

*The*PHOENIX *and*TURTLE

By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

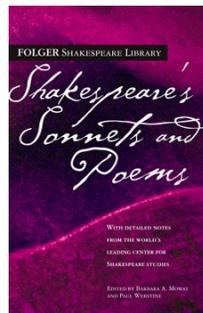
Edited by BARBARA A. MOWAT
and PAUL WERSTINE

Folger Shakespeare Library

<https://shakespeare.folger.edu/>

Get even more from the Folger

You can get your own copy of this text to keep. Purchase a full copy to get the text, plus explanatory notes, illustrations, and more.



Buy a copy.

Contents

Front Matter	From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library Textual Introduction
The Phoenix and Turtle	The Phoenix and Turtle

From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library

It is hard to imagine a world without Shakespeare. Since their composition more than four hundred years ago, Shakespeare's plays and poems have traveled the globe, inviting those who see and read his works to make them their own.

Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of "taking up Shakespeare," finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds. These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as The Folger Shakespeare (formerly Folger Digital Texts), we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

The New Folger Editions of Shakespeare's plays, which are the basis for the texts realized here in digital form, are special because of their origin. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is the single greatest documentary source of Shakespeare's works. An unparalleled collection of early modern books, manuscripts, and artwork connected to Shakespeare, the Folger's holdings have been consulted extensively in the preparation of these texts. The Editions also reflect the expertise gained through the regular performance of Shakespeare's works in the Folger's Elizabethan Theatre.

I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare's works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exists to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library

Textual Introduction

By Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine

Until now, with the release of The Folger Shakespeare (formerly Folger Digital Texts), readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare's plays and poems had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays and poems. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text of all these works: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare's plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of *Hamlet*, two of *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and others. Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare's text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed "improper" and "indecent" for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See *The Tempest*, 1.2: "Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee..."). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Shakespeare texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from *Othello*: "[If she in chains of magic were not bound,]"), half-square brackets (for example, from *Henry V*: "With [blood] and sword and fire to win your right,"), or angle brackets (for example, from

Hamlet: “O farewell, honest (soldier.) Who hath relieved/you?”). At any point in the text, you can hover your cursor over a bracket for more information.

Because the Folger Shakespeare texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.

“The Phoenix and Turtle”

Let the bird of loudest lay
On the sole Arabian tree
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

But thou shrieking harbinger, 5
Foul precurrer of the fiend,
Augur of the fever's end,
To this troop come thou not near.

From this session interdict 10
Every fowl of tyrant wing,
Save the eagle, feathered king;
Keep the obsequy so strict.

Let the priest in surplice white,
That defunctive music can,
Be the death-divining swan, 15
Lest the requiem lack his right.

And thou treble-dated crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go. 20

Here the anthem doth commence:
Love and constancy is dead,
Phoenix and the turtle fled
In a mutual flame from hence.

So they loved, as love in twain 25
Had the essence but in one,
Two distincts, division none;
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote yet not asunder, 30
Distance and no space was seen
'Twixt this turtle and his queen;
But in them it were a wonder.

So between them love did shine
That the turtle saw his right
Flaming in the phoenix' sight; 35

Either was the other's mine.

Property was thus appalled
That the self was not the same;
Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was called. 40

Reason, in itself confounded,
Saw division grow together,
To themselves yet either neither,
Simple were so well compounded

That it cried, "How true a twain 45
Seemeth this concordant one!
Love hath reason, Reason none,
If what parts can so remain,"

Whereupon it made this threne 50
To the phoenix and the dove,
Co-supremes and stars of love,
As chorus to their tragic scene.

Threnos

Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed, in cinders lie. 55

Death is now the phoenix' nest,
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,

Leaving no posterity;
'Twas not their infirmity, 60
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair 65
That are either true or fair;
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

William Shakespeare

Death is now the Phoenix' nest, And the Turtle's loyal breast To eternity doth rest. Leaving no posterity, 'Twas not their infirmity: It was married chastity. Truth may seem, but cannot be; Beauty brag, but 'tis not she: Truth and Beauty buried be. To this urn let those repair That are either true or fair: For these dead birds sigh a prayer. 3. Shakespeare did not give this piece a title, and the title, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," did not appear until 1807. The proper academic title for this piece is simply the first line: "Let the bird of loudest lay." Expand. I believe "turtlet" refers to the bird known as the turtle dove, which is known to call from high branches, and since it's known to pair for life, is a symbol for constant love. "Phoenix" refers to the mythological bird that lived for centuries (or a lifetime of triple digit years, hence, "treble-dated") and burned in a fire, to be born again from the ashes. Beyond those two starting points, one can find a variety of metaphors. 328 views. The Phoenix and the Turtle by William Shakespeare: Summary and Analysis. 380 views. Related Answers. The phoenix and turtledove may die in a fire that produces a new phoenix "or may not produce offspring. Some see the poem as a celebration of their physical union. Others suggest that the two become one as they approach a Christian heaven, or offer a philosophical reading. Some even link them to historical figures, although such interpretations are no longer widely favored. The anthem celebrates the phoenix and turtle's love and introduces the figure of Reason. Reason composes the final "Threnos" (a dirge), which many find the most beautiful section. (Adapted from the Folger Shakespeare Library edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems, edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. © 2004, 2006 Folger Shakespeare Library). One approach to demystifying The Phoenix and Turtle, according to critic I. A. Richards (1959), is to begin fresh, reading the poem for coherence rather than cryptic messages. Richards revisits the poem and offers a close analysis of the literal meaning of words such as "right" and "threnos." Although this method of looking at word meanings in a contemporary context is useful, the critic acknowledges that it is only the first step to understanding the true meaning of the poem. Robert S. McCully (1962) also attempts to take a fresh look at the poem by applying a Jungian interpretation to the text. The Phoenix and the Turtle. Roger Peters Copyright © 2005. Complete template (Sonnet numbers). The first five stanzas of The Phoenix and the Turtle introduce the birds who attend the funeral for the two idealistically deluded love-birds, the Phoenix and the Turtle-dove. The first bird mentioned is the "bird of loudest lay." To understand the role of the "bird of loudest lay" it is only necessary to recall the logic of the Sonnet philosophy presented in Volume 1. The division of the sexes and the increase dynamic in Nature form the logical basis for the dynamic of understanding as truth and beauty in Shakespeare's philosophy. Consequently, the logical relationship between the sexual dynamic of the body and the erotic dynamic of the mind provides the basis for mythic expression.