

"Ah!" said Johnson, "that may be true: for the limbs will quiver and move after the soul is gone."²⁹

As we now know, Dr. Johnson was over optimistic in thinking the controversy "completely finished" by Dr. Farmer, as Dr. Johnson himself later realized. The bludgeon of authority may settle a matter so long and so far as that authority extends. But truth alone should be the final arbiter, and I cannot see that on the main issue Dr. Farmer's rebuttal made any further progress toward truth.

Perhaps Colman's answer to Dr. Farmer in 1768, which was thus too late for the rebuttal of 1767, was the best yet made, and rightly received a place with Farmer's essay in the variorum editions. Colman in his translation of Terence had incidentally shown several parallels between Shakspeare and Terence. So on a few of these matters Dr. Farmer had taken Colman to task, though not as a principal offender. In his second edition, 1768, Colman devoted an appendix to Dr. Farmer.

It is most true, as Mr. Farmer takes for granted, that I had never met with the old comedy called *The Supposes*, nor has it even yet fallen into my hands; yet I am willing to grant, on Mr. Farmer's authority, that Shakespeare borrowed part of the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*, from that old translation of Ariosto's play, by George Gascoign, and had no obligations to Plautus. I will accede also to the truth of Dr. Johnson's and Mr. Farmer's observation, that the line from Terence, exactly as it stands in Shakespeare, is extant in Lilly and Udall's *Floures for Latin Speaking*. Still, however, Shakespeare's total ignorance of the learned languages remains to be proved; for it must be granted, that such books are put into the hands of those who are learning those languages, in which class we must necessarily rank Shakespeare, or he could not even have quoted Terence from Udall or Lilly; nor is it likely, that so rapid a genius should not have made some further progress. "Our author, (says Dr. Johnson, as quoted by Mr. Farmer) had this line from Lilly; which I mention, that it may not be brought as an argument of his learning." It is, however, an argument that he read Lilly; and a few pages further it seems pretty certain, that the author of *The Taming of the Shrew*, had at least read Ovid; from whose epistles we find these lines:

*Hæc ibat Simois; hic est Sigeia tellus;
Hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.*

And what does Dr. Johnson say on this occasion? Nothing. And what does Mr. Farmer say on this occasion? Nothing.

In *Love's Labour Lost*, which, bad as it is, is ascribed by Dr. Johnson himself to Shakespeare, there occurs the word *thrasonical*; another argument which seems to shew that he was not unacquainted with the comedies

²⁹ Northcote, J., *Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Knt.* (1813), pp. 90-91.