Introduction

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The century in which Shakespeare was born saw unprecedented awareness of the importance of informed textual reproduction. In the second and third decades of the sixteenth century, Reformers both within and outside the Catholic Church produced new editions of the Bible that challenged what had been the official Catholic version for more than a thousand years, Jerome's fourth-century Latin Vulgate. Erasmus's textual scholarship made clear that it was misleading in important points of theology, yet the Vulgate was powerfully defended, and many continued to base their interpretation of Scripture on it. In literary studies today, the conflict between those who advocate renewed attention to textual reproduction and those who resist such investigation is in a sense being re-enacted. For a long time, most critics felt free to base their analyses of texts by Shakespeare and others on just any edition at hand, giving no thought to the text's credentials and the editorial policy informing it. Now that editing and textual studies have become hot topics that attract ever-increasing attention – even in *The New Yorker* – this may have started to change.[1] Yet those whose criticism shows little or no awareness of the importance of the nature of modern textual reproduction remain numerous. As an influential textual scholar puts it, 'many a literary critic has investigated the past ownership and mechanical condition of his second-hand automobile . . . more thoroughly than he has looked into the qualifications of the text on which his critical theories rest'.[2] No one will deny that the consequences of a car accident can be rather more severe than those of uninformed criticism, but it is true that all those who remain unconcerned by editorial practices and policy run the risk, as many did in the sixteenth century, of having their interpretations marred by unexamined textual assumptions.

So why does attention to textual reproduction matter? How will our critical response to a Shakespeare play be shaped by an increased awareness of the choices informing modern editorial mediation? Let us start at the end;

Hamlet's end. For that, as we all know, is silence. Or so it was until the editors of the ground-breaking Oxford *Complete Works* came around in 1986 and told us that it wasn't silence after all.[3] Basing their edition on the 1623 Folio rather than the second quarto of 1604/5, they straightforwardly followed their copy-text which reads: 'The rest is silence. O, o, o, o.' The four letters can of course be construed in a variety of ways, from a discontinued last sigh to loud groans in tortured agony. Those who remember the importance of 'making a good end' in early modern England – as instanced by the carefully prepared performance into which John Donne turned his own death – do not need to be reminded of the importance of these final moments for the interpretation of a whole life. Whatever one's interpretation of the four letters is, a decision which any modern textual reproduction entails is their inclusion or their non-inclusion. Whether the arguably most famous fictional character in Western literature may end his life by contradicting, as it were, the last words he has just uttered seems a matter of sufficient critical interest to warrant attention to the relevant textual and editorial questions.[4]

A less familiar example is the male protagonist's attempted suicide in *Romeo and Juliet* (3.3). When Romeo has been informed by Friar Laurence of his banishment, the Nurse enters to them with news about Juliet's grief. As Romeo tries to stab himself, the Friar – in the second quarto of 1599 on which modern editions are usually based – shouts 'Hold thy desperate hand', but no stage direction explains what action accompanies his words. Most modern performances and films, including Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's, have the Nurse shrink back in horror while the Friar bravely intervenes. Yet in the first edition of 1597, to which the unfortunate label 'bad quarto' is sometimes attached, we are told that when Romeo 'offers to stab himselfe', the 'Nurse snatches the dagger away'. G. Blakemore Evans, in the New Cambridge edition, integrates this stage direction into his edition.[5] Brian Gibbons's Arden2 edition, by contrast, provides no stage direction and explains in a footnote that 'There is nothing in the dialogue (or the characterization of the Nurse generally) to prepare for or to support this intervention by the Nurse.'[6] Jill L. Levenson, in the Oxford edition, inserts a stage direction reading 'Romeo offers to stab himself' and explains in a note how editors and directors have dealt with this passage.[7] Whatever decision we prefer, these forms of editorial intervention have an impact on the way we see the play dramatize gender distinctions. In a play which interrogates masculinity so incisively, which has the male protagonist end with the traditionally feminine suicide (poison) and Juliet with the masculine (she resolutely stabs herself), awareness of what informs editorial

textual reproduction in the case of Romeo's attempted suicide seems of considerable importance.

Or take the ending of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Egeus, Hermia's father, wants to prevent his daughter's marriage to Lysander, preferring a match with Demetrius instead. Yet Theseus overrules him at 4.1, in effect destroying the patriarchal authority so central to Egeus's character. Egeus remains silent for the rest of the scene, allowing for considerable scope in the interpretation of the character on stage. Thereafter, in the version of the play best known to modern readers and theatregoers, the first quarto of 1600, he disappears entirely from the play. Yet in the Folio, he reappears in the last scene speaking most of the lines given in Q1 to Philostrate, the Master of the Revels, thus joining the lovers in the festivities. With Q1 excluding, but the Folio reintroducing, Egeus in the comic conclusion, the two texts seem to constitute comedies of a rather different type. As Northrop Frye wrote in his highly influential *Anatomy of Criticism*,

> Comedy often includes a scapegoat ritual of expulsion which gets rid of some irreconcilable character, but exposure and disgrace make for pathos, or even tragedy. *The Merchant of Venice* seems almost an experiment in coming as close as possible to upsetting the comic balance. If the dramatic role of Shylock is ever so slightly exaggerated, as it generally is when the leading actor of the company takes the part, it is upset, and the play becomes the tragedy of the Jew of Venice with a comic epilogue.[8]

Does *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – like *The Merchant of Venice* – contain 'a scapegoat ritual of expulsion' which, as Frye shows, is central to one form of comedy? Or is it a more inclusive kind of comedy? Just what kind of comedy we think *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is has much to do with whether we read (an edition based on) the first quarto or the Folio edition.[9] Here and elsewhere, an awareness of the choices involved in the modern textual reproduction of Shakespeare's drama, and of the rationale informing them, seems essential for an informed critical response.

Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare's Drama aims at increasing this awareness. What motivates an editor to reproduce *this* reading, and not *that* reading? What larger issues of, for instance, evidence or authenticity or market does editorial choice raise, and how might such issues impact in turn on decisions concerning conventions of presentation? 1983 saw the publication of *The Division of the Kingdoms*, the ground-breaking collection on the texts of *King Lear*, edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren.[10] That volume, followed three years later by the publication of

the Oxford *Complete Works*, revolutionized our thinking about the texts of Shakespeare's drama. Scholars, and readers of the plays more generally, became freshly aware of differences between the earliest surviving editions, not least as a result of the decision taken by the Oxford editors 'to prefer – where there is a choice – the text closer to the prompt-book of Shakespeare's company [over the authorial papers]'.[11] Accordingly, they relegated to appendices called 'Additional Passages' sometimes even quite famous speeches that nonetheless fail to appear in the more 'socialized' copy. They further made strikingly visible the existence of multiple textual witnesses by presenting two texts of *King Lear*.

Since then, New Cambridge have launched their 'Early Quartos' series, Arden3 and the Oxford single-volume editions sometimes include as part of their editorial material photofacsimiles of early quartos, Michael Warren has prepared the *Complete King Lear*, Jesús Pérez Tronch *A Synoptic Hamlet*, Paul Bertram and Bernice W. Kliman *The Three-Text Hamlet*, and Early English Books Online, an electronic photofacsimile resource, has become more widely and easily accessible.[12] Leah Marcus, Randall McLeod, and Michael Warren have all written persuasively about the interpretative importance of the sorts of textual details that are inevitably effaced through editorial mediation.[13] The arguments for 'unediting' the Renaissance, and access to the materials with which one might begin to do it, would seem to have arrived. And yet we continue to edit.

The impetus behind *Textual Performances* is not primarily to introduce readers to the idea of textual instability or to foreground textual cruxes – that level of consciousness raising, to a large extent, has already been accomplished. Instead, this collection seeks to gather together the points of key debate and controversy of the present moment to begin to understand the range of pragmatic editorial methodologies that are emerging from the fray, how they respond to the surviving documentary evidence, and how they might speak (or fail to speak) one to another. Robert Weimann – not explicitly or primarily a textual scholar – has recently insisted on the urgency of such investigations, arguing that while it is one thing to identify the limitations of earlier bibliographical standards, 'It is quite another question to define and clarify the new premises.'[14] Weimann's sense that clarification is required is perhaps indicative of the present state of textual and editorial studies, a feature of the paradigm shift in which Barbara Mowat argues we now find ourselves.[15]

Each of the essays in this volume asks very specific questions about, or focuses on a particular aspect of, the modern editions we study in the classroom or rehearsal room, or read for private enjoyment. In what ways might

the imaginations of readers be engaged by performance, past and present? How might the evidence of extant early modern manuscript plays shape an editorial treatment of Shakespeare's (print) drama? What opportunities for editorial mediation are offered by electronic media? Should there be more consistency in the ways editors modernize spelling, and what can we do about the interpretative challenges that result from this now commonplace editorial practice? Do users want to read 'texts' or 'works' of Shakespeare's plays?

These questions speak to a shared concern about how best to engage editorially with evidence provided by historical research into the playhouse, author's study, and printing house, and into the complex relations among these spaces of early modern production. Contributors take as a starting-point the following theoretical considerations. First, our knowledge of events and practices of the past can never be anything but partial (in the senses both of incomplete and ideological). Secondly, the activity of textual reproduction can never be entirely disinterested or 'neutral', as historicist research into the editorial tradition by Margreta de Grazia and Laurie Maguire, among others, suggests.[16] How, then, are editors of playscripts to mediate history, in its many forms, for modern users? Should they have to? Where, considering our knowledge of the past is partial, are we to draw the line between legitimate editorial assistance and unwarranted interference? In what innovative way(s) might current controversies surrounding the mediation of Shakespeare's drama shape editorial practice?

The central issues around which this volume has been organized can thus be distilled into a couple of related questions. How can, or need, what we think we know (or are able to infer) about historical events and practices inform what we do as editors of Shakespeare's drama? And how is editorial intervention, or lack thereof, to be related to the perceived needs of users? These are debated areas that permit, at this moment at least, of no ready answers. *Textual Performances* does not advocate a party line, but instead brings into dialogue competing approaches in order to allow readers to assess for themselves how successfully each responds to the major questions of theory, history, and practice that have arisen since the 1980s. While it is not in the nature of paradigm shifts to allow for a clear awareness of what is to follow, this collection pursues the question of what directions editorial practice might take in the twenty-first century.

Part I, Establishing the Text, includes six essays that offer very different methodological and interpretative responses to the problem of uncertain textual provenance, and engage in a variety of ways the author and editor

functions in contemporary editorial theory and practice. We do not here attempt to introduce the essays one by one in the received manner, but endeavour instead briefly to present the on-going scholarly debate in which the contributors are engaged. Each of the following essays stands on its own, but readers will particularly benefit, we believe, from observing how, and perhaps analysing why, many contributors in this collection address the same questions but arrive at different answers.

If we want to understand modern thinking on the question of textual provenance, we will do well, as Ernst Honigmann, Paul Werstine, and Henry Woudhuysen do, to return to a group of twentieth-century scholars led by A. W. Pollard, W. W. Greg, and R. B. McKerrow, now often subsumed under the label 'The New Bibliography'. Aiming at 'penetrating the veil of print',[17] the New Bibliographers classified Shakespeare's (now lost) manuscript playbooks into such groups as 'foul papers', 'promptbooks', and 'private transcripts' in an effort to discern the copy from which they believed the surviving printed texts had been set up.[18] Greg advocated that editions be based, when more than one substantive text has come down to us, on that which is closest to the state in which the dramatic text left the author's hands.[19] Few assumptions of the New Bibliography have gone unchallenged, and the turn from authorial to performance texts ushered in by the Oxford *Complete Works* of 1986 is reflected by several essays in this collection. The extent to which the above classifications accurately characterize the manuscript copy actually used in early modern printing houses is another particularly contentious issue. Woudhuysen and Honigmann acknowledge that editing techniques deriving from the New Bibliography are necessarily pragmatic and compromised, yet they take issue, in different ways, with emerging trends in textual studies: Woudhuysen offers a sustained analysis of the claims of the so-called 'uneditors', while Honigmann challenges the insights offered by the most recent generation of textual scholars as overly pessimistic. Werstine counters that editorial practice is best not based on either optimism or pessimism but on evidence from extant material witnesses, and presents such evidence to illustrate that our assumptions about so-called 'foul papers' are mistaken.[20]

These contributors agree, however, that the New Bibliography, despite what the label might suggest, was a group of scholars with rather more diverse opinions than some recent discussions suggest and that it in fact anticipated several of the current debates. As Honigmann shows, not only recent scholars but also Greg warned 'against hard-and-fast criteria for distinguishing foul papers from promptbooks' (p. 79); and, as Werstine reminds us, not only recent scholars but also McKerrow departed from the

belief that an edition should necessarily try to recover a play as nearly as possible as it left the author's hands (pp. 51–2).

Just what an editor should strive to edit remains thus a difficult question, and the answers to it differ accordingly. A first important distinction several contributors establish is that between the document, the text, and the work. The precise definitions which attach to each of these terms are contested, as are the interrelationships between the categories, not least because such an exercise implies competing ideological attitudes towards evidence and authority. Woudhuysen maintains that a facsimile edition preserves many (though not all) material features of a dramatic document and is the most 'socialized' text of the kind Jerome J. McGann and D. F. McKenzie have advocated.[21] However, it does not cater to the needs of all readers. Another problem, as John Jowett shows, is that a material document can conceal central aspects of a text – in the specific cases he discusses, distinct layers of adaptation – which sophisticated textual studies, and an edition informed by them, can make visible to a reader. In such a situation, privileging the document over the text is invoked at the cost of invalidating other kinds of editorial intervention (p. 64). Sonia Massai argues, by contrast, that it is important for editors to make the textual users aware of the original dramatic documents and, specifically, of the 'presentational options native to the medium of print' (p. 102). Rather than reducing the medium through which the documents were produced to a corrupting agent interfering with authorial intentions, we need to understand it as a set of ideological as well as technological developments which partly constitute the text. She proposes that release of editorial control, as practised in her Internet Shakespeare edition of *Edward III*, does better justice both to the reader (or user), who is empowered, and to the original documents. As her essay shows, it is precisely the 'radical technological break from print culture' (p. 106) constituted by medium that allows editors to mediate important insights into early modern print culture.

If the distinction between text and document serves to highlight one area of disagreement, that between text and work pinpoints another. 'Work', in this context, tends to refer to the play as one might assume the author, in an ideal world, would have wished to see it presented. The editorial situation that best brings this distinction into focus is that of plays, such as *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, of which more than one version has survived. If two, or even three, substantive editions of a play survive, should editors strive to recover, or construct, the play as Shakespeare conceived it, interpreting the extant versions as reflections, of different provenance and authority, of that same lost work? Or is that work simply unavailable, a Platonic idea

fabricated by editorial narratives and unverifiable speculation? Werstine argues for the latter position, advocating 'the humanly possible goal of editing one or more of the early printed texts, without claiming to locate either author or work in relation to these printed versions' (p. 59). Woudhuysen, by contrast, states that 'most people understand that reading an edition of *Hamlet* is different from reading an edition of the second quarto of the play' (p. 40) and, drawing on the work of T. H. Howard-Hill, holds that the great majority of readers, including university teachers and students, want to read works, not texts. Honigmann emphasizes that editing separate versions fails to take account of the plays' normal evolution in Shakespeare's theatre and that 'the notion of the "single play" had at this time to be elastic' (p. 86). Yet Leah Marcus's advocacy of 'unediting' emphasizes what can be lost when versions of a play are conflated instead of studied separately: if the first quarto and Folio editions of *Othello* can be distinguished in their treatment of race, then an edition that presents these versions of *Othello* as a unified work may conceal something essential about the changes the play underwent in Shakespeare's time.[22]

A different way of framing the distinction between text and work is to ask whether, and if so in what way, editorial practice should continue to be 'critical' (or 'eclectic'). Editing works implies eclecticism (and at least local conflation) insofar as more than one version will be drawn upon for the edition. Woudhuysen maintains that there is still space enough 'for the critical editing of works' (p. 47), but Werstine insists that '"critical" editing of Shakespeare has had its day' (p. 58). A question this debate raises is how to deal with errors in the copy-text if editors are bent on avoiding eclecticism. McKerrow, as Werstine reminds us, advocated sticking to copy unless its readings appear to be certainly corrupt, but Woudhuysen and Honigmann believe that such a position is fraught with problems: 'if errors are to be corrected, where should the editor stop and how confident can we be that *this* is an error but *that* is not?' (Woudhuysen, p. 44). Similarly, Honigmann believes 'editors committed to an anti-conflation policy still persist in conflating' (p. 87). While Werstine seems less sure than Woudhuysen and Honigmann that the New Bibliography has equipped us with adequate tools to identify 'foul papers',[23] Woudhuysen and Honigmann seem less sure than Werstine that editors can know what is and what is not textual error and that conflation and critical (or eclectic) editing can be entirely resisted.

The growing awareness since the 1970s that Shakespeare may have revised some of his plays further complicates the question of whether to edit texts or works.[24] Is it legitimate to try to recover the work of *King Lear* (Honigmann,

pp. 86–7), or is it not because it never was a single work in the first place (Woudhuysen, p. 43)? Honigmann warns us that the signs of revision and those of corruption may be difficult to keep apart, yet Marcus believes that, in the case of *Othello*, the different treatment of race in quarto and Folio does argue for (quite possibly authorial) revision. A 'two-text model' is also pursued by Jowett in his work on *Sir Thomas More* and *Measure for Measure* as texts which survive in their adapted forms. Editing these plays for the Arden Shakespeare and the Middleton *Collected Works* respectively, he points out that readers will have to know why *Measure for Measure* and *Sir Thomas More* qualify for inclusion in these editorial projects in the first place. His editorial recovery of adaptation points back to authors at the same time as these authors are seen as functioning within a theatrical enterprise in which solitary authorship did not reign supreme, in which theatrical texts were adapted by a writer who had no hand in the original composition.

As all of these approaches and debates imply, editorial practices in the twenty-first century are bound up with the question of how far the extant dramatic documents allow us to get back to the author. No one doubts that Shakespeare and others wrote plays, but how far can the author(s) of a dramatic work be recovered through the socialized texts that may have been mediated by actors, scribes, compositors, and proof-readers? Werstine believes that the quest for the author should be abandoned, while Honigmann argues that, the necessary caution granted, the good quartos may well give us limited access to Shakespeare. This opposition may seem to re-enact the controversy over whether to edit texts or works, but Marcus's essay bears out that, paradoxically, it is by making available the versions rather than the work of *Othello* that readers are led back to Shakespeare, a revising Shakespeare who does not resemble 'the "gentle Shakespeare" we have been taught to know and love' (p. 33). Massai adds that the notion of the author is 'medium-specific' (p. 105), significant in early modern print culture but obsolete in modern-day electronic culture. She sees the electronic medium as offering new editorial opportunities precisely because it can foreground evidence of textual instability that might allow readers to discern how non-authorial agents 'construct[ed] the printed texts from which "Shakespeare" emerged as an early modern dramatic author' (p. 96). The sum of these essays suggests that whether, and if so how, we have access to authors (rather than just manuscripts and printed texts) is a question that remains wide open.

What precedes makes abundantly clear that current thinking on textual provenance and on how to theorize the role of the editor, the text, the work,

and the author in relation to editorial practice is sharply divided. While *The Division of the Kingdoms* in 1983 assembled a group of contributors most of whom were united in advancing the case for Shakespeare's revision of *King Lear*, *Textual Performances* stages the current division among Shakespearean textualists. It does so in the hope of sharpening our readers' awareness of the key issues in today's debates as well as of providing guidance to students and practitioners of the modern reproduction of Shakespeare's drama.

The seven essays included in Part II, Presenting the Play, continue this analysis of evidence and authority. Here the debate is framed in terms of what might be described as an editorial overlay – decisions concerning spelling, annotation, page layout, and appendices which are often invisible, taken for granted, or even determined in advance by publishing houses. These essays offer a sustained examination of the relation between interpretation and presentation, and explore how, and to what effect, a reader's experience of Shakespeare's drama is inflected – and might be inflected differently – by the way the text is shaped.

The vast majority of modern editions of Shakespeare are prepared with the student reader in mind. In an effort to make the drama more accessible, editors attempt to smooth over passages perceived as difficult through a combination of modernization and emendation. Some of these tactics, however, as David Bevington and Michael Warren emphasize, come at a price. There are probably now few people who would agree with Fredson Bowers that 'the preservation in any serious edition of the old-spelling characteristics of a text . . . scarcely needs defence'.[25] 'Serious' modern-spelling editions of Shakespeare come as standard these days. The pragmatic problem, however, as Bevington demonstrates, is that there is as yet little consistency in the way editors approach the task of modernization. As a result, 'misinformation that is culturally and linguistically revealing' (p. 146) (false etymologies, for instance) is preserved erratically in modern editions, or erased without comment. The more an editor intrudes to dress a play in a twenty-first-century guise, the more fully the play is subjected to his or her critical understanding of language and action. Michael Warren places a slightly different emphasis on the dangers of intervention by examining how the speech prefixes of the First and Second Citizens in the opening lines of *Coriolanus* are typically, and unnecessarily, altered to conform to editors' notions of 'playability' and psychological realism. What constitutes error – and our willingness to find it – is thus brought into question: 'Error is a risky concept; the idea of others' error is a temptation' (p. 138).