Introduction: the idea of Apocrypha

All held Apocrypha*, not worth survey.*[1]

Falsehoods

On 2 April 1796, London's Drury Lane Theatre presented a recently unearthed play by William Shakespeare. *Vortigern and Rowena*, 'discovered' by William Henry Ireland, played to a derisive crowd, whose disbelief in the play's authenticity was shared by the theatre's manager, John Philip Kemble. Kemble, in the lead role, pointedly repeated the line 'and when this solemn mock'ry is ended', inviting ridicule from the crowd. The production was not revived, and the whole incident contributed to the unravelling of Ireland's claims.[2]

The authenticity of the play – along with the other purportedly Shakespearean documents unearthed by Ireland and his father Samuel – had been attacked only a fortnight earlier by the leading Shakespearean editor of the day, Edmond Malone, in *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments*. Malone's statement of intent makes clear his chosen role as a defender of Shakespeare:

> It has been said, and I believe truly, that every individual of this country, whose mind has been at all cultivated, feels a pride in being able to boast of our great dramatick poet, Shakspeare, as his countryman: and proportionate to our respect and veneration for that extraordinary man ought to be our care of his fame, and of those valuable writings that he has left us; and our solicitude to preserve them pure and unpolluted by any modern sophistication or foreign admixture whatsoever.[3]

[1] *Antonio's Revenge* (London, 1602), G2[r].
[2] Jeffrey Kahan, ed., *Shakespearean Imitations, Parodies and Forgeries: 1710–1820* (Abingdon, 2004), 5.2.62.
[3] Edmond Malone, *An inquiry into the authenticity of certain miscellaneous papers* (London, 1796), 2–3.

Malone brings together a series of preconceptions, priorities and duties to justify his project. Shakespeare is 'our' poet, with the possessive also attached to 'this country' and Shakespeare's 'countrym[e]n'. The tone of jingoistic nationalism is exaggerated by the fear of pollution by 'foreign admixture', diluting Shakespeare's indigenous purity. Yet within these communal concerns, perhaps more importantly, is an emphasis on the individual 'poet', 'that extraordinary man'. Shakespeare, both man and works, is to be protected at all costs. The values that Malone articulates continue to underpin the phenomenon that is my concern in this book: the division between accepted and disputed works attributed to William Shakespeare, and the implications of this division for the study of early modern drama.

Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha takes as its premise the adage that one can tell a great deal about a society by the way it treats its weakest members: in this case, how Shakespeare scholars and practitioners such as Malone have treated the dubious works at the fringe of the canon. Margreta de Grazia identifies Malone as the Enlightenment editor who, she argues, constructed the modern Shakespeare 'in his own experience, consciousness and creativity', removed from 'discourse, production and reception'. Shakespeare, through Malone's work, became the 'exemplary instance of the autonomous self'.[4] As such, Shakespeare was finally entitled to a canon 'that consists not only of authentic works, like the canonical books of Holy Scripture, but also of regulating and binding tenets, like those of church dogma, inferred from the very texts over which they preside and legislate' (11). For de Grazia, this is the point at which questions of authenticity, the individual and the sanctity of canon most importantly come into play on the question of Shakespearean authorship. It is this same preoccupation of Malone's with individuality as guarantor of authenticity that informs Brian Vickers's statement, in his study of collaborative authorship, that 'no issue in Shakespeare Studies is more important than determining what he wrote'.[5] The canonisation of Shakespeare would continue to be dominated in the modern era by the determination of 'pure and unpolluted' works.

Every religion has its heresy, however. As Trevor Ross points out, 'the agonistic structures of rhetoric require that the canon be set against a discredited apocrypha'.[6] Shakespeare's canon is one of the few non-theological

[4] Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim* (Oxford, 1991), 10.
[5] Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford, 2002), 3.
[6] Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon from the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal, 1998), 77.

bodies of works to be split into the two categories of 'Canon' and 'Apocrypha'.[7] Many of these apocryphal plays, including *The London Prodigal* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, have declared Shakespeare's authorship since his lifetime in their print appearances, or more ambiguously bear initials that may or may not deliberately reference Shakespeare, as in the cases of *Locrine* and *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* (discussed in Chapter 3). Others have gradually adopted Shakespeare's name, whether in miscellaneous manuscript annotations (*The Second Maiden's/Lady's Tragedy*, a play now normally associated with Thomas Middleton), early anthologies (the anonymous *Fair Em*), or in associated records (several lost plays including *Cardenio*, attributed to Shakespeare and John Fletcher). Many later critics have continued to add candidates to the list based on a variety of criteria including vocabulary, phraseology, literary parallels, linguistic profiles and verse patterns, including recently *Edmund Ironside* and *Thomas of Woodstock*. The appendix to this volume provides an overview of some eighty plays not included in the 1623 Shakespeare folio that have been associated with Shakespeare's name, only a handful of which – including *Vortigern and Rowena* – are avowed deliberate forgeries. The Apocrypha exists as a rare example of a canon defined *negatively* by the question of authorship: they are the plays attributed *to*, but emphatically not *by*, Shakespeare.

The term 'Apocrypha' has inescapably biblical associations. Deriving from the Greek word *ἀπόκρυφος*, meaning 'hidden', the OED defines it as

> A writing or statement of doubtful authorship or authenticity; *spec.* those books included in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions of the Old Testament, which were not originally written in Hebrew and not counted genuine by the Jews, and which, at the Reformation, were excluded from the Sacred Canon by the Protestant party, as having no well-grounded claim to inspired authorship.[8]

The biblical associations of the word point to the severity of the problem. As Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett argue, the Bible as ratified by the early Church emerged as a holy book of a very different kind.

> It encompassed the history of the world from its creation, through the fall and redemption of mankind, to the final judgement. Such completeness

[7] Many authors are associated with individual works of doubtful authorship, but I am concerned here with *collections* of disputed work, a phenomenon usually associated with classical authors, most obviously Homer and Virgil. Kathleen Forni's *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Selection* (Kalamazoo, 2005) is a rare English vernacular example.

[8] 'Apocrypha, *n.*' Def. 1a. OED Online, 6 January 2014.

> permitted no competition. The exclusiveness of the Bible was thus a direct concomitant of the exclusiveness of Christianity. . . . Unity was essential to this formula, not an extra.[9]

Elements of disunity were at direct odds with the project of the consolidation of canon and religion. 'Excluded', 'hidden', 'uninspired' – these words are similarly evoked in the use of the word 'Apocrypha' to describe Shakespeare's disputed works, creating a category that casts the plays as somehow blasphemous while also pointing to those elements of disunity in the Shakespeare canon. While this book will challenge the appropriateness of the title, I will continue to use it throughout in recognition of the still-current negative associations attached to these plays.

The title was affixed to the group by C.F. Tucker Brooke's seminal 1908 collection *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, which both 'canonised' the terminology for the group and established a core group of plays of interest, namely *Arden of Faversham, Locrine, Edward III, Mucedorus, 1 Sir John Oldcastle, Thomas, Lord Cromwell, The London Prodigal, The Puritan, A Yorkshire Tragedy, The Merry Devil of Edmonton, Fair Em, The Two Noble Kinsmen, The Birth of Merlin* and *Sir Thomas More*.[10] Many of these plays will be unfamiliar to even professional Shakespeareans other than as footnotes or names in lists of 'Works Excluded from this Edition', yet they retain an association with Shakespeare strong enough to have warranted their frequent compilation as a group, but too weak to admit them to the mainstream of Shakespearean scholarship. Of these fourteen, the tragicomic adaptation of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale, The Two Noble Kinsmen*, is the only one to be accepted by all modern Shakespeare editions, with critics since the 1950s accepting the 1634 title page's attribution of the play to Shakespeare and Fletcher. The Tudor martyr play of *Sir Thomas More*, with its famous quelling of London riots by the title character, and the patriotic *Edward III*, with its French wars and romantic subplot featuring Edward's wooing of the Countess of Salisbury, contain scenes that most scholars agree Shakespeare wrote. However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, even these relatively familiar plays continue to resist absolute consensus over authorship. The more recent case made for Shakespeare's contributions to the blackly comic domestic murder play *Arden of Faversham*, or the problematic identification of 'corrections' to the Senecan-influenced tragedy

[9] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, eds., *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1997), xiv.

[10] C.F. Tucker Brooke, ed., *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1908). The play known variously as *The Puritan* and *The Puritan Widow* continues to resist a preferred form; in this book, I choose the shorter title as that used on the title page of the 1607 quarto.

Locrine, further illustrate the difficulties facing attribution scholars. This book is not concerned to establish the authorship of these plays (though the appendix sets out the current beliefs and debates on their provenances), but rather to establish what is at stake in the arguments.

The primary loss for literary and theatrical critics in the overwhelming focus on the authorship of the plays is, of course, attention to the contents of the plays themselves. Chronicle history plays such as *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* and city comedies such as *The London Prodigal* whose authorship remains unknown drift out of discussion, whereas those plays that enjoy a more definite consensus over attribution, such as the domestic murder play *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and the city comedy *The Puritan* (both generally accepted as authored by Thomas Middleton) achieve fuller discussion in editions of their author's works. Yet despite the range of genres and styles represented by the group and usually considered un-Shakespearean – from bourgeois magician comedy (*The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, anonymous but possibly by Thomas Dekker) to martyr play (*Thomas, Lord Cromwell*), domestic tragedy (*A Yorkshire Tragedy*) to comical romance (the anonymous *Mucedorus*) – the constitution of the group has remained surprisingly consistent and, when discussed alongside the Shakespeare canon from which the plays are usually separated, reveals the fluidity of characters, plot situations, genre experiments and thematic concerns shared within and among theatrical repertories. Together, these plays form a deeply problematic group on the fringe of Shakespeare Studies, tying Shakespeare to a range of collaborators, genres, themes and sensibilities that pollute the purity of the approved canon. Collectively, they highlight the indeterminacy of the canon, posing a threat to Shakespeare's ideological unity. The idea of a Shakespeare Apocrypha is thus a starting point for exposing the limitations of a study that restricts itself by maintaining boundaries between authorial canons.

New directions

During the last twenty years, a combination of theoretical movements has challenged the notion of a pure, unpolluted canon and destabilised the fixity and identity of 'Shakespeare'. In particular, the legacies of cultural materialism, with its interest in the historical situatedness of texts, and poststructuralist theory, including the oft- and prematurely proclaimed 'death of the author', have resulted in a debunking of many of the categories of authenticity postulated by the New Bibliographers in the early twentieth century, such as Alfred Pollard's distinction between 'bad'

and 'good' quartos.[11] This dismantling of old orthodoxies has in turn led to widespread acceptance of the authority of variant versions of several of Shakespeare's plays, independent of linear textual genealogies. The unstable nature of the text, as articulated by Stephen Orgel and Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, underpins the recent movement in editorial practice towards the preservation of material realisations of the text, promoting plurality.[12] *King Lear* and *Hamlet* in particular are often now edited as multiple plays rather than one, breaking down even in these key tragedies the idea of a 'pure, unpolluted' version of a play.

All theatrical productions are, to a greater or lesser extent, collaborative ventures, made up of the contributions of multiple agents including writers, actors, audiences, venues and censors. Moreover, increasingly sophisticated computer technology has caused a renaissance in attribution studies, and authorship investigators have identified widespread collaboration within the established Shakespeare canon. It is generally accepted that *Henry VIII, Pericles, Timon of Athens, Titus Andronicus* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* contain the work of other writers, while the *Henry VI* plays, *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* all have advocates for the presence of multiple authors.[13] If one includes and accepts the growing consensus that Shakespeare's writing survives in *Sir Thomas More, Edward III, Arden of Faversham* and Lewis Theobald's play *Double Falsehood*, between a quarter and a third of the plays to which Shakespeare contributed contained 'foreign admixture' in the form of the words of other writers.[14] However, one might remember the words of

[11] For the debunking of the pervasiveness of memorial reconstruction and the shift away from seeing variant quartos as qualitatively 'bad', see Paul Werstine, 'Narratives About Printed Shakespeare Texts: "Foul Papers" and "Bad" Quartos', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41.1 (1990): 65–86; Paul Werstine, 'A Century of "Bad" Quartos', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50.3 (1999): 310–33; Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts* (Cambridge, 1996). The original distinction was made by Pollard in *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* (London, 1909).

[12] Stephen Orgel, 'What is a Text?', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 24 (1981): 3–6; Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, 'The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44.3 (1993): 255–83.

[13] Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, overviews the scholarship that has formed consensus regarding the first five plays in this list, and all scholarly editions since the turn of the century have concurred on collaboration. On the *Henry VI* plays, see Vickers, 'Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Coauthorship in *1 Henry VI*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.3 (2007): 311–52; and Hugh Craig, 'The Three Parts of *Henry VI*' in *Shakespeare, Computers, and The Mystery of Authorship*, eds. Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge, 2009), 40–77. The identity and extent of co-authors is more hotly debated. The case for Thomas Middleton's hand in *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* has been most forcefully advanced in recent years by Gary Taylor and the team behind *Thomas Middleton: Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007).

[14] On these texts, see Chapters 3 and 4 below. All four plays are being prepared for the New Oxford Shakespeare, and all apart from *Arden of Faversham* will be included in the complete third series of the Arden Shakespeare.

Sir Thomas More's title character: 'Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England, / Why, you must needs be strangers' (2.4.129–30). More points out that foreignness, or strangeness, is a relative matter, determined by context and viewpoint. That these words are usually believed to have been written by Shakespeare for inclusion in a multiple-authored play is symptomatic of the play's own 'strangeness'. These collaborative 'immigrants' are such only if students assume the sanctity of canon, rather than accept Shakespeare as a contributor to the collaborative drama of his day.

The idea of a fixed, authorially sanctioned Shakespeare canon is further destabilised when plays are viewed as products of multiple agents and their environment rather than the sole offspring of an all-controlling Author. In fact, studies over the last two decades have tended to subsume Shakespeare himself within the circumstances of collaborative production and ongoing appropriation. Jeffrey Kahan notes that *Vortigern and Rowena* starred John Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons, who

> were both established Shakespeareans, and their star power added a theatrical stamp of Shakespearean validity to the enterprise. The use of Shakespeare actors for New Shakespeare implicitly suggested a reassuring product stability; audiences almost certainly brought associations from the previous night's Shakespeare performance with them, and these perceptions influenced their acceptances of these new works.[15]

The play was not 'by' Shakespeare, but was produced and marketed as Shakespeare to raise a certain set of expectations and encourage a specific kind of reading. In a sense, *Vortigern and Rowena* became Shakespearean; it operated under the aegis of a Shakespeare 'effect', where Shakespeare acted as a locus of responsibility, a governing function. That this function failed under the attacks of a sceptical cast and audience is indicative of the slipperiness of the author-function and the continual contestation of what defines Shakespeare. While many attribution specialists dismiss postmodern treatments of authorship as *authorisation* as unhelpfully theoretical and historically imprecise, these treatments offer useful terminologies for articulating historical disruptions of simple categorisations of author and text.[16]

The notion of a 'Shakespeare Apocrypha' defined by its inauthenticity cannot survive when the authenticity of the canon it is defined against is undermined. As James P. Bednarz argues, 'the concept of a Shakespeare Apocrypha assumes an absolute distinction between authentic and fake versions of his plays and poems, since its very existence is predicated on the

[15] Kahan, *Shakespearean Imitations*, 1. xxxv–xxxvi.
[16] See Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, 506–41, and David Nicol, *Middleton & Rowley* (Toronto, 2013), 7–15.

idea of a Shakespeare Canon against which it is defined'.[17] But if authenticity itself is an unstable concept in light of collaborative authorship, multiple versions of texts and the fluid nature of performance, then the plays of the Canon and Apocrypha might better be seen to exist at different points on a continuum, rather than in two diametrically opposed groups. It is later criticism, not *a priori* authorisation, that sustains the division.

The category of Apocrypha remains one of the least-studied aspects of Shakespeare. Full-length studies in English consist solely of H. Dugdale Sykes's *Sidelights on Shakespeare* (1919) and Baldwin Maxwell's *Studies in the Shakespeare Apocrypha* (1956), both of which are primarily concerned with establishing the authorship of selected plays.[18] The critical response to Maxwell's volume speaks to the disregard in which the plays are held on account of their grouping together: G.K. Hunter remarks that 'nothing except the accident of historical error now links these plays together'; and I.B. Cauthen Jr argues that '[e]xcept for the specialist, no-one reads the apocryphal Shakespeare; this able study clearly shows that there is no reason that we should'.[19] Cauthen's review rather misses the point of Maxwell's volume, which does not invite a qualitative dismissal of the plays, but instead points towards a different series of connections between the plays. 'Historical error' remains, of course, part of history; whatever the reasons underpinning the plays' associations with Shakespeare, they continue to be connected by the shared and mutually reinforcing response that they are not by Shakespeare and are (therefore) of little worth. For much of the twentieth century, as evidenced by Cauthen's remarks, the issue of the Apocrypha was easy to avoid on grounds of aesthetic judgement; but while the problematic nature of this category has become urgent in the wake of developments in textual-canonical theory, this has only been directly addressed in recent years in three articles by Christa Jansohn, Richard Proudfoot and John Jowett.[20] These three posit new approaches to the idea

[17] James P. Bednarz, 'Canonizing Shakespeare: *The Passionate Pilgrim, England's Helicon* and the Question of Authenticity', *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007): 252. As Bednarz demonstrates, poetic miscellanies such as *The Passionate Pilgrim* open up a different set of questions concerning the circulation of poetry and the role of early modern manuscript culture, and for reasons of space I restrict my attention here to drama. See also Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 2013), 82–89.

[18] H. Dugdale Sykes, *Sidelights on Shakespeare* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1919); Baldwin Maxwell, *Studies in the Shakespeare Apocrypha* (New York, 1956).

[19] G. K. Hunter, 'Review', *Modern Language Review* 52.4 (1957): 588; I.B. Cauthen Jr., 'Review', *College English* 18.5 (1957): 292.

[20] Christa Jansohn, 'The Shakespeare Apocrypha: A Reconsideration', *English Studies* 84 (2003): 318–29; Richard Proudfoot, 'Is There, and Should There Be, a Shakespeare Apocrypha?' *In The Footsteps of William Shakespeare*, ed. Christa Jansohn (Münster, 2005), 49–71; John Jowett, 'Shakespeare

of an Apocrypha that inform respectively the first three chapters of this book, as follows.

Jansohn argues that the Canon is 'a historically grown, not a universally available fixed construct' (324) and quotes Frank Kermode: '[C]anons are essentially strategic constructs by which societies maintain their own interest, since the canon allows control over the texts a culture takes seriously and over the methods of interpretation that establish the meaning of "serious"'.[21] Jansohn contends that the Shakespeare canon is constructed according to the editorial biases and socioeconomic prerogatives of the time, rather than being subject to any firm or objective criteria. It cements 'a repository of universally "valuable" texts' (329) that in turn acts to cast its exclusions as qualitatively inferior, occasioning a lack of interest in interpretational issues. The processes of canonisation, to which Malone contributed significantly, form the subject of Chapter 1, which interrogates how the category of Apocrypha came to be created, and the processes and ideologies that governed its inception. Extending de Grazia's discussion of Malone and the posthumous construction of authorship and authenticity, the chapter examines how Shakespeare was sold and reproduced in early modern book culture. The divisions between authentic and inauthentic were informed by a variety of political and artistic motivations that bear little resemblance to modern scholarly standards, and I analyse the editorial justifications for these decisions. By unpacking the history of the apocryphal canon, I suggest that critics can move away from received notions of the quality of the plays to an understanding of their importance in constructing the modern Shakespeare. Key to this is acknowledgement of the material forms of 'Shakespeare' available to early readers. The chapter frequently departs from the mainstream editorial tradition, which is retrospectively biased towards those texts that most reflect modern editorial standards, to consider lesser-known appearances of the disputed plays that testify to how Shakespeare was experienced historically.

Richard Proudfoot confronts the implications of 'Apocrypha' within the word's biblical context as 'doctrinally unacceptable' and traces the history of the need to categorise the plays.[22] Importantly, he notes that until the eighteenth century, there was an 'absence of sustained concern with the nature or quality' of the disputed plays (57); before the Shakespeare canon was stabilised, these judgements were rarely employed in relation to

Supplemented', *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks, *Shakespeare Yearbook* (Lampeter, 2007), 39–73.

[21] Jansohn, 'Reconsideration': 324–25. [22] Proudfoot, 'Is There?', 49.

authenticity. He notes that Shakespeare's role as an in-house dramatist meant that he may well have been involved in the revising and fitting-up of plays for performance, which necessarily complicates an understanding of what Shakespeare 'wrote'. He argues that it may be more productive to instead focus on companies and repertory systems, and abolish the 'Apocrypha' in favour of 'Shakespeare's unattributed repertoire' (65), which could take into consideration the anonymous and disputed plays from the playing companies of which Shakespeare was a member. Proudfoot's suggestion is consistent with an emerging critical interest in theatre companies as an alternative paradigm to authorial canons. Scholars including Roslyn Knutson, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, Andrew Gurr and Lucy Munro have established the treatment of plays as emerging from a socialised network.[23] This approach has much in common with poststructural theories of discursive authorship but, in contrast to the easy dismissal of 'theory' in opposition to 'history' posited by Vickers, has a clear historical basis in theatre practice.[24] The concern in Chapter 2 is thus how this repertory focus disrupts the simple dichotomy of 'Shakespearean' and 'non-Shakespearean' in the plays' original theatrical context, focusing on those disputed plays that were performed by the Chamberlain's–King's Men. This chapter does not argue that plays such as *Thomas*, *Lord Cromwell*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *The London Prodigal*, *Mucedorus* and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* have *unique* connections to the Shakespeare canon alongside which they were performed; rather, it argues that the segregation of these plays in critical study leads to the occlusion of important shared connections that show both accepted and disputed Shakespearean plays reinforcing one another within the theatrical repertory.

Jowett, elsewhere a contributor to attribution studies, offers a textual history of the formation of the Shakespeare Apocrypha in 'Shakespeare Supplemented', and covers much of the contextual ground shared by Jansohn and Proudfoot. For Jowett, it is specifically attribution studies and the identification of collaboration that render the apocryphal category 'redundant': 'the suggestions of holy writ embodied in the terms "canon" and "Apocrypha" become much less compelling once we envision Shakespeare as a collaborating dramatist'.[25] Jowett shows how, historically, the notion of impurities in the canon renders canon itself a problematic category, and he recommends in turn that the Apocrypha be seen as a supplement rather than an 'other'. He proposes that

[23] Tom Rutter provides one of the most compelling overviews of this critical movement in 'Introduction: The Repertory-Based Approach', *Early Theatre* 13.2 (2010): 121–32.
[24] Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, 506–41. [25] Jowett, 'Shakespeare Supplemented', 39–40.