespeare] rose from mediocrity to the summit of excellence; from artless and sometimes uninteresting dialogues, to those unparalleled compositions . . .'.<sup>28</sup> The chronological arrangement called into being a new mode of viewing the works: as development. Although doubling that the chronology demonstrated any 'regular scale of gradual improvement', Malone in dating the plays nevertheless established several scales on which the poet's development might be traced. Because the early works demonstrated an 'addiction to rhyming' that gradually weakened as Shakespeare either tired of 'the bondage of rhyme' or became convinced of its impropriety in the drama, Malone assumed the plays with the most rhymes to be Shakespeare's earliest. Wordplay was also judged to diminish as Shakespeare continued to develop. And characters became more finely delineated and discriminated as 'the elegant and pastoral simplicity' of his early effusions yielded to 'that moral and judicious reflection that accompanies an advanced period of life'.<sup>29</sup> In both style and tone, the plays followed a generally steady and self-generated progression, independent of any contemporaneous historical events.

As Malone noted, Shakespeare's first editors had paid no attention to chronological arrangement; nor had subsequent editors, for until his own effort, 'no attempt has been made to trace the progress and order of his plays'. When first published in 1778, his chronology was a 'new and curious inquiry'

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 327, 318, 406.



requiring justification.<sup>30</sup> His eighteenth-century predecessors had done little more than contemplate the desirability of devising one. Rowe in 1709 believed 'it would be without doubt a pleasure to any Man, curious in Things of this Kind, to see and know what was the first Essay of a Fancy like *Shakespeare's*'.<sup>31</sup> He doubted, however, that it would reveal any correlation between early and inferior plays; because Shakespeare's genius was, by a tradition tracing back to the 1623 Folio, the result of Nature and not Art, his youngest works might well have been the most excellent, 'the most vigorous', having 'the most fire and strength of Imagination in 'em'. Pope in his 1725 preface also considered the possibility of dating the plays, but disagreed on the relation to be discovered between the time of their writing and their quality. For him, however, the improvement that a chronology might mark would reveal not Shakespeare's spontaneous growth but rather his response to the increased sophistication and support of his audience: 'The Dates of his plays sufficiently evidence that his productions improved, in proportion to the respect he had for his auditors';<sup>32</sup> 'When the encouragement of the Court had succeeded to that of the Town, the works of his riper years are manifestly raised above those of his former.' When for his 1765 edition Johnson turned to the problem of 'by what gradations of improvement [Shakespeare] proceeded', he joined Pope in countering Rowe's opinion by maintaining that, 'however favored by nature', Shakespeare's art perforce improved in time by a steady and arduous 'gradual acquisition', the result of study and experience.<sup>33</sup> Each of these pre-Malonean editors, even Rowe, considered whether chronology would be useful in revealing the relative worth of the various plays; had one been available, it would have served the editor in the evaluative criticism which until the latter part of the century was deemed one of the editor's primary functions. A chronology would have provided a system of ranking the plays that could be used to support the critic's own judgement or Taste in measuring the Beauties and Defects of a given play. Edward Capell recognized the importance of the plays' chronology, to the extent of providing, in his *Notes and Various Readings*, an undated chronological list, a 'Scheme of their

<sup>30</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, i, 290, 292.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays*, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 128.

Succession', he too believing that it would be of interest to critics in 'weighing their Author's pieces, and adjusting the comparative merits of them'.<sup>34</sup> In the introduction to the edition itself, he adapted this 'Scheme' to further purpose, defending a number of plays whose attribution to Shakespeare had been challenged by Pope and Theobald—the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Titus Andronicus*—by identifying them as early works rather than works by a lesser playwright.<sup>35</sup> According to Capell, the younger Shakespeare had catered to the taste of 'the people who govern theatres . . . the middle and lower orders of the world' by producing the excessive rhymes and atrocious effects that later came to offend more discerning sensibilities. Taking into account 'the Writer's childhood' at the time of their writing, he pronounced them 'his true off-spring', despite their apparent inferiority, and therefore determined to 'replace [them] amongst [their] brethren'.<sup>36</sup> A play's inferiority to the rest of the plays signalled not un-Shakespearean authorship but rather Shakespearean authorship at an earlier, less practiced stage. Thus it was in order to insist upon the common parentage of the Folio plays that Capell made use of chronology, thereby introducing a new mode of affliating the plays never considered by the gatherers of the 1623 Folio plays discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>37</sup> While Shakespeare's friends and colleagues can be presumed to have had much reader and fuller access to the information required to date the plays, organizing a collection of plays in relation to a consideration as tendentious to their production as an author's career was apparently unthinkable to them.

When Malone finally devised and published his chronology, he apologized for what he assumed would appear to some a tedious and fruitless inquiry. Yet he did not defend it as a system either of evaluating the relative merits of the plays or of establishing their authorship; its importance lay rather in its demonstration of how Shakespeare's art developed—'how the genius of the great poet gradually expanded itself, till, like his

<sup>34</sup> *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*, ii, 186.

<sup>35</sup> Capell, *MSSHCHT*, i, 44, 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>37</sup> See the extensive discussion of chronology in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford, 1987) that faults Hemminge and Condell for their generic organization of the Folio (p. 36).



own Ariel, it *flamed amazement* in every quarter'.<sup>38</sup> This was an internally impelled expansion rather than, as held by Pope, Johnson, and Capell, a response to external factors such as the changing status of his audience, his ever-increasing exposure to books and experience, his concessions to popular taste. His talent unfolded spontaneously without influence from the outside—tentative at first, then becoming bolder and more innovative, 'advancing in his progress to excellence' during the fervidly inspired middle period of his life, waning somewhat towards the end.<sup>39</sup> The charting of such a development would provide a complete way of looking at all of Shakespeare's work, a totality with a beginning, a middle, and an end that accommodated variations of style and quality without relinquishing continuity and coherence.

The 1821 edition gave physical reality to this postulated continuity and coherence. Boswell recorded that Malone left specific instructions that the works should appear in this edition in the order in which Shakespeare had, by his determinations, written them: 'The plan laid down by Mr. Malone, was to exhibit all his dramas in what he considered to be, from the best judgment he could form, their chronological order, that the reader might be thus enabled to trace the progress of the author's powers.<sup>40</sup> Malone had specified that even the history plays should follow the chronology of Shakespeare's biography rather than that of England's history, thereby breaking with a tradition extending back to the 1623 Folio. On this point, however, Boswell demurred, fearing that the substitution of the 'progress of the author's powers' for the succession of British monarchs would be 'universally objected to'.<sup>41</sup>

The 1623 Folio had established the traditional ordering of the plays that continued to be respected by the editors of subsequent seventeenth-century Folios as well as, in the main,

<sup>38</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii. 468.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* ii. xvii–xviii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* i. xvii.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* The recent Oxford editors, however, have not found it objectionable and have printed the histories in the order they believe Shakespeare wrote them. For them, the Folio's ordering of the histories by reign is 'an accident of juxtaposition which continued to inhibit a proper sensitivity to the individuality of the eight plays huddled in this anachronistic chronological ghetto'; Wells and Taylor, *Companion*, p. 38.

by all the eighteenth-century editors.<sup>42</sup> Yet as Malone regretted, 'the Folio editors manifestly paid no attention to chronological arrangement', being in this respect not unlike the anachronistic Shakespeare: 'there is nothing in which he is less accurate, than the computation of time'.<sup>43</sup> The Folio contained no dates at all for the individual plays, neither for the eighteen plays that had previously been published in quarto nor for the eighteen plays that were being published in quarto for the first time. The only date it recorded had nothing to do with the time of Shakespeare's writing: 1623, the year of the volume's publication. If dates besides those of publication had been affixed to the plays, they would have been those of their first performance, as in Ben Jonson's 1616 Folio, rather than of their writing. Indifferent to the dates of the plays, the First Folio grouped them into three kinds: comedies, histories, and tragedies. The comedies and tragedies followed no temporal order at all, while the histories, as we have seen, were arranged to reflect England's chronicle history. Nor does the only other early listing of the plays follow Shakespeare's 'progress': Francis Meres's 1598 *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury* named twelve of Shakespeare's plays, thereby providing the important information that these twelve were all written by 1598, but the list euphuistically balanced six comedies against six tragedies, just as the Folio respected generic divisions but with no attention to the order in which the plays were written.<sup>44</sup> The plays published in quarto were of course dated,

<sup>42</sup> Rowe follows the Folio ordering of the plays; Pope, however, divides its three classifications into four in his 1723 editions: Comedies, Historical Plays, Tragedies from History, and Tragedies from Fable; he also rearranges the order of the Comedies somewhat. Although they do not adapt his nomenclature, subsequent editors more or less follow his precedent, apparently in the attempt to define the genres more strictly. Pope, Theobald, Warburton, and Hamner classify *Lea* as a History; Capell, Johnson, Steevens, and Malone (1790) classify it as a Tragedy but place *Macbeth* with the Histories. Cymbeline remains classified with the Tragedies throughout the century. The Cambridge edition (1863–6) is the first to return to the Folio order and the Globe (1866) makes it standard until the end of the century and beyond. No edition follows the 1821 chronological arrangement, though the Comedy, History, Tragedy, Romance progression formulated by Edward Dowden enables the generic and chronological to be fused. See Ch. 1, n. 37. On the novelty and fluidity of the Folio's generic terms, see Stephen Orgel, 'Shakespeare and the Kinds of Drama', *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (1979), 1, 107–23.

<sup>43</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii. 451, 351.

<sup>44</sup> 'As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines; so *Shakespeare* among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love*

though the date was, as with the Folio, that of publication rather than composition; in some cases the date or occasion of its performance is also given. The registers of the Stationers' Company also assigned dates to plays for the purposes of recording when the right to print and sell a play was secured. The significant dates in Shakespeare's period, then, were those specifying not when a play was written, but when it was made public, either in print or in performance. As we have seen, even as late as 1778 Malone felt he had to justify attempting the 'new and curious inquiry' that would ascertain the order in which Shakespeare wrote his plays. Yet once that order was determined, the works became fastened to Shakespeare's sequence of writing, following an arrangement that reflected his and only his contribution to the making of the plays.

The printing of the plays according to the order of composition encouraged the reader to encounter them in that same order. The reader was invited to follow the complete 'progress of Shakespeare's powers', experiencing each successive play as a step in the development of the author's art. Because that creative process possessed its own inherent purpose and design, it no longer needed to depend on the outside world of history for its significance. Self-referential and self-perpetuating, it 'gradually expanded itself', spontaneously unfurling over the years. The organization of the plays along a temporal spectrum provided the mechanism for releasing them from the history that had supplied the very co-ordinates by which that spectrum had been constructed in the first place. It also entirely eclipsed the arrangement of the original 1623 Folio, which grouped the plays into three dramatic kinds and printed them within those groups in accordance with printing-house practices, priorities, and constraints that still remain to be determined.<sup>45</sup> By supplanting that arrangement, the chronology obscured its reference

*labours woman*, his *Midsummer night dream*, & his *Merchant of Venice*: for 'Tragedy his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*,' *Palladis Tamia* (1598) with intro. by Don Cameron Allen (New York, 1938), pp. 281-2. Quoted by Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, ii, 194, who suggests that Meres may have omitted the *Henry VI* plays in order to retain the balance: i, 208.

<sup>45</sup> On the types of printing-house considerations that might have determined the Folio's arrangement of the plays, see W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 80-1; Wells and Taylor, *Companion*, p. 38.

to the wide array of productive activities we saw to be diversely represented in the Folio preliminaries. The chronological schema committed the plays to a history of individual and finite creation rather than one of collective and indefinite production on state and in print. Needless to say, the chronological structure could not possibly accommodate the non-authorial contributions of collaborators, book-keepers, adapters, copyists, censors, composers, and correctors; nor could it allow that a play, constantly subject to modification in the process of being performed and printed, might not at any point possess a finalized state, at least not one of the author's prescribing. The chronology both assumed and determined that Shakespeare, alone, finished a play once and for all in a specified year.

Malone's biography differentiated Shakespeare by accumulating all available factual information and organizing it in a dated temporal sequence; his chronology, by situating the plays on the same temporal continuum, made it possible to extend that biography into the works. Both the documents and the plays provided specifics characterizing Shakespeare's outer life and their postulated inward correlatives. Even specifics concerning his private life appeared to emerge as a result of conjoining the two types of materials. Biographical documents determined that Shakespeare's twelve-year-old son Hamnet died in 1596; believing *King John* to have been written in the same year, Malone inferred that Constance's lament at Arthur's death expressed Shakespeare's own grief at the loss of his son, which in turn gave his dating probability.<sup>46</sup> Documents recorded that Shakespeare's wife was seven and a half years older than he; believing that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written thirteen years after his marriage and *Twelfth Night* eleven years after that, he speculated that the former's reference to love 'misgraffed in respect of years' and the latter's injunction that 'the woman take | An elder than herself' expressed Shakespeare's own marital unhappiness, the predictable consequence of 'disproportion of age'.<sup>47</sup> The circularity of the first example and the improbability of the second both betray the degree of Malone's determination to find materials not just about Shakespeare, like the documents, or by Shakespeare, like the plays:

<sup>46</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPHS*, ii, 353.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 112-13.

but both about him and by him. The same desire impelled his eager search for the 'unquestionably voluminous' correspondence he believed Shakespeare in London must have sent regularly to family and friends in Stratford.<sup>48</sup> It was writing in the first person, writing that gave unmediated access to Shakespeare's inner self, that the documents and dramatic works lacked. And it was precisely that kind of self-expressive writing that the Sonnets of the 1609 quarto appeared to offer. Written in Shakespeare's own person, the Sonnets ostensibly possessed the subjectivity that could only sporadically and conjecturally be inferred from Malone's objective inquiries.

Malone was the first editor of Shakespeare to publish the 1609 Sonnets in an edition of the works, first in 1780 as a supplement to the Johnson-Stevens 1778 edition and then in the final volume of his own 1790 edition.<sup>49</sup> He was also the first to situate them in a full textual apparatus, one that proved instrumental in establishing their relation to their author. The apparatus opened up a new dimension to Shakespeare's identity that would subsequently be taken for granted in his other works. The identification of the first person in the Sonnets with Shakespeare authorized the practice we have already observed in Malone's dating of the plays: circumstances in the Sonnets were matched up with those in Shakespeare's biography; and beneath those biographical circumstances a correspondent interiority began to be posited. Like the factual particulars that prompted them, these inner feelings or experiences further sequestered Shakespeare from the reader, ensconcing him in an introspective space of his own.

The explicit task of the apparatus was to establish the authenticity of the 1609 Sonnets. The first collection of Shakespeare's works, the 1623 Folio, had included only his dramatic works. In the eighteenth century, when the narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were added to Rowe's 1709 edition in a supplementary volume, the Sonnets were still omitted—at least as they had appeared in the 1609 quarto, the only edition published in Shakespeare's lifetime.<sup>50</sup> The sup-

<sup>48</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, ii, 486.

<sup>49</sup> Malone, *Supplement*, i, 579–706, *PPWS*, x. For the history of the 1609 Sonnets and Benson's *Poems*, see Hyder Edward Rollins, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets* (Philadelphia, 1944), ii, 1–52.

plement, edited by Charles Gildon, reproduced instead a 1640 publication entitled *Poems: Written by Wil. Shakespeare. Gent.*, that varied quite flagrantly from the 1609 quarto; and it was only in this form, until Malone, that Shakespeare's sonnets appeared in eighteenth-century editions.<sup>51</sup> Because of its history of exclusion and supersession, the authenticity of the 1609 quarto needed to be established in order to justify first appending it to the Johnson-Stevens 1778 edition and then incorporating it into Malone's 1790 edition. Of all the doubtful works, it was the only one Malone believed to be entirely and unquestionably Shakespeare's. To establish its authenticity, his apparatus adopted a system of cross-references connecting the Sonnets to Shakespeare's other works. The majority of his notes identified verbal parallels between the plays and the sonnets, thereby 'furnishing a very strong proof of their authenticity'. The frequent similarities between expressions in the plays and in the Sonnets were taken as proof of their common authorship by Shakespeare and left 'not the smallest doubt of their authenticity'.<sup>52</sup> 'Many of the thoughts that occur in his dramatic productions are found here likewise; as may appear from the numerous parallels that have been cited from his dramas, chiefly for the purpose of authenticating these poems.' By identifying the particular phrases, rhymes, definitions, and images that appeared in the Sonnets with those of Shakespeare's uncontested works, the footnotes drew the Sonnets into the corpus: 'The numerous passages in them which remind us of the author's plays, leave not the smallest doubt of their authenticity'.<sup>53</sup> The system of cross-references worked both ways, the notes tying the plays to the Sonnets as well as the Sonnets to the plays. The stylistic features they shared—word choices, preferred phrases, favoured senses, coinages—proved them definitively Shakespeare's.

In addition to authenticating the Sonnets, parallels from the plays were used to gloss their obscurities: 'Many passages in these poems being obscure, they have been illustrated with notes, in which all such parallel expressions as have been discovered in our author's dramatick performances are quoted'.<sup>54</sup> Rather than providing a definition or paraphrase for a difficult

<sup>51</sup> See Ch. 2, n. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Malone, *PPWS*, x, 217.

<sup>53</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, xx, 360.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

word or locution, comparable citations from several of Shakespeare's plays were given. Passages from Shakespeare clarified other passages from Shakespeare, giving the impression that his work possessed a morphology of its own. By labelling the form and sense of their language 'Shakespeare's', the apparatus qualified the 1609 *Sonnets* for admission into the works, first as a supplement, then as an integral part of the edition, intertwined with the other works by footnotes that glossed the plays with citations from the *Sonnets* and glossed the *Sonnets* with citations from the plays. The title of the 1790 edition reflected their new status; while previous editors had called their editions either *The Works* or *The Plays*, Malone entitled his edition *The Plays and Poems*.

While this system of cross-references interwove the non-dramatic and the dramatic, in one salient respect the *Sonnets* remained distinct from the other poems as well as the plays. They were written in the first person. So consistent were Malone's identifications of the first person with Shakespeare that by the time of the 1821 edition, Boswell recorded that 'it seems to be generally admitted that the poet speaks in his own person'.<sup>55</sup> Malone's apparatus prepared the way for this identification, suggesting the interchangeability of the name to which the work was attributed on the title-page and on the running title of every page (in the 1609 quarto, 'Shakespeare's *Sonnets*') with the first person pronoun appearing in the poems themselves. The identity was assumed, for example, in dating the *Sonnets*. References in the sonnets to 'my pupil pen' (16) and 'this growing age' (32) were taken to refer to Shakespeare's early poetic career; 'As an unperfect actor on the stage | Who with his fear is put besides his part' (23) was associated with Shakespeare's introduction to the London stage. These internal references suggested that the earliest possible date for the *Sonnets* was 1592, the year Malone believed Shakespeare had begun his theatrical career. An external reference in Francis Meres's 1598 *Palladis Tamia* to the circulation of Shakespeare's 'sugred *Sonnets* among his priuate friends' provided the latest possible date, on Malone's assumption that the 'sugred sonnets' were identical with those of the 1609 quarto.

<sup>55</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, xx. 219.

Having identified the title-page attribution of the *Sonnets* with the 'I' within them, the apparatus continued to fuse internal references with external documentation. In the attempt to name the young man to whom some of the sonnets are addressed, it matched up the initials 'Mr. W. H.' on the prefatory dedication with the wordplay in sonnet 20 ('A man in hue all hues in his controlling') in order to arrive at the name W. Hughes. The name on the title-page—William Shakespeare—similarly found its way into sonnet 135 which was 'formed entirely on our author's Christian name'. So, too, documents were used to determine the identity of the rival poet in sonnets 78–80, 'the better spirit' (80). The poet who was in the early 1590s 'at the zenith of his reputation' while Shakespeare's 'name was but little known' was, Malone concluded, Spenser.<sup>56</sup> In all three instances, antecedents for the pronouns within the sonnets were found in documentary materials, the same kind of 'original and authentic documents' from which Shakespeare's life had been compiled. It should be mentioned that the assignment of antecedents depended on another editorial prescript: the division which Malone's preliminary comments introduced after sonnet 126 ('To this person [W. H.], whoever he was, one hundred and twenty-six of the following poems are addressed. The remaining twenty-eight are addressed to a lady') and repeated before sonnet 127 ('All the remaining *Sonnets* are addressed to a female'). Without such a dictum, the number of antecedents would have remained unspecified. Nothing in the 1609 quarto limited the reference of the second- or third-person pronouns to two individuals.<sup>57</sup> The dating of the *Sonnets*, the attempt to assign proper names to their pronouns, and their

<sup>56</sup> Malone, *PPMS*, x. 193, 258.

<sup>57</sup> Until Malone, there appears to be no reason to assume that the first 126 sonnets were read as being uniformly addressed to a man and the following 28 to a woman. Benson obviously assumed that the beloved was a woman, unless a man was specified. So too did the first eighteenth-century editors of the *Poems*. Charles Gildon referred to the 'Poems being most to his Mistress' ('Remarks', Rowe, 1713, vii); George Sewall assumed the poems to have been inspired by 'a real, or an imaginary Lady', 'a Mistress to play off the beginnings of Fancy' ('Preface', Pope, 1755, x. 447). Even in Bernard Lintot's edition of the 1609 quarto, the *Sonnets* were described as 'One Hundred and Fifty Four Sonnets all of them in Praise of his Mistress, A Collection of Poems in Two Volumes . . . Being all the Miscellanies of Mr. William Shakespeare, which were Publish'd by himself in the Year 1609, and more correctly Printed from those Editions' (1711). The antiquarian William Oldys made the same assumption, according to Malone, and thought that a woman, Shakespeare's wife, was the subject of sonnet 93 (Malone, *PPMS*, xx. 265 n. 4).

division at 126 all increased their applicability to Shakespeare's own life. As the cross-references made the style his, so these specifications designated the content his.

The footnotes extended Shakespeare's involvement in the Sonnets by the repeated evocations of his name, whether to associate or dissociate him from the circumstances implied by the poems. In some instances, it is not clear whether the abundant references throughout the notes to 'poet' and 'author' were intended to denote the writer named on the title-page or the writer designated by the sonnets' first person: 'Shakespeare' or 'I'. For example, in the note on the paradox in sonnet 75, 'And for the peace of you I hold such strife', the use of 'poet' is ambiguous: 'The conflicting passions described by the poet were not produced by a regard to the case or quiet of his friend, but by the high value he set on his esteem'.<sup>58</sup> Yet at other points, the notes quite explicitly intended Shakespeare: 'We learn from the 122d Sonnet that Shakespeare received a table-book from his friend',<sup>59</sup> apparently in exchange for one given to this friend in sonnet 77. So, too, when sonnet 80 admits, 'O, how I faint when I of you do write, | Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,' the reader was to wonder what poet might have intimidated Shakespeare: 'curiosity will naturally endeavour to find out who this *better spirit* was, to whom even Shakespeare acknowledges himself inferior'.<sup>60</sup> When details could not properly be ascribed to Shakespeare, they were glossed as metaphorical: while sonnet 89 instructs, 'Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt', and sonnet 37 concedes, 'So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,' the note maintained that, as in *Coriolanus* and *As You Like It*, 'the expression appears to have been only figurative'.<sup>61</sup> 'If the words are to be understood literally', then line g of the same sonnet ('So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd') would have to be understood to mean 'that our admired poet was also poor and despised, for neither of which suppositions there is the smallest ground'.<sup>62</sup> Nor need such references to Mr. W. H. as 'the master-mistress of my passion' (20) or to himself after death as 'the deceased lover' of the same Mr. W. H. conflict with the one irrefutable 'fact' which, as we have seen, unified the factual biography. Boswell

<sup>58</sup> Malone, *PPMS*, x, 294.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 257-8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 225.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 256.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

evoked it in his continuation of Malone's preliminary remarks to the Sonnets: 'We may lament that we know so little of [Shakespeare's] history; but this, at least, may be asserted with confidence, that at no time was the slightest imputation cast upon his moral character'.<sup>63</sup> For as the apparatus insisted in commenting on both sonnet 20's 'master-mistress' and sonnet 32's 'deceased lover', 'Such addresses to men, however indelicate, were customary in our author's time, and neither imparted criminality, nor were esteemed indecorous'.<sup>64</sup> Like the First Folio's solecisms, the Sonnets' imputations had to be considered in the context of obsolete uses and customs. The same appeal to conventions and customs of the period that we saw Malone use to justify Shakespeare's grammatical and lexical irregularities also served to allow his apparent moral deviations.

The identification between the Sonnets' poetic 'I' and the title-page's documentary 'Shake-speare' was pushed further when allusions in the Sonnets were found to match events or circumstances in Shakespeare's life. Once an historical determination had been made, a subjective response could be inferred. Two references to the stage registered not only Shakespeare's documented involvement with the theatre, but his undocumented feelings about it. An allusion to fortune's having provided no better 'Than publick means, which publick manners breed' (111) was taken as Shakespeare's own lament for 'being reduced to the necessity of appearing on the stage, or writing for the theatre'.<sup>65</sup> On the basis of sonnet 23's simile, 'As an unperfect actor on the stage, | Who with his fear is put besides his part,' Malone conjectured that the lines were written upon Shakespeare's arrival in London and that 'he had perhaps himself experienced what he here describes'. When George Stevens, who contributed notes to Malone's edition, took issue on this point, arguing that Shakespeare no doubt had seen plays in Stratford before he came to London, Malone emphasized the epistemological distinction between observation and experience. While Shakespeare may have *seen* plays before coming to London, he could not until he was a player in London have

<sup>63</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, xx, 220.

<sup>64</sup> Malone, *PPMS*, x, 207.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 281.

been 'acquainted with the *feelings* of a timid actor on the stage'.<sup>66</sup>

The same distinction between observing and feeling was debated in the longest note of the edition: an essay-length note stretching across five pages glossing the simile of sonnet 93's opening lines, 'So shall I live, supposing thou art true, | Like a deceived husband'. The combined strength of documents, anecdotes, and four plays established the relevance of this phrase to Shakespeare himself. The terms of Shakespeare's will, which Malone had carefully perused, suggested that he was 'not very strongly attached' to his wife, for he had made his daughter his executor and had bequeathed his wife 'only an old piece of furniture' and even that as an afterthought, '*the clause relating to her being an interlineation*'.<sup>67</sup> The well-known story of Shakespeare's infatuation with the Oxford vintner's wife, William Davenant's mother, lent additional support to this interpretation, as did Malone's observation 'that jealousy is the principal hinge of four of his plays' and that Shakespeare appeared 'to have written more immediately *from the heart* on the subject of jealousy, than on any other'. The combined evidence from these diverse sources gave Malone firm ground for suspecting 'that the author, at some period of his life, had himself been *perplexed* with doubts, though not perhaps *in the extreme*'.

Stevens rejected this hypothesis too, first by finding legal, personal, and medical reasons to explain away the peculiarities of Shakespeare's will and then by challenging the claim that Shakespeare had himself felt jealousy. He maintained that Shakespeare had expressed with equal vigour other states—Timon's cynicism or Shylock's vindictive cruelty, for example—that he could not be supposed to have experienced. If Shakespeare's writing was most intense in *Othello*, it was because jealousy was 'a commotion of mind the most vehement of all others', as well as being one with which 'every man who loves is in some degree acquainted'. Shakespeare's success in portraying it argued not a special familiarity with the passion, but rather a distance from it: 'accuracy of description can be expected only from a mind at rest'. Malone concluded the debate by again emphasizing the distinction between what

<sup>66</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, xx, 245.

<sup>67</sup> Malone, *PPWS*, x, 266.

Shakespeare felt or experienced and what he observed: 'experience will give a warmth to his colouring, that mere *observation* may not supply' (emphasis added).<sup>68</sup> Though Boswell in commenting on the Sonnets for the 1821 edition disputed his mentor's 'uncomfortable conjecture' about Shakespeare's firsthand familiarity with jealousy,<sup>69</sup> the question of Shakespeare's 'personal' involvement in these poems had been raised irrepressibly. The Sonnets had begun to palpitate.

Disagreement between editors was frequently registered in the footnotes, over a proposed emendation of a word, for example, or an elucidation of an obscure phrase. The conflict recorded in the note on sonnet 93, however, was over an entirely different kind of issue: Shakespeare's relation to the circumstances represented in the text. And Malone's pursuit from the externally observed to the inwardly felt or experienced marked more than a new type of consideration: it signalled an important shift in how Shakespeare was read. Shakespeare was now cast not as the detached dramatist who observed human nature but as the engaged poet who observed himself. His dramatization of jealousy was not that felt by any man in love, but the passion as he himself knew it and expressed it. This consideration, even when qualified as conjecture, marked a crucial redefinition of his relation to his works. It drew Shakespeare, who had formerly been distinguished for his accurate observation of others, into his works, casting him as the subject of his own writing, reflecting on his own psychological condition.<sup>70</sup> When the subject of his observation shifted, so too did the content of his verse. His singular experience, rather than the experience of all men, became the content of his sonnets.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 267, 268.

<sup>69</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPWS*, xx, 309.

<sup>70</sup> As early as the Restoration, Shakespeare was singled out for his intuitions into character that freed him from dependency on traditional models; see Margaret Cavendish in *Sociable Letters* (1662) and John Dryden in *An Essay of Dramatick Poetics* (1668), both included in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers (London, 1974-81), i, 42, 138. See also Pope's evaluation in the preface to his 1725 edition: 'His Characters are so much Nature her self, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as Copies of her. Those of other Poets have constant resemblance, which shews that they receiv'd them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture like a mock-rainbow is but the reflexion of a reflexion. But every single character in Shakespeare is as much an Individual as those in Life itself' (Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays*, p. 45).



Yet the verbal surface enveloping the content was not exactly correspondent to its personalized interior. As the massive note on 'Like a deceived husband' indicated, the truth within could only be approached by departing from the statement as it appeared without. The phrase could not, as the note began by insisting, refer to the jealousy aroused by the infidelity of Shakespeare's wife, for according to Malone's own editorial edict, it occurred in a sonnet addressed to the man Malone identified as Mr. W. H. All the same, it led readers 'to suspect that the author, at some period in his life, had himself been *perplexed with doubts*'. The logic by which Malone arrived at that suspicion was purely circular: the documents on which the biography was based were glossed by the works (dramatic and non-dramatic) in order to divulge his experience of jealousy; and the works were glossed by the biographical documents to reveal the same experience. The objective biographical facts and the subjective responses to them interpenetrated collusively in order to intimate, though never fully disclose, the private truths underlying both.

The apparatus encouraged readers to pry inward by repeatedly substituting Shakespeare for the first person pronoun, in part to strengthen their readings' claim to authenticity, in part to 'eke out the scanty memorials, which have come down to us, of the incidents of his life'.<sup>71</sup> The notes inserted Shakespeare into what they then came to imply was a biographical narrative, making him ubiquitously present in both the style (parallel passages) and the content (outer and corresponding inner experience) of the verses. Yet at the same time as they implanted Shakespeare there, they also rendered him inaccessible or only guessingly discernible. Once saturated with Shakespeare, the text receded from the reader into an interiorized realm that had at best a tangential relation to the surface of the poem. The poem then had to be sounded, penetrated, and decoded in order to yield what had become its unique mystery, secret, or meaning. The more private it was—the more exclusively Shakespeare's—the more it eluded comprehension. Malone's footnotes did not typically illuminate the words Shakespeare used; instead, they attempted to cast light on what

<sup>71</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, xx, 219.

Shakespeare meant or had in mind when he used them. Sometimes the notes appeared definitive in delivering or translating Shakespeare's thoughts: 'Shakespeare considers the propagations of the species as *the world's due*'; 'Then do I expect, says Shakespeare, that death *should fill up the measure* of my days.'<sup>72</sup> In general, however, the notes qualified themselves as speculation: 'By a *summer's story*, Shakespeare *seems* to have meant some gay fiction'; 'Perhaps the poet means, that however slandered his friend may be at present, his *worth* shall be celebrated in future time';<sup>73</sup> 'Shakespeare *seems* here to have the burial service in his thoughts'; 'The poet . . . *seems* to allude to the operation of spinning' (emphases added). The editor's task up until Malone had been to illuminate syntactic complexity, lexical obscurity, and topical allusions; but the 1780 notes continually worked to clarify not so much the sense of the words as Shakespeare's sense of the words. Meanings and allusions took on a subjective cast that required a speculative tone of the notes, a limitation to the realm of 'seems'. When meaning originated in private renderings of unique experience, editorial elucidation and evaluation perforce gave way to conjectural interpretation, a belated hermeneutic analogue to the 'conjectural' or 'intuitive' textual criticism from which earlier editors had dissociated themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Thus the particular experiences that gave Shakespeare definition simultaneously rendered him inscrutable by prompting singular and singularly expressed responses that could not be understood through appeals to general human nature or consensual meaning. While the Sonnets could by corresponding with external fact yield biographical details, true identity—feelings, thoughts, and meanings—remained deeply embedded within the verse. This simultaneous revealing and obscuring occurred on another level as well. Repeatedly in his edition, Malone invoked his own copy of the 1609 quarto, the 'old copy', in order to authenticate its own readings. As Shakespeare's presence in the Sonnets was attended by his inaccessibility, so too the existence of the authentic quarto was haunted by a sense of the irretrievability of the truly authentic text—Shakespeare's own manuscript. As Malone speculated on what Shakespeare

<sup>72</sup> Malone, *PPMS*, x, 194, 210.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 272, 250. <sup>74</sup> See Ch. 2 above.



had meant, so too he guessed at what he had actually penned. The printed words on the page were thrown into question as well as the intentions behind them. The notes thus strained to make Shakespeare's physical manuscript imaginable. Although the quarto read '*chushi*', 'I suspect that our author wrote *just'd*'; 'I once thought that the poet wrote—*sleepy* night, instead of *steepy* night'; 'Perhaps the poet wrote "the *lines* of life," rather than "the *lines* of life"; 'Shakespeare, I believe, wrote with *his* rage' not '*this* rage'; 'I once thought Shakespeare might have written—from time's *quest*' rather than '*chert*'; 'Perhaps Shakespeare wrote—*These* vacant leaves' instead of '*The*'.<sup>75</sup> Occasionally the discrepancy between the imagined manuscript and the existent printed quarto could be assumed the result of the compositor's error: 'The compositor might have caught the word *see* from the end of the line'; 'the letters that compose the word *due* were probably transposed at the press, and the U inverted'; 'I suspect the compositor caught the word from a subsequent part of the line.'<sup>76</sup> Yet however concretely imagined, the manuscript could not be definitively reconstructed any more than Shakespeare's own thoughts and feelings could be positively ascertained.

Malone's attention both to the 'old copy' and to the hypothetical Shakespearean manuscript from which it was printed were unprecedented. As we have seen, until Malone not even the printed text of the 1609 *Sonnets* itself had received much attention. The quarto was never reprinted in the seventeenth century; in the eighteenth century it appeared in 1711 in an edition that apparently did not sell, was published in a 1766 collection of twenty Shakespearean quartos with the purely antiquarian intent of preserving the remaining quarto 'pamphlets' in durable book form, and was edited but never printed in 1768.<sup>77</sup> Not until nearly two centuries after their first publication was their position within the Shakespeare corpus secured. Once situated within Malone's apparatus, they were proven more thoroughly Shakespeare's than any of his other works. That the Sonnets were written by Shakespeare became evident

<sup>75</sup> Malone, *PPWS*, x, 243, 244, 204, 246, 255.

<sup>77</sup> Bernard Lintott, *A Collection of Poems in Two Volumes* (London, 1711). Edward Capell's edited copy of Lintott is in Trinity College; George Steevens's edition of the 1609 *Sonnets* is in *TPS*, iv.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 230, 249, 272.

from their style: the abundant words, phrases, and images that paralleled those in the other works. But it also became evident from their content: Shakespeare's thoughts and observations, reflecting the outside world but above all his own internal feelings and experiences.

Although the identification of 'Shakespeare' with the 'I' in the Sonnets may seem unexceptional now, it would have been virtually impossible to make in the edition which circulated before Malone: John Benson's 1640 *Poems: Written by W<sup>m</sup>. Shakespeare. Gent.* Despite the title's blanket attribution, it is clear that the volume did not intend to claim Shakespearean authorship for all of its contents, for it included three initialled elegies to Shakespeare as well as an appendix with a separate title-page labelled 'An Addition of some Excellent poems . . . by other Gentlemen'.<sup>78</sup> Even with the poems presented as Shakespeare's, Benson's arrangement and apparatus prevented them from representing circumstances and experiences as if they were singularly Shakespeare's. The 1609 sonnets were interspersed with twenty-nine poems from another miscellany, the 1612 *The Passionate Pilgrim or Certain Amorous Sonnets betwixt Venus and Adonis*, written primarily in the third person rather than the first. The poems in the collection, only five of which have since been attributed to Shakespeare, ranged in length from ten to a thousand lines, the longest ones being nine Ovidian epistles by Thomas Heywood. Most of the 1609 sonnets lost their distinctive form in Benson's edition: while it printed 146 of the 154 sonnets, it regrouped them into units of from one to five sonnets to form seventy-two poems and assigned each a title—'Unkinde Abuse', 'Loath to Depart', 'Immoderate Passion'—that abstracted and universalized its content. The pronouns used in the titles to refer both to the lover and to the beloved are consistently in the third person, as in 'In prayse of her beautie though black' and 'His heart wounded by her eye'; without antecedents, they suggest a representative rather than an individuated subject and object. Nor, unsurprisingly, did Benson assume Malone's partition between a group of sonnets addressed to W. H. and to a group addressed to 'a female'; the sonnet that Malone saw as marking the break, sonnet 126, was

<sup>78</sup> 'Finis' appears at the end of the *Poems*, followed by three elegies to Shakespeare and 'An Addition . . . by other Gentlemen'.

not even included. As his titles indicate, when a sonnet did not specify the gender of its addressee, he assumed it to be feminine. For example, he grouped three such sonnets which Malone subsequently directed to Mr. W. H. (113, 114, 115) under the rubric 'Self-Flattery of her Beauty' and entitled sonnet 122 'Upon the receipt of a Table Booke from his Mistresse'.

As its intermixing of poems from other publications as well as its regrouping, reordering, and titling of the 1609 sonnets demonstrated, the 1640 edition had no interest in publishing what Malone struggled to imagine and reproduce: the text Shakespeare had originally written. By assigning generic titles to the contents of both the 1609 and 1612 publications, Benson blocked the identification of the first person with Shakespeare, just as it blocked all forms of historically specific identification. According to Benson's titles, the 'unperfect actor' was not Shakespeare (as in Malone's apparatus) but 'A bashfull Lover'; the 'man in hue' was not Mr. W. H. but the sexually variable partner of 'The Exchange'; the jealousy of a 'deceived husband' was not provoked by Shakespeare's wife but symptomatic of 'A lovers affection though his Love prove unconstant'; the 'better spirit' was not Spenser intimidating Shakespeare with his poetic superiority, but a rival making the lover 'Love-Sicke'. Yet the edition's purpose in avoiding topically was not, as has been assumed, to shield Shakespeare from the 'harmful decds' and 'vulgar scandal' the sonnets reveal, for that concern subtended Malone's identification. It fell upon his immediate successor Boswell to resist the identification by maintaining, as we saw Malone's biography to have done, that 'at no time was the slightest imputation cast upon his moral character'.<sup>79</sup> The identification would have been incompatible with the 1640 edition's presentation of its contents as typical and representative amorous circumstances. It is possible that readers could not recognize the sonnets as such when they were combined to form longer poetic units, shuffled among poems of varying lengths and assigned titles. Indeed, there is no mention of the form 'sonnet' in either Benson's original edition or its eighteenth-century reprints. Retitled *Mr. Shakespeare's Miscellany Poems* and *Poems on Several Occasions*, reprints of the 1640 *Poems* refer to their

<sup>79</sup> Malone-Boswell, *PPMS*, xx, 220.

contents as 'epigrams', that is, short poems distinguished by acumen and wit rather than first-person lyrics generally treating of love.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the numerous editions of Benson that were printed either independently or as supplements to the collected plays, there is evidence that Theobald and Warburton intended to prepare the 1640 *Poems* rather than the 1609 *Sonnets* for their editions of Shakespeare, and that Capell worked on both collections for his edition.<sup>81</sup> The reason for this preference could not have been that the 1609 *Sonnets* was unavailable, for it was twice reprinted during this period, in 1711 and 1766. It was rather that authenticity and first-person writing were not of paramount importance before Malone. There was no commitment in 1640 to precisely what Shakespeare had penned and to exactly what Shakespeare in his own words had done and felt, no preoccupation with either textual authenticity or personal sincerity. This did not mean, however, that the edition was fraudulent and irresponsible, as Malone assumed in describing its contents as 'spurious performances' which upset the original order and imposed 'fantastick titles'.<sup>82</sup> While all of the poems were not 'Written by W. Shakespeare', all of them in the body of the collection had been at some previous point ascribed to him in print. His name had appeared on the title-page of *The Passionate Pilgrim* in a 1599 edition as well as on that of the augmented 1612 edition, the edition which Benson used. Benson had taken two poems ascribed respectively to Marlowe and Raleigh from *England's Helicon*, but shorter versions of both

<sup>80</sup> In Charles Gildon's preface printed in editions of the *Poems* to supplement the 1710, 1714, 1725, and 1728 *Works*, the majority of the poems are classified as epigrams: 'All that I have to say of the Miscellaneous Poems is that they are generally Epigrams, perfect in their kind according to the best Rules that have been drawn from the Practice of the *Ancients* . . . Shakespeare 'has something Pastoral in some, Elegiac in others, Lyric in others, and Epigrammatic in most'; 'Remarks', Rowe, *HWMS*, vii, 458. Capell also appears to have associated sonnets with epigrams, describing them as each containing 'a single thought'; see Vickers, *Critical Heritage*, vi, 76, n. 97.

<sup>81</sup> On Theobald's and Warburton's intention of editing the 1640 *Poems*, see Rollins, *Sonnets*, ii, 30, 334, 605 and *Poems*, pp. 461. In 1775 a volume containing the 1640 collection appeared, printed in the same style as Capell's 1767-8 edition of the plays which it was intended to supplement. William Jaggard records that Capell himself may have edited the supplement. *Shakespeare Bibliography* (New York, 1959).

<sup>82</sup> Malone, *PPMS*, x, 193. See Josephine Waters Bennett, 'Benson's Alleged Piracy of Shakespeare's Sonnets and of Some of Jonson's Works', *Studies in Bibliography*, 21 (1958), 235-48.

poems had been published as Shakespeare's in the 1612 edition.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, he included a song from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Bloody Brother* which had appeared in a shorter version in *Measure for Measure*; like the song from *As You Like It*, it could have been found in the 1623 Shakespeare Folio. 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' had been attributed to Shakespeare in the collection of 'Poeticall Essays' appended to Thomas Chester's *Love's Martyr or Rosalind's Complaint*. If 'ascription to Shakespeare in print' was the criterion for Benson's selection, the poems from all four publications—the 1601 *Love's Martyr*, the 1609 *Sonnets*, the 1612 *The Passionate Pilgrim*, the 1623 *Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*—qualified equally for acceptance.

Benson's publication constituted a fairly full and representative collection of Shakespeare's poetry. Its only notable omissions were substantial, certainly, but perfectly explicable: *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, unlike the 1609 and 1612 publications, had been regularly reprinted from the time of their first appearance.<sup>84</sup> No claim to Shakespeare's authorship could possibly have been intended by the three elegies to him at the end of the *Poems* (two signed by I.M. and W.B. and one anonymous), and the appended final collection was separated by a new heading identifying its contents as 'Additional Poems . . . by other Gentlemen'. Thus all the poems Benson included possessed some relation to Shakespeare: they were either by him, at some point attributed to him in print, in his memory, or (the poems by other gentlemen) in his style as broadly defined by the collection itself.

Another rationale for the collection was announced by its physical format. Benson's 1640 octavo was modelled on Heminge and Condell's 1623 Folio, the second edition of which had been printed in 1632 by the same Thomas Cotes who printed Benson's octavo. The 1640 octavo and the 1632 Folio

<sup>83</sup> *The Passionate Pilgrim* was attributed to Shakespeare on the title-pages of the 1599 edition and of one of the two 1612 editions. For a facsimile of the 1599 edition, see the edition with introduction by Joseph Quincy Adams (New York, 1939); for the 1612 edition, see the edition with introduction by Hyder Edward Rollins (New York and London, 1940).

<sup>84</sup> Unlike the collections of poems Benson drew from, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* had never gone out of print and could therefore not be appropriated. By 1640, *Venus and Adonis* had been reprinted fourteen times and *The Rape of Lucrece* eight. See Rollins, *Poems*, pp. 374–9 and 406–13.

shared more than a printer: both opened with an engraved portrait, an address to the reader, and commendatory verses by some of the same poets.<sup>85</sup> William Marshall's engraving in the octavo (Pl. 4) was clearly taken from Droeshout's in the Folio (Pl. 1); six of the eight lines of the inscription underneath the engraving were taken from Jonson's encomium in the Folio. Benson's address to the reader, like that of Heminge and Condell, attempted to establish both the authority of the edition's copies and the integrity of its publishers. Both publications claimed to have respected the author's wishes: the poems 'appare of the same purity, the Author himself then living avouched'; the plays are printed 'as he conceived them' by colleagues and friends who wished 'the Author himself had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerscen his owne writings'.<sup>86</sup> Both collections stated that their purpose was to perpetuate Shakespeare's glory: Benson's apology—'I haue been somewhat sollicitous to bring this forth to perfect view of all men and in so doing, glad to be serviceable for the continuance of the glory to the deserved Authour in these poems'—amplified Heminge and Condell's insistence that their undertaking was 'without ambition either of self-profit or fame: onely to keep the memory of so worthy a friend, & Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare'. The 1640 *Poems* adaptation of the Folio format declared its own design: as the Folio collected Shakespeare's dramatic works, so the *Poems* gathered his non-dramatic works, with the notable exception of the unprocurable *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Further, by adapting the Folio's apparatus it appropriated something of its authority, despite its modest octavo dimensions. With the 1623 First Folio and the 1599 and 1612 editions of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, William Jaggard had printed the first collections of both Shakespeare's plays and his poems. With the 1632 Second Folio and the 1640 *Poems*, Thomas Cotes printed the second such pair. In 1710 the third appeared, consisting of Rowe's edition of the 1685 Fourth Folio and Gildon's edition of the 1640 *Poems*, as well as the two previously

<sup>85</sup> Leonard Digges's 'To the Memorie of the deceased Authour Maister W. Shakespeare' was printed in the 1623 Folio and reprinted, in a longer version, in the 1640 *Poems*. Both versions are published in Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, ii, 231–2. See also John Frechater, 'Leonard Digges, Ben Jonson, and the Beginning of Shakespeare Idolatry', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21 (1970), 63–75.

<sup>86</sup> All citations from the 1623 Folio are from Hinman, *TW*.

unobtainable Ovidian poems.<sup>87</sup> For almost 150 years, the matching formats coupled together the folio and octavo volumes, the drama and the poetry, to comprise Shakespeare's complete works.

Because of the liberties it took with the attribution and arrangement of its contents, the 1640 collection has since Malone been dismissed as spurious. It has generally been assumed that the edition was intended to hoodwink stationers and readers alike by passing itself off as a new collection by Shakespeare.<sup>88</sup> Yet it has recently been convincingly argued that there was nothing transgressive about the publication.<sup>89</sup> Benson appears to have been a respectable publisher who obtained and published the contents of the *Poems* without violating the regulations then governing book production; his printer, Thomas Cotes, was the established printer of the 1632 Second Folio. That no entry appeared in the Stationers' Register for Benson's publication was not unusual: *The Pastoral Pilgrim* had never been entered and the entry for the 1609 *Sonnets* had expired, and the copy-right to both would therefore have reverted to the Stationers' Company. Benson did register 'An Addition . . . by other Gentlemen' in an entry that made it clear that he was also printing Shakespeare's poems: 'John Benson. Entered for his Copie under the hands of Dr. Wykes and Master Fletcherston warden. An Addition of some excellent Poems to Shakespeares Poems by other gentlemen . . .'<sup>90</sup> It appears doubtful that the wardens would have allowed the publication if they had deemed it illegal, especially if it violated their own claim.

As I shall explain in the next chapter, no modern understanding of literary property is adequate to account for the regulation of book production and circulation in the sixteenth

<sup>87</sup> In 1710, E. Curll published a spurious volume 7 to Tonsen's six-volume edition of Shakespeare edited by Rowe; see n. 80. Edited by Charles Gildon, it was published by Tonsen with the *Works* themselves in 1714.

<sup>88</sup> Malone's censure of the 1640 *Poems* remains traditional: 'nobody who studies Benson's *Poems* without preconceived opinions can fail to see that it was an illegal publication . . . a deliberate and evidently successful attempt to deceive readers and hide the theft'; Rolins, *Sonnets*, ii, 22. Compare Stephen Booth's more qualified explanation: 'he presumably did so for the simple commercial purpose of disguising a pirated reprint as something new'; *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven, Conn., 1977), p. 545.

<sup>89</sup> See Bennett, 'Benson's Alleged Piracy', pp. 235-48, and Hallett Smith, *The Tension of the Lyre: Poetry in Shakespeare's Sonnets* (San Marino, Ca., 1981), pp. 140-44.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted by Bennett, 'Benson's Alleged Piracy', p. 237.

and seventeenth centuries. The Benson addition is instructive precisely because of what appears, from a post-Maloneyan perspective, to be its open disregard for authenticity—for what poems Shakespeare actually wrote and how he intended them to be arranged—as well as for the autobiographical potential of the poems as first-person lyrics. The assumption that the publication was at least unscrupulous if not illegal stems from a later preoccupation with what Shakespeare originally wrote and meant. With Malone, Shakespeare simultaneously became the principal producer of the text and the primary source and referent of its meaning. Benson, however, appears not to have distinguished between what Shakespeare had written and what had been ascribed to him or associated with him in print; nor was he interested in singling out Shakespeare's experience from commonplace occasions and conventional Ovidian encounters.

It may be helpful to think of Benson's mode of attribution in the context of manuscript collections in which ascriptions could indicate roles as various as the author of the poem, the poet in whose style the poem was written, a member of the poet's circle, a reviser or transcriber, and a composer who set the poem to music.<sup>91</sup> Authorship was only one of the functions contributing to a poem's production that included its writing, adaptation, transmission, circulation, and preservation; the author's name, therefore, was only one among several that might be chosen to identify that poem. The ascription worked synecdochally to refer to a poem's production and reproduction, the stages of its materialization being less than entirely distinct when the making of a poem was often a remaking of or response to a prior composition and when the duplication of a poem often modified and adapted the form it copied. Circumstances were different, of course, for a manuscript and for a printed book, for a manuscript's circulation was confined at least initially to a familiar and informed circle that must have known how poetic

<sup>91</sup> Peter Beal, the compiler of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London, 1980), in his response to the attribution to Shakespeare of 'Shall I Die?', explains the various ways attribution can function in manuscripts: 'Names became associated with poems in these miscellanies for a variety of reasons besides simple authorship. A man's name might become linked with a poem in the course of manuscript transmission because he was the copyist, or because it was written by someone in his circle, or because he added his own stanza to it, or wrote a reply to it, or set it to music, and so on,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 Jan. 1986, p. 13.

labours were divided.<sup>92</sup> Yet the printed anthologies which took their materials from manuscript collections must also have adopted their synecdochic mode of attribution, even when what the Folio addressed as 'the great Variety of Readers' could no longer be expected to substitute the productive whole for the signifying part. The materials Benson collected as Shakespeare's *Poems* issued not from Shakespeare's pen but rather from earlier publications bearing his name or associated with his works.

This is not to exclude the possibility that Benson and his publisher intended to increase profits by fleshing out *The Passionate Pilgrim* with the 1609 *Sonnets*, poems from *Love's Martyr*, and verses 'by other Gentlemen'; it was, after all, 'the laudable custom of the Trade, to swell the Volume and the Price', to make it more copious by copying, another instance of how the *copied*/copy cognate proposed in Chapter 2 might take material form.<sup>93</sup> In 1640, after the second edition of the Folio, fifteen editions of *Venus and Adonis*, and eight of *Rape of Lucrece*, the name 'Shakespeare' may have been even more 'sufficient to vent his worke' than it was said to have been in the 1622 stationer's address to the quarto of *Ohello*.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, that the edition's promiscuous content and presumptive attribution were, if not typical, certainly permissible, reflects not lax regulations or unethical policies but rather a more pliable concept of book and author. Until the very notions that are the subject of this present study were fixed and legally codified, authorship—especially when posthumously assigned—was a more flexible and variable ascription having more to do than has been generally allowed with a sprawling nexus of stationers' practices and printed materials than with a direct line to the author and his holograph. The engraved portrait of Shakespeare

<sup>92</sup> For the various modes in which printed texts appropriated the practices of manuscripts, see J. W. Saunders, 'From Manuscript to Print: A Note on the circulation of poetic MSS. in the sixteenth century', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, vi, 8, 1951, 508–28. I wish to thank Arthur Marotti for permitting me to read his major essay, 'Shakespeare's *Sonnets* as Literary Property', which inaugurates an important discussion of the differences between manuscript circulation and book publication: in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, eds. Katherine Maus and Elizabeth Harvey (Chicago, 1990).

<sup>93</sup> Gildon, 'Remarks', p. ii.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Stationer to the Reader', in the 1622 quarto of *Ohello*, quoted by Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, ii, 227–8.

on the title-page of the 1640 *Poems* recalled not the individual Shakespeare but rather the Folio title-page from which it was taken and to which it was also connected by its publishing history and printed format. Even that portrait in the 1623 Folio might have had a more important relation to another printed volume, Jonson's 1616 folio, than to the once flesh-and-blood Shakespeare; it may have been more germane to distinguish Martin Droeshout's engraved, unadorned portrait (Pl. 1) from William Hole's ornate architectonics (Pl. 2) than to provide a likeness faithful to Shakespeare. As Marshall duplicated Droeshout's model to associate the modest poetic octavo with the authoritative dramatic Folio, so Droeshout may have eschewed Hole's precedent in order to assert a different claim to the same folio status, based on propagative, vulgarizing Nature rather than monumental, classicizing Art. In addition, the 1640 *Poems* may have possessed a relation to another publication besides the 1623 Folio: *Benjamin Jonson's Q. Horatius Flaccus: His Art of Poetry Englished By Ben. Jonson. With other Workes of the Author*.<sup>95</sup> Published in the same year and by the same publisher in the same octavo format, also claiming its contents had never been published before, this edition featured on the frontispiece an engraving of the poet by the same William Marshall (Pl. 6), in the form of a classicized or 'artful' bust rather than a natural countenance. Benson's 1640 octavo could then have fulfilled a double function: pairing with the Folio to comprise Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic works and pairing with Jonson's octavo to provide the poems of the two most-acclaimed poets in the language.<sup>96</sup>

Benson's edition reflected a fidelity to a bibliographical rather than a personal entity during a time when the Stationers' Company regulations protected the bookseller's interests rather than the author's. His collection was not designed to preserve the author's poetic output; rather, it established a classification of printed materials according to their status among stationers and readers. The contingencies and pressures of publication affected ascription to a greater degree than the identity of

<sup>95</sup> *Benjamin Jonson's Q. Horatius Flaccus: His Art of Poetry Englished By Ben. Jonson. With other Workes of the Author* (London, 1640).

<sup>96</sup> Peter Blayney has suggested in conversation that this type of 'printing-house logic' would not have been unusual.

an author who, once dead, existed in the printing house primarily as a bibliographic function. To suggest that dead authors in the seventeenth century possessed a bibliographic rather than a personal identity is not to deny that live authors were not concerned with correct attribution. Shakespeare himself has been thought to have objected to *The Passionate Pilgrim*'s attribution to him of verses written by Heywood, an attribution Heywood indignantly contested in print.<sup>97</sup> To authors, there must have been a distinct difference between what they had written and what others had written; nothing less than their reputations, advancement, and patronage depended upon it. Their concerns, however, as we shall see, were not primary to the Stationers' Company, which regulated the printing and selling of books according to their own priorities and to the exclusion of the interests of all but their own members.

When his plays and poems were printed in the seventeenth century, Shakespeare in the printing house was a name in the Stationer's Register and on title-pages rather than a man with a personal identity. Accounts of his life that assigned to him incidents and attributes, like Thomas Fuller's *Worthies of England* (1662) and John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* (1681), circulated in separate compendia in the context of other lives rather than in conjunction with Shakespeare's works. Rowe was the first to bring the two together by prefacing his 1709 *Works* with 'Some Account of the Life . . .'. Yet even when physically juxtaposed, the edition provided no way of interconnecting the two. Though the 'Account' might satisfy the reader's curiosity, it accompanied the works without relating to them: 'And tho' the Works of Mr. *Shakespeare* may seem to many not to want a Comment, yet I fancy some little Account of the Man himself may not be thought improper to go along with them'.<sup>98</sup> It was Malone who converted that 'little Account of the Man himself' into a voluminous biography with a fundamental relation to the works. He provided the mechanism for interrelating the two by inserting the chronology of the plays into the biography and by

<sup>97</sup> In an epistle to the printer appended to *An Apology for Actors*, Thomas Heywood objected to Jaggard's having added his heretical epistles, translations from Ovid, from *Troia Britannica* (1609) to the 1612 *The Passionate Pilgrim* and alluded to Shakespeare's offence at the misattribution. See Rollins's speculations on Shakespeare's reaction: *The Passionate Pilgrim*, p. xx.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays*, p. 1.

arranging the plays in biographical order; only then did the works and life come into contact with one another in a reciprocal relation by which the life illuminated the works and the works eked out the life. Malone's apparatus conferred upon Shakespeare a personal identity that both informed the works and issued from them. It is no wonder, then, that Benson's edition appeared to Malone 'spurious', for clearly Shakespeare was by the end of the eighteenth century much more than a name on title-pages and in register entries, much more than a subject of conversation and reports. Situated within an historical period, differentiated by a factual biography, personalized by outer and inner experiences, Shakespeare had within Malone's apparatus become an 'individual' divisible from the productive network he represented. That autonomy gave new definition and urgency to the categories of both 'authentic' and 'spurious'.

Malone's supplementary notes of 1780, published with the full edition of the works in 1790, conclusively ousted the 1640 *Poems* and instated the 1609 *Sonnets*. Its apparatus simultaneously drew the *Sonnets* into the corpus and fastened them to Shakespeare and only Shakespeare. The procedures by which it authenticated them extended Shakespeare's relation to the *Sonnets* to include not simply style but also content, and not simply what all men experienced, but what Shakespeare uniquely experienced, not only in the public world of observable events and available publications but also in the private world of hidden feeling. Yet the earlier 1640 form in which the *Sonnets* had previously been circulating was indifferent to both that authenticity and that privacy. It contained verses associated with Shakespeare through various publications rather than belonging to him in deed or by right. These verses were assigned titles that denoted them as applicable to the experience of all men rather than emanating from the exclusive experience of the author alone. It was Malone's apparatus that made the *Sonnets Shakespeare's*, both by situating them in the context of his works, themselves enmeshed with the life, and by drawing out allusions that made them singularly and uniquely his.

As we move back in time from Malone, Shakespeare's relation to the *Sonnets* becomes increasingly attenuated. Just prior to Malone, Stevens in 1766 had based his acceptance of the 1609



*Sonnets* as Shakespeare's on the information provided by the quarto title-page: 'That they were published in 1609, by G. Eld, one of the printers of [Shakespeare's] plays . . . added to the consideration that they made their appearance with his name, and in his lifetime, seems to be no slender proof of their authenticity.'<sup>99</sup> In Gildon's edition of Benson that supplemented Rowe's 1709 edition, the style of each poem or epigram bore the 'Author's Mark and Stamp upon it' in the form of 'the frequent *Catachreses*, his Starts aside in Allegories, and in short his Versification, which is very unequal; sometimes flowing smoothly but gravely like the Thames, at other times down right Prose'. Gildon allowed, however, that the content, unlike the style, was less clearly personalized: 'it is but too visible, that Petrarch had a little infected his way of thinking on their subject'—'Love and its Effects'.<sup>100</sup> The generic nature of the content was stressed still more, as we have seen, by the labels Benson assigned the verses in his 1640 edition. Finally, according to the very first recorded allusion to the Sonnets in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* of 1598, what distinguished the style of the verses as well as their content was their relation not to Shakespeare but to Ovid: 'As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to live in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*. Witness his *Venus* and *Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends, & c.'<sup>101</sup> The 'sugred Sonnets' no less than the two narrative poems derived their 'sweetness' from Shakespeare's 'mellifluous and hony-tongued' style; but that style expressed not Shakespeare, but rather 'the sweete wittie soule of Ouid'. It was Ovid's soul that was transmitted into Shakespeare's verse, as Shakespeare's well-versed circle of 'priuate friends' would no doubt have recognized.<sup>102</sup> In the sentence describing this trans-

<sup>99</sup> Stevens, *TPS*, iv, preface.

<sup>101</sup> Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, p. 281, '2'. Thomas Tyrwhitt first brought this source to light in 1766; see Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 167.

<sup>102</sup> For speculations on the taste of Southampton's circle and Shakespeare's 'priuate friends', see G. H. Hobday, 'Shakespeare's *Venus* and *Adonis* Sonnets', *Shakespeare Survey*, 26 (1973), 103–9; Arthur Marotti, "'Love is not love': Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order', *English Literary History*, 49 (1982), 410–12, and Marion Trousdale, *Shakespeare's Poetry*, forthcoming. The 1612 edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim* bore witness both to the popularity of Ovidian poems and to their association with Shakespeare when it expanded its title to *The Passionate Pilgrim Or Certaine Amorous Sonnets Betwene Venus and Adonis*.

migrational metamorphosis, Meres himself tapped the same sweet and witty Ovidian fountainhead, as is evidenced by the wordplay on 'wittie' and 'witness', the strain of savoury adjectives ('sweete', 'mellifluous', 'sugred') and their erotic undertones, which Ovid's very name was capable of conjuring up within social and literary circles like those of Shakespeare's 'priuate friends'. Also animated by Ovid, Meres proved himself privy to the very artifice he applauded, at the same time illustrating with his own euphuistic prose how English could rival its ancient models, the argument of the discourse containing this reference.

Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* provided the most consequential contemporary reference to Shakespeare. Brought to light in 1766, this work proved crucial to Malone's major projects as defined in Chapters 1–3: in confirming the authenticity of the plays published before 1598 without Shakespeare's name on the title-page, in providing dates for his characterization of Shakespeare's period by yielding information about some 125 Elizabethan writers, painters, and musicians, and, above all, in grounding the chronology of the works by giving *termini ad quem* for eleven plays as well as the Sonnets. The materials relevant to authenticity and the chronology were derived from two sentences; the materials contributing to the construction of an historical period were based on the ten-page 'A comparative discourse of our English Poets with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets' consisting of long heterogeneous inventories of classical authors and their British counterparts, many of whom have since been forgotten, as the list of English tragedians demonstrates: 'the Lorde *Buckhurst*, Doctor *Leg* of Cambridge, Doctor *Edes* of *Oxford*, maister *Edward Ferris*, the Authour of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, *Marlow*, *Pele*, *Watson*, *Kid*, *Shakespeare*, *Drayton*, *Chapman*, *Decker*, and *Beniamin Jonson*'.<sup>103</sup> The rest of Meres's 333-page commonplace book consisted of sententious and poetic passages freely transcribed not from authentic sources, but from quotation books, epitaph books, and compendia of universal knowledge. His critical comments were lifted from other writers without acknowledgement; some of his historical details concerning British authors had no

<sup>100</sup> 'Remarks', Rowe, *HS*, vii, 445, 446, 450.

<sup>103</sup> Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, p. 283.



factual basis whatsoever, having been lifted from classical accounts; not a single date was given.<sup>104</sup>

There is more than irony in the observation that the late-sixteenth-century source on which Malone depended respected none of the late-eighteenth-century premisses he assumed and secured—not even (as the inclusion of Shakespeare's name in several of those indiscriminating lists indicates) Shakespeare's pre-eminence. There is illustration of the radical incompatibility between the textual imperatives and desiderata that instructed reading and understanding at these two historical junctures.

<sup>104</sup> D. C. Allen, in his critical edition of *Francis Meres' Treatise 'Poetic'*, establishes that Meres borrowed both the form and content of this tribute from the 1520 *Ojibina* by Ravastus Textor and merely inserted the English names (Urbana, Ill., 1933), p. 35. The title-page of the 1634 edition of *Palladis Tamia* substitutes it *A Treatise of Poetrie, Morall, and Philosophical Similes and Sentences, Generally Useful*.

## 5

## Shakespeare's Entitlement: Literary Property and Discursive Enclosure

Copley's painting has served to illustrate how Malone's apparatus enclosed Shakespeare in a discrete period and a singular identity both derived from and sustained by authentic documents. Both the painting and the apparatus scrupulously attend to historical facts and individuated subjects, as if the one entailed the other. A unique event (Charles's entry) in precisely specified space and time (the House of Commons on 4 January 1642) involves participants differentiated by proper names and unique identities: Charles I, Prince Rupert, Lenthall, Walsingham, Faulkland, and the fifty-three other participants enrolled in the brochure available at the painting's first showing in 1793.<sup>1</sup> As if to authenticate the work's minutiae, their primary source, the assistant clerk John Rushworth, is depicted at the far right taking minutes, documenting the event as it occurs.<sup>2</sup>

Yet it may be more than the style of Copley's painting—its meticulous focus on particulars (including, as one contemporary viewer sniped, even 'buttonholes')—that affiliates it with Malone's Shakespeare apparatus.<sup>3</sup> As Malone pointed out, in addition to representing Charles's climactic entry, it 'cannot but be also a very flattering exhibition to every Englishman, an arbitrary monarch attempting the grossest violation of the privilege of Parliament and foiled in the attempt'.<sup>4</sup> To the glory of all Englishmen, the painting exhibited the preservation of

<sup>1</sup> The portraits are identified in Julius David Prown, *John Singleton Copley in England 1774-1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), fig. 600.

<sup>2</sup> Although Rushworth's minutes were the primary source, Malone also drew from several of the members' diaries. Roy Strong lists the first-hand accounts Malone recommended to Copley in 'And When Did You Last See Your Father?' *The Victorian Painter and British History* (London, 1978), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Prown, *John Singleton Copley*, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> Malone's letter to Copley of 4 January 1782 is discussed by Strong, *The Victorian Painter*, p. 28 and Prown, *John Singleton Copley*, pp. 343-50; it is reprinted in Martha Babcock Armory, *The Domestic and Artistic Life of John Singleton Copley, R.A.* (Boston, 1882), pp. 450-53.