SHAKESPEARE AND THE BOOK

Shakespeare and the Book is a lively and learned account of Shakespeare's plays as they were transformed from scripts to be performed into books to be read, and eventually from popular entertainments into the centerpieces of the English literary canon. Kastan examines the material forms in which we encounter Shakespeare, exploring with unusual breadth and elegance the motives and activities of Shakespeare's first publishers, the curious eighteenth-century schizophrenia that saw Shakespeare performed almost always in versions adapted for contemporary tastes even as scholars were working to establish and restore the "genuine" texts of the plays, and also the exhilarating possibilities of electronic media for presenting Shakespeare to new generations of readers.

This is an important contribution to Shakespearean textual scholarship, to the history of the early English book trade, and to the theory of drama itself. As it considers the various forms in which Shakespeare is available to be read, *Shakespeare and the Book* persuades its readers of the resiliency of the book itself as a technology and of Shakespeare's own extraordinary resiliency, which has been made possible not least by print.

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For Stephen Orgel and Keith Walker

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Illustrations

Acknowledgements

This book began as the Lord Northcliffe Lectures that I was privileged to deliver at University College, London in March 1999. My delight at having been invited to give the lectures can hardly be overestimated. (I wish I could confidently attribute the same delight to those who heard them, but they will have to, if asked, speak for themselves.) I am grateful to all at UCL who made that occasion so memorable, but especially to Professors David Trotter and John Sutherland, who in fact were responsible not only for my invitation but also for the extraordinary hospitality I was shown on my visit.

Their responsibility goes deeper, however, than for merely arranging what was a wonderful experience for me, as their own work, in different ways, provided much of the inspiration for my consideration of Shakespeare and the book. Though both are usually more concerned with nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature than with anything directly related to my topic here, they both have long been thinking about literature's materiality in ways that provoked my interest in what became this study. John Sutherland, the current Lord Northcliffe Professor, has provocatively pointed to and worked to fill what he sometime ago identified as a "large and troubling hole" at the center of literary sociology: "scholarly ignorance about book trade and publishing history technicalities." The chapters here record my debt to that observation and my desire to remedy at least my own ignorance of the topic. David Trotter's work is perhaps less obviously connected to my own, but his work, not least his recent study of "mess," has always combined an extraordinary sensitivity both to the words on the page and to the intellectual and institutional conditions necessary for them to appear there. And "mess" is a topic any scholar

can all too easily identify with, or at least can any scholar's family or friends who have unsuspectingly ventured into the study as a book is being written.

Others who must be acknowledged perhaps bear less immediate responsibility for what appears here, although they were no less influential, as they were the friends whom I talked with, listened to, read, and no doubt often bothered as my own interests in Shakespeare and the book were developing: David Bevington, Peter Blayney, Margreta de Grazia, Andrew Murphy, Franco Moretti, Barbara Mowat, Richard Proudfoot, Peter Stallybrass, G. Thomas Tanselle, Paul Werstine, Henry Woudhuysen, and Steve Zwicker; and, perhaps most significantly, a group of extraordinary young scholars who, as they passed through Columbia's halls and after, have played instructor to my eager student at least as often as it was the other way round: Heidi Brayman Hackel, Douglas Brooks, Patricia Cahill, Alan Farmer, András Kiséry, Jesse Lander, Zachary Lesser, Ben Robinson, Andrew Sage, Bill Sherman (who still counts as young), and Chloe Wheatley. All of these people will find in the pages that follow places where they will disagree with my ideas and my formulations, and, no doubt, find others where "my ideas and my formulations" are in fact theirs. In regard to the former, I can only utter the formulaic assurance that they must not be held responsible for the limitations of the book; in regard to the latter, I suppose could merely take the disclaimer back, but in fairness I must say thanks.

There are other friends who have importantly contributed, friends who often did no more, but always no less, than to believe in me and in the project, and without whom this book might never have been written (or, more likely, without whom it might have been written more quickly but with far less pleasure and confidence): David Armitage, Kimberley Coles, Josie Dixon, Jessica Hodge, Jonathan Hope, Gordon McMullan, Claire McEachern, and Jim Shapiro so prominent among these that their welcomed distractions must be publicly recognized.

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Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, and the British Library. Some of their assistance is recognized in the picture credits, but that represents only a very small piece of their actual contribution, among which not the least is their creation of environments in which one can believe that scholarship still matters (and in which it can be efficiently done: the remarkable collections in all those places enabled me not only to consult the editions that are the main subject of this study, many of which are extremely rare, some unique, but also enabled me to engage with the generations of critics who have worked on similar problems, to whom my debts can only partially be acknowledged in my notes).

And there is my family who must be thanked, who good-naturedly – I think – tolerated long periods of me being away at various libraries or in front of the computer (and in my absences and intensities walked the dog); and the two people to whom this book is dedicated, whose extraordinary generosity in different ways made it possible.

One last note: I have considerably revised the texts of what I gave as the Lord Northcliffe lectures, as well as the paper I presented at the International Shakespeare Congress in August 2000, which served as an early version of chapter three. My hope is that whatever has been achieved in revision towards greater clarity and precision will outweigh whatever has been lost in abandoning the more informal nature of the original lectures (some of whose marks I could not quite bear to part with). Again, I give sincere thanks not only to those who organized those opportunities for me to speak, but also to the audiences on each occasion, whose alert, learned, and sometimes very unnerving questions and comments, have also served to make this work far better than it ever would have been without them.