PART I | Text

Introduction

The year 1864 marked the three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. Various schemes were proposed for celebrating the occasion. A committee was formed with the intention of commissioning a public statue of the playwright. The publishing trade journal, *The Bookseller*, poured scorn on the idea, accusing the committee members of empty pomposity: 'self-seeking', the journal complained, 'was their only motive; [the aim of] the proposal to raise a statue was, that the pedestal might be sufficiently large to convey their names to posterity'.[1] *The Bookseller* suggested an alternative form of tribute to the committee's vainglorious plan. 'It would not form a bad Shakespearian monument', the journal suggested, 'if a copy of all the editions of his works and comments upon them were collected and piled together.' 'A tribute of this kind', the journal noted, 'would be more rational than a senseless pillar or column of stone.'[2]

It is interesting to contemplate the manner in which *The Bookseller*'s imagined monument would have evolved century by century. In 1664, a column of Shakespeare editions would have been somewhat more than 150 volumes high. By 1764, something in the region of 500 books could have been heaped on top of each other. At the time of the three-hundredth anniversary, the number of volumes forming the column would already have been approaching the point where counting the individual texts would have been difficult, as editions proliferated at an unprecedented rate, in America as well as Britain, and, indeed, elsewhere throughout the world. By 1964, the exponentially multiplying building materials would have produced a monument rivalling that biblical 'tower, whose top may reach unto heaven'. And still there was no end in sight, despite the optimism of one textual scholar who, at the mid-point of the twentieth century, looked forward to the day when 'the accumulation [of bibliographical facts] will reach the limits of human endeavour and the fact-finding be exhausted'. When that day arrived, he predicted, 'the final capstone [could] be placed on Shakespearian scholarship and a text achieved that in the most minute details is as close as mortal man can come to the original truth'.[3] Such twentieth-century dreams

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of an edition of Shakespeare so compellingly definitive that it would bring the editorial process to an end proved no more, indeed, than fantasy, and so still, uncapped, the tower of editions continues inexorably to rise. Like Bruegel's famous vision of Babel, Shakespeare's monument is destined to remain forever in an unfinishable state. When 2064 arrives, whole new strata of materials will have joined the accumulated tons of rag fibre, woodpulp and ink: plastic, silicon, magnetic media . . . who can say what else.

If the accumulated mass of Shakespeare editions is indeed a kind of Tower of Babel, then the aim of *Shakespeare in Print* is to chart a journey from the lowest floors to the unfinished heights. But the journey time available is relatively short, the building massive, and the rooms myriad. For these reasons, John Velz has described the business of writing a book such as this as an 'awesome task'.[4] Other scholars have, very sensibly, confined themselves to an individual room or two or to parts of particular floors. Thus, for instance, Margreta de Grazia, Peter Martin and Peter Seary have devoted entire books to the work of a single Shakespeare editor, and Simon Jarvis and Marcus Walsh have written about Shakespeare editing in extended periods of a single century.[5] Arthur Sherbo has produced a covey of books which, taken together, constitute a history of Shakespeare editing over a stretch of several decades.[6] At the risk of overloading a fanciful extended metaphor, it might be said that still other scholars have offered a non-stop elevator ride from the bottom of the tower to the top, providing snatched glimpses of each floor along the way. So, for example, a slightly breathless Paul Werstine presents a complete history of Shakespeare editing in a bravura thirty-page essay entitled 'William Shakespeare' in the MLA's *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, and Barbara Mowat attempts to cover the same general territory in about half that number of pages in a chapter contributed to Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells' *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. With a deal more space to spare in his masterful short monograph, *Shakespeare and the Book*, David Scott Kastan lingers lovingly on certain floors, but then shoots silently past others, attending most closely to material that holds for him a broader theoretical significance.

By contrast with the work of these scholars – which I find entirely admirable and to which (as will repeatedly be seen in the chapters that follow) I am enormously indebted – my own aim in this book is to offer, for the first time, an extended single volume study that covers the entire history of Shakespeare publishing century by century, and which treats every period in some detail. It is inevitable that this book – lengthy though it is – will itself miss much along the way. Doubtless there will be readers who will consider it an unforgivable omission that I have neglected to discuss some particular

edition, or that I have treated of another in a condensed and hurried manner. However, I hope that such readers may also feel that if – to lean again on my Bruegellian metaphor – I rush too quickly past particular rooms, or fail even to push open the door to many another, then, in compensation, I also attempt a considered exploration of certain areas where the settled dust of decades' neglect has seldom enough been disturbed by the tread of scholarly enquiry. So, for example: it is striking that so much recent scholarship on the history of Shakespeare publishing has concentrated exclusively on the eighteenth century (the work of de Grazia, Martin, Seary, Jarvis, Walsh and Sherbo referred to above is all concerned with this period). By contrast, very little sustained attention has been paid to Shakespeare publishing in the nineteenth century.[7] There is a certain irony in the fact that scholarly work has been oriented in this way, given that it was precisely in the nineteenth century that the Shakespeare text became – from a publishing point of view – a genuinely popular commodity, to be mass-produced, mass-marketed and mass-distributed. *Shakespeare in Print* attempts to redress such imbalances as this by devoting a roughly equal measure of attention to every phase of the extended history of Shakespeare publishing.

Setting out the scope of my project and its general parameters is relatively easy, defining its precise focus is a touch more difficult. An alert reader may already have noticed that, in this introduction, I have tended to slide back and forth between speaking of editing and of publishing, writing interchangeably of editions and of texts. As this duality indicates, the history of the reproduction of Shakespeare's texts could potentially be approached from two distinctive perspectives. What John Velz characterised as 'awesome' was, in fact, the 'task of writing a comprehensive history of the Shakespearean *editorial tradition*' (emphasis added) and one could indeed write a study of the history of the Shakespeare text which focused exclusively on the history of editing, on what the most important of Shakespeare's editors have done to the text century by century and how the general theory of editing has evolved over the course of this time period. But books, of course, are not just edited, they are also – as Jerome J. McGann, D. F. McKenzie and others have forcefully reminded us – *produced*.[8] They appear in different formats, in different quantities, in different places, aimed at different markets, under a variety of different circumstances. So: one could also write a study of the Shakespeare text that focused exclusively on the history of Shakespeare publishing, on how publishers have handled the text in different ways over time. I have, however, felt very strongly in writing this book that an exclusive focus either on editing or on publishing would not produce an adequate general history of the reproduction of Shakespeare's texts.

Editorial history has tended – certainly at least until very recently – to have a certain teleological cast to it.[9] Thus, the best Shakespeare editors are seen as being those who have helped to advance the theory of Shakespearean editing in some way, who have, we might say, stepped along the road that leads towards ever more advanced conceptions of the editorial project. This view of editing thus resonates with what S. M. Parrish has characterised as 'the Whig interpretation of literature'.[10] The eighteenth century provides a convenient example. From the point of view of editorial history, Shakespeare publishing in the eighteenth century is dominated by a succession of editors, running from Nicholas Rowe to Edmond Malone, and the achievements of each editor in turn can be weighed, to see how much of a contribution he has made to the development of the editorial tradition. The logic of this framework necessarily suggests that some editors merit far more attention than others and that some deserve hardly any attention at all. For instance, in 1743–4, Sir Thomas Hanmer, one time Speaker of the House of Commons, published an edition of Shakespeare's works with the university press at Oxford. Hanmer was not well versed in contemporary editing theory and, textually, his edition is decidedly undistinguished. Writing of his text in 1933, R. B. McKerrow observed that

> Hanmer seems to have known little and cared less about such matters as early editions or the language of Shakespeare's time, and attempted to reform the text by the light of nature alone, with the result that though his conjectural emendations are sometimes ingenious and seem at first sight attractive, the work as a whole can hardly be regarded as a serious contribution to Shakespearian scholarship.[11]

McKerrow's judgement is perfectly reasonable in the context of the terms of reference that he is applying here – the terms of reference, that is, of editorial history. But there is more – much more – to Hanmer's edition than McKerrow's dismissive assessment suggests. Hanmer's was the first English Shakespeare edition to be published outside the city of London and the first to be produced by a university press. It was also an enormous commercial success, quickly selling out its print run, and subsequently changing hands at an ever-increasing price as the years went by.[12] Furthermore, it enjoyed an extended afterlife, immediately spawning a range of other editions. The Tonson cartel, indignant at what they saw as an encroachment on their private property, reacted to the Oxford edition by appropriating the Hanmer text and reissuing it in a cheap octavo London edition in 1745. Hanmer's edition thus became part of the important larger-scale battle over copyright which raged during the course of the eighteenth century. Another

publisher – John Osborn – produced a duodecimo edition of the Hanmer text in 1747. The Tonson cartel bought up this edition too, and reissued it with a substitute title page. The pocket-sized volumes proved popular and so the cartel decided to reprint them in 1748, 1751 and 1760. In 1770–1, Oxford University Press itself issued a second edition of Hanmer's text and this too proved a commercial success. By 1892, one bookseller in London was offering the second Oxford Hanmer edition for 30*s*. at a time when he was selling a copy of Nicholas Rowe's 1709 text – described as a 'Very rare Edition' – for exactly one third of this price.[13]

A history of Shakespeare editing would very largely overlook Hanmer's edition. It would also pass over texts considered, in editorial terms, to be 'derivative', which is to say, editions that simply reproduce an existing text without further conscious editorial intervention. But, again, these texts have their own particular significance. To take a nineteenth-century instance: the London publisher John Dicks was prompted by the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth to add his own few modest blocks to *The Bookseller*'s Shakespeare monument.[14] He issued individual plays at the price of two for a penny. It is not entirely clear what edition his texts were based on, but certainly they were derivative. Dicks shifted 150,000 play texts in this way. He then drew his individual texts together into a 2*s*.-collected volume and sold 50,000 copies of this edition. He next moved this collected text into paperback format and sold a staggering 700,000 further copies – in the space of about two years. These sales figures might be compared with the equivalent figures for high-profile editorially significant editions. The towering academic edition of the nineteenth century was the Clark and Wright text, produced as a joint venture by Macmillan's and Cambridge University Press, and issued at around the same time as Dicks' texts. Alexander Macmillan had initially thought to print just 750 copies of this edition. In the event, he increased the print run to 1,500 copies, but he did not think it a worthwhile investment to produce stereotype plates so that further issues could easily be released. Looking at these figures, we can see that in just two years Dicks' 2*s*. and 1*s*. editions sold, between them, 1,000 times the original projected print run of the most editorially significant edition of the nineteenth century. In 1864, *The Bookseller* predicted that texts of Shakespeare would 'be poured upon the country until every person has possessed himself of a copy'.[15] If *The Bookseller*'s prediction proved to be accurate, then the imprint carried by the flood of Shakespeares washing through the country was 500 times more likely to be that of the obscure John Dicks, rather than of the prestigious house of Macmillan or the Cambridge University Press.[16] Dicks' derivative text thus made an enormous contribution to the wide dissemination and

popularisation of Shakespeare's works, and yet his name finds no place in standard histories of the reproduction of the text.[17]

I am suggesting, then, that a thorough and useful account of the history of Shakespeare's texts cannot be written from the perspective of editorial history alone. But it is also true, of course, that an exclusive focus on publishing history would be equally unbalanced. For example: from a publishing point of view, Alexander Pope's 1723–5 edition was a dismal flop. It failed to attract a convincing number of subscribers – even Swift and Arbuthnot did not sign up for the set – and a significant portion of the edition remained unsold some four decades after publication, when outstanding stock was sold off at auction at around one tenth of the original price.[18] Quite a contrast, we might say, with Thomas Hanmer's edition. Yet no one who truly understands the history of Shakespeare publishing would suggest that Pope's edition lacks significance simply because it was a commercial failure. Pope systematised and regularised the text – especially the metre – in ways that persisted in the canon for decades, if not centuries. His edition provoked Lewis Theobald to write the first ever book devoted exclusively to Shakespearean editorial concerns: *Shakespeare Restor'd*. Additionally, he prompted Theobald to produce his own edition of the plays – an edition which, some would argue, helped significantly to lay the groundwork for much later textual work. Pope's edition is thus absolutely central to the early history of Shakespeare editing – and therefore to the general history of the Shakespeare text – even if his edition had little immediate commercial impact.

One might also make the point here that attempting to write an account of the Shakespeare text exclusively from the perspective of publishing history would be a very difficult task indeed, given the sheer volume of Shakespeare editions that have been issued over the course of the past four centuries. Anyone seeking to write a history of these texts needs some kind of stable navigation points – otherwise Shakespearean history would run the risk of becoming a record of just one damn text after another. This book takes as its fixed navigation points those editions which are consensually regarded as being textually significant – the editions, in other words, that any serious editor of Shakespeare would be expected to consult. But the book does not confine itself simply to travelling the shortest line between these beacon texts; it also attends to a broad range of other editions not normally covered in survey histories of the editorial tradition.

Shakespeare in Print, then, attempts to meld editing and publishing history, in order to produce as multifaceted an account of the history of the reproduction of the Shakespeare text as possible. As already indicated, the book discusses all of the editions that are commonly regarded as being textually

important and it gives some account of why these editions are considered to be significant. So, a reader working through this volume will discover that the 'editor' of the Second Folio retrieved Greek and Roman names and many foreign language phrases and bits of dialogue that had been lost in the First Folio; that Edward Capell was the first editor to build his own text from the ground up, instead of marking up a copy of his predecessor's edition; that Charles Knight valorised the First Folio texts over their Quarto counterparts; that the editors of the 1986 Oxford text privileged what they considered to be the most 'theatrical' versions of the plays. Such a reader will also be able to reconstruct, from this book, a general history of the evolution of Shakespearean editorial theory, from the work of the earliest anonymous quarto and folio 'editors', to Pope's aesthetically oriented reframing of the text, through Malone's insistence on the documentary and the authentic, on to the formulation of a would-be scientific approach (initially in the New Shakspere Society and then, more coherently, in the work of the New Bibliographers), thence to the impact on the editorial project of the evolution of social and poststructural conceptions of textuality and, finally, to the reshaping of editorial concerns in the light of the emergence of electronic modes of publishing.

In tandem with this focus on editors and editing *Shakespeare in Print* also attends closely to the wider context of Shakespeare publishing, examining peripheral, derivative and popular editions. So this book finds room to trace the history of eighteenth-century Scottish and Irish editions of Shakespeare and indicates why these editions are important; it maps out a history of cheap Shakespeare publishing in the nineteenth century; it logs the emergence of schools and expurgated editions. Just as a history of editors and editing is combined here with a history of the theory of editing, so I also attempt to combine the history of popular and peripheral editions with a certain element of general historical contextualisation of the business of producing texts. In covering the eighteenth century, for example, I try to place the emergence of opposing strands of Shakespeare publishing – metropolitan/Celtic, prestige/popular – in the context of battles over the exact legal status of Shakespeare's text and the dispute over the precise meaning of copyright. Likewise, publishing trends in the nineteenth century are discussed in the context of the broadening of the educational franchise and technological advances which very significantly reduced the cost of producing editions. In charting the rise of Shakespeare publishing and editing in America, I have tried to sketch some of the history of book collecting in the United States, since no serious editing work could be undertaken in America until the necessary materials had been accumulated in easily accessible libraries. Part of

the aim of this book, then, is to set the extended narrative of Shakespeare publishing within something of its greater historical and cultural contexts.

The book also attempts – where it can – to give some attention to the quotidian logistics of editing and publishing. *Shakespeare in Print* draws – in many instances for the first time – on a range of archival materials connected with the publication of particular editions. I have made use of the Macmillan archives at the British Library, the archives of Oxford and Cambridge university presses, the Routledge archives at the University of London Library, Edward Dowden's papers at Trinity College Dublin, the John Dover Wilson and David Nichol Smith papers at the National Library of Scotland, and many other manuscript sources. These materials provide an insight both into the intellectual formation of the edited text and into the logistics of bringing an edition to press and to the marketplace. For example, a series of letters exchanged between David Nichol Smith and W. W. Greg, coupled with the Oxford University Press Shakespeare files, serves neatly to indicate the shift in editorial conceptions which occurred in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Smith, increasingly influenced by the emergent New Bibliography, grew frustrated with the traditionalist Walter Raleigh, with whom he was trying to create a new edition for the Oxford press. Raleigh thought that the best new edition would simply present a corrected transcription of the First Folio, but Smith strongly disagreed. The intellectual tensions between the two scholars ultimately proved to be irresolvable and had the effect of sinking the project (at least as it was originally conceived). From a somewhat different perspective, Edward Dowden's papers help to remind us that even those editions that are driven by the best intellectual motives still have their commercial context, as Dowden – dismayed by the sales figures for his inaugural *Hamlet* volume – quickly withdrew from the general editorship of the *Arden Shakespeare*, on the grounds that the series was unlikely to enjoy much enduring success. In slightly more mundane terms, I have also drawn on archival materials to provide details of print runs and sales figures for some editions – for example, tracking the *Globe Shakespeare* through the Cambridge University Press prizing books (effectively the company's publication ledgers) to discover exactly how many copies of it were printed over a period of about half a century.

I have said that *Shakespeare in Print* attends to this kind of backstage logistical history *where it can* and the qualification is important to note here. The editors and publishers of editions of Shakespeare are legion. But few enough of them have left much of a trace behind. The extensive collection of Macmillan materials held at the British Library is very much the exception rather than the rule. Even this well-preserved archive is incomplete, as the

process used by the company in the nineteenth century for mechanically making copies of its outgoing correspondence was imperfect, with the result that some volumes of Macmillan letters held by the British Library now consist entirely of blank pages. The experience of having fastidious librarians deliver neatly bound blank books to one's desk in the rarefied atmosphere of the British Library manuscript reading room is not without its own peculiar surreal charm, but one cannot help registering a sense of genuine loss also. Other major archives are subject not to the whim of imperfect reproduction technologies, but to the pressing need that working publishing companies necessarily feel to save on storage space. In the case of one archive that I visited, many file covers indicated that the enclosed contents had been 'weeded', which is to say that documents had been removed and destroyed, in order to slim the files down. For some commercial publishers – notably corporate multimedia giants who inherit once venerable imprints like the small change of great legacies – the conservation of archives may seem a useless frivolity: why spend money to preserve the past if the past cannot be made to generate a speedy profit? Some other archives have survived in fragmentary form by chance, such as a Thomas Nelson ledger preserved in the Edinburgh University Library and an account book for the 1853–65 James Orchard Halliwell edition in the same collection (the latter acquired when the university bought a set of Halliwell materials that had originally been held by the Public Library of Penzance). Other archives have, like the Library of Alexandria, suffered at the hands of history itself: a call to one London publisher to enquire about materials relating to their nineteenth-century editions of Shakespeare was met with the response that all of their early records had been destroyed in the Blitz. The archival material presented here should, then, be treated with a certain degree of caution. This is the material – or some of it, at least – which happens to have survived. It may be difficult to say to what extent, exactly, it is representative of the culture of Shakespeare publishing more generally.

In addition to the archival limitations discussed in the previous paragraph, a further problem might also be noted here. John Sutherland has identified a tendency in certain forms of publishing history to concentrate on, as he has put it, 'picking the lowest apples' on the tree.[19] Sutherland's vivid metaphor indicates, as I take it, an overreadiness among some scholars to scavenge in archives for easily useful material and to leave behind the mass of other, less immediately accessible data. I must plead guilty here to being myself something of an archival scrumper. I have tended in many instances to look to archives for material which easily fits with the narrative line of this book, declining, in many cases, to ascend through dense branches of accounting