

Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,  
 For a good *Poet's* made, as well as borne.  
 And such wert thou. Looke how the fathers face  
 Liues in his issue, euen so, the race  
 Of *Shakespeares* minde, and manners brightly shines  
 In his well torned, and true filed lines:  
 In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,  
 As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.

Jonson here accounts for this overwhelming greatness of Shakspeare. Nature herself rejoiced to be clothed in his lines, so that she now lets Aristophanes, Terence, and Plautus deserted lie as if they were not of Nature's family. But Nature must not receive all the credit; Shakspeare's Art must also receive part of it.

For though the *Poets* matter, Nature be,  
 His Art doth giue the fashion.

The poet must by Art shape his matter, "For a good *Poet's* made, as well as borne." So Shakspeare's mind and manners brightly shine, "In his well torned, and true filed lines." Jonson then ends by making a heavenly constellation of this "Sweet Swan of *Auon*." Thus while Shakspeare is fundamentally indebted to Nature, yet he owes a great deal to Art.

How much of this Jonson really meant I do not profess to know—I am none of God's spies!—; but this is what he says. And it is Shakspeare's subject matter that Jonson attributes to Nature, which no one essentially denies. But "His Art doth giue the fashion," which again no one ought essentially to deny. It is in subject matter, which comes of Nature, that Shakspeare has surpassed Aristophanes, Terence, and Plautus, who now

antiquated, and deserted lye  
 As they were not of Natures family.

Then of shaping Art Shakspeare is admitted to have had some, though the degree as compared with that of Aristophanes, Terence, and Plautus is not stated. But it is doubtless significant that Jonson chooses Aristophanes, Terence, and Plautus with whom to make his comparison. Terence and Plautus were more or less well known to every learned grammarian, and Jonson knew even better than we that Shakspeare was acquainted with them. That knowledge in no way affects the accuracy of Jonson's pronouncement upon Shakspeare's "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*."