Introduction: "raptures of futurity"

> I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze and loftier than the Pyramid's royal pile, one that no wasting rain, no furious north wind can destroy, or the countless chain of years and the ages' flight, I shall not altogether die, but a mighty part of me shall escape the death-goddess. On and on shall I grow, ever fresh with the glory of after time.
>
> (Horace, *Ode* 30, 1–8)[1]

The pathos of the monument metaphor that Horace employs in the epigraph above normally derives from the admission that poems cannot replace people. Although texts stand in for persons, they are not equivalent to them, and therefore cannot compensate fully for the loss their absence creates. The poetic monument that Horace has built, however, deviates from this practice. The poem not only compensates for the absence of the poet, but the absence created by his loss becomes a necessary and even welcome prerequisite for the unlimited fame that posterity will confer on him. Rather than memorializing the poet we no longer have access to, the poem preserves the "mighty part" of Horace that will "escape the death-goddess," purposefully deflecting attention away from the mortal person in favor of the immortal poem.[2] Unlike actual monuments, moreover, which are subject to the "wasting rain" and "furious north wind," Horace's poem will not decay over "the countless chain of years and the ages' flight."[3] The tenor of the metaphor, in this way, overtakes its vehicle by defeating time.

[1] Horace, *Horace: The Odes and Epodes*, C.E. Bennett (trans.) (Heinemann, 1968).

[2] "The boast 'I shall not die' (non moriar)," Aaron Kunin observes, "is qualified by 'altogether' (omnis), which means that the speaker still has to die, just not completely; a 'mighty part' (multaque pars) will continue to live, and even 'grow' (crescam) past the threshold of death." A. Kunin, "Shakespeare's Preservation Fantasy," *PMLA* 124 (2009): 93.

[3] The claim " 'Non omnis moriar' (I shall not wholly die)," in Ramie Targoff's words, "is the boldest possible affirmation of poetry's power, surpassing even the monuments of kings as a means of preservation." R. Targoff, *Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 138.

The point is not that the creation of poetry prolongs or sustains the life of the writer, but that it performs the superior function of preserving and enlarging those elements of his identity that the poem contains; the goal of the poet is not to live forever, but rather to not "altogether" die.

Horace provides an extreme example of what Andrew Bennett has called the "immortality effect," or the "perennial fascination" that "writers, artists and other manufacturers of cultural artifacts" have with "the ability of a poem, novel, statue, painting, photograph, or symphony to survive beyond the death of the artist."[4] In Raymond Himelick's words, "the literary fame convention was in the Elizabethan air,"[5] particularly, and its effects are abundant in the work of poets such as Samuel Daniel and Edmund Spenser, both of whom make explicit attempts to reorient Horace's quest for fame within the context of early modern England. Daniel's popular sonnet sequence *Delia* (1592), for example, takes on Horace directly when he boldly proclaims that his words will remain a "lasting monument" capable of conferring immortality not only upon himself but also his mistress. "If they remaine," Daniel assures his muse, "then thou shalt live thereby. / They will remaine, and so thou canst not die" (145).[6] Spenser, who represented himself as both the heir to Chaucer and as England's Virgil, sought to eternize himself by conflating his immortalizing aspirations with those of his monarch. Seeking to legitimize Queen Elizabeth's reign, her family line, and her religion, *The Faerie Queene* was intended not only as an English epic but a Protestant one as well.

Allusions to the eternizing claims of Horace and those of other classical and humanist predecessors, such as Petrarch and Ovid, as well as the immortalizing ambitions that underwrite them, also surface frequently in the works of the early modern dramatists. Nevertheless, traditional accounts of their work depict these writers as surprisingly immune to the ambitions that Horace describes and that the poets of their age embrace.[7] Of all the major playwrights, only Ben Jonson, who self-consciously modeled his career after Horace's, is thought to have harbored ambitions for the future

[4] A. Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

[5] S. Daniel, *Musophilus: Containing a General Defense of All Learning*, R. Himelick (ed.) (Purdue University Press, 1965), 31.

[6] "As the sonnet vogue develops over the course of the following decade (the 1590s)," Targoff observes, "poets represent themselves more and more confidently as working in a genre capable of competing with other forms of preserving memory, beauty, or even – in the Horatian manner – some part of the lovers themselves" (Targoff, *Posthumous Love*), 143.

[7] This passage, along with Golding's version of the last lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were, in Booth's words, "so regularly echoed in the Renaissance that it is impossible and unnecessary to guess whether a poet who uses them had them at first hand or not." Quoted in W. Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, S. Booth (ed.) (Yale University Press, 2000), 227–228.

of his work, ambitions so manifest that it has been easy to consider him the polar opposite of his contemporaries. Richard Helgerson's influential *Self-Crowned Laureates*, for example, sets Jonson apart from his fellow playwrights, grouping him with the epic poets Spenser and Milton. By the time Jonson began his theatrical career, Helgerson writes, "the expansion of the literary market, particularly the market for plays, had brought into existence a small but active group of true professionals, men who depended on writing for a livelihood."[8] These "professional" playwrights, who included Marlowe and Shakespeare among their ranks, managed to create a body of literature that was both popular in its own time and has flourished in succeeding generations. Despite the enduring value of these plays, however, scholars of the period have argued that these writers had little if any regard for the future of their works. The playwrights of the era are said to have provided Jonson with a foil against which to position himself and legitimize his laureate aspirations. Had they not existed, Helgerson argues, Jonson "would perhaps have had to invent them."[9]

The primary aim of this book is to offer a new model for understanding the relationship between early modern dramatists and literary posterity. Whereas critics have long noted Jonson's proprietary claims over his texts, and have recently re-evaluated Shakespeare's interest in print, these approaches underestimate the extent to which the plays themselves engage with issues involving futurity. My project redresses this oversight by elaborating two central claims. First, I argue that in spite of the supposed ephemerality of theatrical works, early modern playwrights were in fact deeply invested in whether their plays would endure as literary objects, and their plays offer a range of responses to this issue. These playwrights, that is to say, concern themselves with the perpetuation of their works and in doing so they also concern themselves with self-perpetuation. Second, I suggest that the various ways in which these dramatists thematize their interest in self-perpetuation in the plays reflects a broader cultural preoccupation with memorialization. To demonstrate this pervasive but critically overlooked connection, I examine how the playwrights of this period, many of whom wrote poems as well as plays, resituate familiar poetic motifs involving commemoration into dramatic contexts. There is an inherent tension between the way in which these writers dramatize attempts at memorialization and the question of whether their plays will endure as literary artifacts capable of projecting their authors' legacies into

[8] R. Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (University of California Press, 1983), 22.
[9] Ibid.

the future. The generic distinctions between poetry and drama allow early modern dramatists to forge self-conscious relationships to these conceits and to convey, to differing degrees, their confidence or lack of faith that plays can provide a stable vehicle for posterity. At the heart of this book is the idea that early modern dramatists were in a unique position to explore the troubling discrepancy between, on the one hand, the desire for posthumous fame and, on the other, the uncertain mode of representation that was their only means of fulfilling that desire. Excavating these anxieties yields powerful insight into the thematic obsession with monumentality and posterity that drives these significant literary works.

I.1 "No Sooner Shew'd but Spent"

Despite his insistence on the monumentality of plays, Thomas Heywood consistently emphasizes that the business of producing successful theatre involves performers as well as writers, and stresses the unlikelihood of producing an enduring achievement even when the two converge under ideal circumstances. The prologue to *Part One* of *If You Know Not Me, You Know No Bodie; or The Troubles of Queene Elizabeth* (1605) describes the plight of plays in a manner that forms a useful bridge to the concerns of this study:

> Plays have a fate in their conception lent,
> Some to short liv'd, no sooner shew'd, than spent;
> But borne to day, to morrow buried, and
> Though taught to speak, neither to go nor stand,
> This: (by what fate I know not) sure no merit,
> That it disclaims, may for the age inherit.[10]

Heywood asserts that plays are living things only during the act of performance; even the ones that gain popular acclaim could expect to be "buried" after a few days, with most "no sooner shew'd than spent." Unlike poetry, the "life" of plays depends on the ability of actors to animate them as well as an audience's appreciation. Heywood's acute, clear-sighted understanding of his profession is made more poignant by its accuracy regarding his own chances of gaining immortality.

The idea that playwrights such as Heywood took more than a casual interest in the literary value of their work is, of course, not unique to this project. Before establishing the historical and cultural conditions that gave rise to the focus on posterity we see in the plays, I therefore address how

[10] T. Heywood, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood* (Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964), 1:191.

scholars of the period have assessed the relationship between early modern drama and literary immortality. Recent scholarship has questioned whether the categories that Helgerson outlines – professionals and laureates – are adequate to describe the ambitions of the playwrights responsible for the theatrical scene that blossomed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Perhaps most prominently, Lukas Erne's *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* challenges the widespread view that Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists were indifferent to print, which, Erne writes, "had become an agent of the greatest importance in the construction of literary reputation by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries."[11] Positioning himself against theatrically minded critics who argue that Renaissance playwrights paid no attention to the posterity that print represents, Erne contends that a more historically responsible exploration of the publication history of Shakespeare's plays suggests that he was concerned with writing for both a theatrical and a readerly audience. To substantiate this position, Erne points out that the majority of Shakespeare's plays were printed during his lifetime, arguing that "Shakespeare's attitude towards the emergent printed drama" and the place his plays occupied within it "greatly affected" their composition.[12] In the recently released *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, which builds on the argument *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* begins, Erne aims to prove that "Shakespeare wanted to be published, bought, read and preserved, and that indeed he was all those things."[13]

Although Erne's focus is Shakespeare, much of his research applies to early modern dramatists in general. The questions he raises involving the authorial ambition of early modern playwrights and the form in which they wished to be "preserved" for posterity are germane to this study, as are the debates his work has launched among Shakespeare critics. As Erne acknowledges in the preface to the second edition of *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, his conclusions have provoked "territorial anxieties" among bibliographic scholars and, to use Erne's phrase, the "so-called performance critics" who feel that his work violates their sense of Shakespeare as a playwright focused on creating works for the stage. At the center of these anxieties, I would argue, is the distinction his work draws, or seems to draw, between the "theatrical" and the "literary." Erne concedes "that the terms can be problematic, since they may suggest a dichotomy where none exists."[14] Defending his work against those who suggest that an implicit

[11] L. Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, *Second Edition* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32.
[12] Ibid., 35.
[13] L. Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9.
[14] Erne, *Literary Dramatist*, 4.

anti-theatrical prejudice underlies this distinction, however, Erne explains in the following that the boundaries between the two "were far more porous in Shakespeare's drama" than most of these critics account for:

> Instead of having played out in separate spheres, the literary and the theatrical often overlapped . . . "Literary" is a convenient term for designating Shakespearean dramatic authorship, and one reason is the term's elasticity . . . Shakespeare was aware of and not indifferent to the readerly (or literary) reception of his plays (in print and, conceivably, manuscript); he and many of his contemporaries considered his printed plays as more than discardable ephemera, as literary texts of some prestige . . . "Literary" does not mean "untheatrical" . . . The phrase "literary dramatist" encapsulates at once a style of writing, an anticipated readerly reception, a claim for generic responsibility, and an authorial ambition. What it does not mean is that Shakespeare was not simultaneously a man of the theater.[15]

Although Erne claims that there is little to choose between the literary and the theatrical, his definition of what constitutes the former is far more precise than his sense of the latter, and the two terms clearly denote different types of experience. A "literary" text, Erne suggests, is intended to reach readers and extend beyond the immediate reception of audiences. The literary component of the description involves potential "prestige," "generic responsibility" and "authorial ambition." The closest Erne comes to defining the theatrical is to stipulate that the term "literary" does not mean "untheatrical." The tension at the heart of this comparison involves the difference between experiences meant to last and those not expected or intended to endure. The experience of watching a play, Erne implies, is an evanescent, ephemeral event, whereas reading is a more lasting experience.

Implicit in Erne's distinction between the literary and the theatrical is the tension between transience and permanence that is always at issue in discussions of theatre, a medium that emphasizes present rather than retrospective experience. The status of theatre as a genre that foregrounds its relationship with transience has long been thought to correspond with the lack of interest early modern dramatists took in the future of their work. I contend, however, that this interest intensifies rather than diminishes when we consider how the eternizing hopes of these writers relate to the dramatic situations their plays consistently put on stage. Shakespeare and the other playwrights in this study dramatize their concerns with whether their work will endure for posterity in a manner that obliges their audience to consider their own relationships to their posthumous

[15] Ibid.

identities. Early modern dramatists were in a unique position to address their culture's concerns regarding commemoration because the experience of live theatre – *because* rather than *in spite* of its reliance on ephemeral illusions and emotions – brings these concerns vividly to life by dramatizing them, by literally rendering them visible through the act of performance.[16]

Whereas Erne's contention that Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists hoped that their plays would be read as well as performed is persuasive, his definition of the literary too often seems to come at the *expense* of the theatrical rather than a conflation of the two terms. According to the criteria *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* sets forth, in fact, a significant percentage of Shakespeare's audience was capable of having a "theatrical" experience but not a "literary" one. This conclusion underestimates not only an audience's ability to come to terms with the more rapid pace of early modern performances but also the extent to which the stage picture the words create advances the ability to process the words the actors speak. "All playgoers in 1600," Andrew Gurr informs us, "many of them illiterate, were practiced listeners"; the "business of hearing was more important than the business of seeing."[17] Erne rightly draws attention to the opening chorus of *Romeo and Juliet's* reference to "two-hours traffic of our stage" as evidence of the cuts he argues for, but neglects to consider the relevance of the plea in the following line that the audience "attend" the play with "patient ears." That early modern playgoers went to *hear* a play as well as see it seems in some cases to satisfy a desire to be overwhelmed by the very qualities that Erne considers too poetical for the stage.[18] The

[16] Robert Weimann argues along similar lines in the following: "Without, then, in the least wishing to underrate, let alone downplay the power and the poetry that distinguish Elizabethan dramatic writing, I propose to view its forms and functions as participating, together with performance, in important shifts of social interests and cultural needs." R. Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

[17] A. Gurr, "The Shakespearean Stage" in W. Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare, Second Edition*, S. Greenblatt, W. Cohen, J. Howard, and K.E. Maus (eds.)(W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 90.

[18] This tension between "theatricality" and "literariness" emerges most fully in the final chapter of *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, where Erne reads variant texts of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V* and *Hamlet* alongside one another in order to trace their trajectory from "short, theatrical texts" to "long, literary texts." Longer texts, theatre historians have long conceded, needed to be cut on stage to roughly 2,500 lines in order to approximate the "two hours traffic of our stage" that the chorus of *Romeo and Juliet* promises. Once again, Erne's notions of what constitutes a theatrical moment versus a literary one are unconvincing. To take one of his examples drawn from *Romeo and Juliet*, Erne notes that, in the second quarto, Juliet responds to her father's orders to marry Paris by proclaiming: "Good Father, I beseech you on my knees, / Heare me with patience, but to speake a word." The first quarto, in contrast, which Erne believes is intended for the benefit of potential readers rather than audience members, shortens Juliet's speech by omitting her line about kneeling and adding the stage direction *She kneeles downe*. "An audience that can see Juliet kneel," Erne argues, "does not need to be told that she is kneeling. Accordingly, Q1 avoids

prologue, in Brian Walsh's words, "calls the audience's attention to the temporal pressure under which the play will unfold . . . theatre happens, and leaves only a scant material and memorial traces to mark that it happened."[19] The use of poetical language on stage does not diminish the theatrical energy of the performance; instead, as Walsh emphasizes, the use of this language heightens the intensity by assimilating it into the action of the play itself.

Although Shakespeare was not alive to oversee its publication, critics have frequently adduced the First Folio as evidence of his interest in his plays reaching readers. By overseeing their publication, David Kastan suggests in the following, Heminge and Condell were erecting a monument for Shakespeare that guaranteed that his plays would remain "alive":

> Although Shakespeare did indeed write his plays to be performed, they quickly escaped his control, surfacing as books to be read and allowing Shakespeare to 'live' no less vitally in print than he does in the theater. If the 1623 folio is a memorial tribute, 'an office to the dead,' as John Heminge and Henry Condell say in their dedicatory epistle, it is one in which the departed is brought back to life in the very act of publication.[20]

Although I agree with Kastan's conclusions concerning the intention to memorialize Shakespeare, the process he describes is missing a step. Initial

tautology by confining the information about Juliet's kneeling to a stage direction." Erne, *Literary Dramatist*, 247.

Erne's intuition seems perfectly reasonable to the modern reader, to whom a line reaffirming what an audience could clearly see comes across as superfluous. A working knowledge of Shakespeare's stage conventions, however, suggests that the opposite conclusion is at least as likely to be true. Although early modern play-texts rarely contain specific stage directions, they are saturated with "embedded stage directions," or moments in the text that indicate the physical action of the actor on stage. To take one of many examples of this practice, consider Macbeth's famous soliloquy before he murders the sleeping King Duncan:

> Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. (2.1.33–35)

In three lines, Shakespeare provides the actor playing Macbeth with at least three clear indications of Macbeth's actions on stage without the benefit of an explicit stage direction. Macbeth notices and reacts to the sight of the dagger in line one; he attempts unsuccessfully to "clutch" it in line two, and realizes that the dagger remains visible in line three. A few lines later he resolves this dilemma by drawing his own dagger. In like manner, Juliet's line "I beseech you on my knees" eliminates the need for a stage direction by alerting the actress or, on Shakespeare's stage, actor, playing Juliet that Shakespeare intends for Juliet to kneel. The stage direction *She Kneeles downe* could therefore be considered just as superfluous in a theatrical text as Erne concludes it is helpful to a literary one. Including the line, moreover, works just as well for readers as including the stage direction.

[19] B. Walsh, *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 27–28.

[20] D. Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 9.

theatrical success was necessary to inspire the desire to bring the plays "back to life" in print. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare's ability to control this process was in this way dependent on his actors as well as the quality of the plays themselves. Erne and others rightly emphasize the injunction to "read him again and again" included in the prefatory matter, but this introductory material also reinforces the importance of theatrical success to a possible future in print. Including the names of the actors, I would add, targets not only future readers but also readers who may have seen the plays performed, or had received positive reports from those who had, and wished to re-create the experience. Implicit in this desire, I would argue, is that the experience of theatre cannot be fully recuperated, or "published" into permanence.[21]

The bibliographic turn in criticism epitomized by Erne and others cannot help but alter received notions that early modern playwrights were indifferent to print, and that this indifference was indicative of the value they ascribed to their works. I agree with the contention that emphasizing print as a means of furthering the potential for literary immortality need not come at the expense of our sense of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as playwrights invested in pleasing audiences. At the same time, however, I contend that these studies too often neglect to consider the ways in which questions of literary ambition emerge from within the thematic material of the plays themselves.[22] David Bergeron's *Textual Patronage in English*

[21] As George Donaldson observes, although "Heminge's and Condell's imperative appeal is supported by a surety that arises from Shakespeare's proven popularity, their subsequent statements make it plain that the future success of the Folio is connected to the past success of the public performances of the plays contained in it." In G. Donaldson, "The First Folio: 'My Shakespeare' / 'Our Shakespeare': Whose Shakespeare?" in *Shakespeare's Book: Essays in Reading, Writing and Reception*, R. Meek, J. Rickard and R. Wilson (eds.) (Manchester University Press, 2008), 187–206, 194.

[22] For other prominent examples of this bibliographic turn in studies of early modern drama, see D. Brooks, *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2005); P. Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); S. Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Cheney's *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, whose title forges a purposeful relationship with Erne's work, also calls for a "fuller, more historically accurate classification" of Shakespeare's status as an author. Arguing that readers have too often neglected his poems in favor the plays when considering Shakespeare's sense of himself as a writer, Cheney points out that Shakespeare was an author who "wrote plays for both stage and page alongside his freestanding poems, and who ended up bridging the divide between the professional exigencies of the bustling commercial theatre and the longer-term goals of literary immortality" (xii). To substantiate this thesis, Cheney locates examples of what he calls "Shakespeare's self-concealing authorship," in his plays, where we can "find" Shakespeare "within the language of his own fictions." Cheney's methodology, in this way, approximates my own in that it seeks to discern Shakespeare's literary ambitions by considering how they surface as literary concerns in his work. Similar to Erne, however, Cheney's discussion of Shakespeare's desire for literary immortality seems to come at the expense of his theatrical sensibilities. I would argue, with Jeffrey Knapp, that Cheney "overcorrects when he disputes the claim that drama was Shakespeare's principal medium" and that

Drama, 1570–1640, for example, focuses entirely on the prefatory material surrounding printed early modern plays, arguing that one useful way of considering how Renaissance dramatists defined themselves "can be found in the dedications and addresses," for "short of letters, diaries, or comments from others, we have no other consistent record of how dramatists thought about their situations."[23] Bergeron suggests that the "epistles dedicatory and addresses to the readers underscore the playwrights' determination to make their writing a published book."[24]

This prefatory material is illuminating, and I make ample use of it as evidence to substantiate how Jonson, Webster, and Fletcher in particular envisaged their posterity as authors. What Bergeron's insights do not consider, however, is that the issues these playwrights introduce in their prefatory material almost always self-consciously telescopes the dramatic material that follows. To determine how these playwrights felt about the future of their works, I argue, we must consider how issues involving posterity manifest themselves within the plays. *Monuments and Literary Posterity in Early Modern Drama* is the first study to treat in any sustained way the plays as thematic reflections on their chances of enduring for posterity rather than focusing on extratextual material such as print history and prefatory matter.

Jeffrey Knapp's discussion of the false dichotomy between "authorship" and "mass entertainment" that often arises in reference to early modern playwrights provides a helpful way of reframing Erne's distinction of the literary and the theatrical. The desire for literary immorality, Knapp reminds us, did not negate or come at the expense of the ambition to gain the more immediate notoriety offered by the public stage. Once the permanent theaters were built in London, there was "real fame and fortune at stake" in the business of writing plays. As Knapp points out, these possibilities inspired "competition for the social and financial capital to be gained from public as well as court performances" and "lent greater weight to the hierarchical ranking of Renaissance playwrights than it had ever possessed before in English literary or theatrical circles."[25] In his "Defence of Plays" (1592),

"Shakespeare's theatrical career dominated his sense of authorship." J. Knapp, *Shakespeare Only* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 166, n. 78. Cheney's claim, moreover, that "Shakespeare is an alert reader of Spenser's laureate self-fashioning, and organizes his own art in opposition to it" (22), separates Shakespeare from his fellow playwrights, whereas I argue that we learn more about his literary ambitions when we situate him among them.

[23] D. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570–1640* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 17.

[24] Ibid., 3.

[25] Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, 26. Although the idea that it is "impossible to reconcile the high standards of elitist connoisseurship with the low standards" that a mass audience demands, Knapp continues,