Introduction

This book is a study of dramatic manuscripts and of how manuscript evidence may inform critical practice across several fields of the study of early-modern drama in general, and of Shakespeare's work in particular. Some of the manuscripts discussed in this book are imagined or inferred. They are the products of scholars' attempts to reconstruct what Shakespeare wrote and how his plays were affected by their use in the playhouse. The manuscripts that I explore in most detail, however, exist. As instances of the 'precious few' documents that survive from use in the early-modern theatre, these manuscripts represent the best witnesses of the work of playwrights and players (Long 1999, p. 414). One of these survivors, *Sir Thomas More* (British Library MS Harley 7368), is widely held to include writing by Shakespeare. It has garnered much more critical attention than the others, and it is given the most space in this book. The other three manuscripts that the following chapters examine in detail – *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (Huntington MS 500), *The Captives* (British Library MS Egerton 1994, folios 52 to 73), and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (British Library MS Lansdowne 807, folios 29 to 56) – do not possess the obvious Shakespearean interest of *More*, but may be attributed with varying degrees of confidence to three of Shakespeare's contemporaries and, for many critics, collaborators: Anthony Munday, Thomas Heywood, and Thomas Middleton. These three manuscripts also include the work of some of Shakespeare's other probable, less-known collaborators – a theatrical agent that subsequent scholarship has named 'C' and the bookkeeper of the King's Men in 1611 – as well as the interventions of other agents with whom Shakespeare shared textual space: Edmund Tilney and Sir George Buc, Masters of the Revels over Shakespeare's career. Through their insistent materiality, all of these manuscripts in some ways resist assumptions that shape the current reception of early-modern drama. The obligations that the manuscripts place on their interpreters lie at the heart of this book's attempt to rethink what we can know about early-modern dramatic

texts, how dramatists wrote, how their plays were altered in the playhouse, and how, as a consequence of this study, Shakespeare may be regarded as a dramatic 'author'.

The following chapters consider each manuscript – its inks, hands, cancellations, and interlined or interpaged additions – as a material ground for rethinking what is assumed by scholars about early-modern, and in particular Shakespearean, dramatic texts. These studies form critical encounters with different areas of current scholarly practice, beginning with the field of textual studies, moving through theatre history and theories of dramatic collaboration and attribution studies, to a consideration of 'the Shakespearean' and the integrity of the Shakespeare canon. These critical encounters progress through studies of increasingly complex manuscripts. But their order is also governed by a movement from the consideration of general questions about the text in the playhouse to an argument about how the author, and then the authorial signifier 'William Shakespeare', continue to function and should function in critical work on the period's drama. Both teleologies lead to an examination of how *More*, as a single possible example of Shakespeare's dramatic work, demands a reconsideration of what constitutes Shakespearean dramatic writing. As will become clear, this Shakespearean trajectory does not mean that the following pages offer an unqualified celebration of Shakespeare as an author. They do not seek to bury him either.

After the New Bibliography

This book's initial concern is with the work of textual scholars. In its focus on dramatic manuscripts in general, and Shakespeare's manuscripts in particular, this book attends to what have long been objects of editorial speculation and wistfulness. In the dedication to the Duke of Somerset that prefaces his edition of Shakespeare's works, Nicholas Rowe, the 'first of Shakespeare's editors to be publicly identified', explains the limitations of his work by conceding that 'I must not pretend to have restor'd this Work to the Exactness of the Author's Original Manuscripts: Those are lost, or, at least, are gone beyond any Inquiry I could make' (Murphy 2007, p. 94; Rowe 1709, I: sigs. A2r–A2v). The desire for an act of restoration of the type that Rowe admits is beyond his capacity, if not for the manuscripts themselves, has been almost ubiquitous since (Mowat 1996, pp. 26–7). This book's studies of how plays were written and revised for use in the theatre are

dominated by one particular series of attempts to restore Shakespeare's lost manuscripts: those associated with the New Bibliography. The term 'New Bibliography' denotes a turn in textual criticism that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century that professed to focus on the material details of textual production. As its most important figure, W. W. Greg, put it, New Bibliographic criticism was concerned with 'the fortunes of the actual pieces of paper on which the texts were written or printed . . . rather than with the literary characteristics of the texts in question' (1942, p. 3). Its methods strove to be rigorous and objective, even scientific, and came to dominate Shakespearean textual criticism for the rest of the century.[1] They remain influential today, often constituting what appear to be the natural forms of textual practice.

Over the past two or three decades, what E. A. J. Honigmann labels a 'revolt against the New Bibliography' has taken place (2004, p. 85). The objectives, assumptions, and methods associated with this method of textual criticism have been subjected to powerful critique. Explanations of textual production advanced by New Bibliographers have been described as 'grand narratives' unsuited to the particularities of the early-modern theatre and unacceptable in the present intellectual climate that recognizes developments in narrative theory (Werstine 1999a, p. 103). The goal of reproducing the author's original manuscript that is central to most New Bibliographic editorial practice has been described as an operation of 'metaphysical' mystification that abjects the material text (De Grazia 1988, p. 82). And New Bibliographic suppositions about the appearance of theatrical manuscripts have been shown not to accord with the evidence of extant documents (Long 1985; Werstine 2013). John Jowett captures the uncertain place of the New Bibliography today by remarking that '[i]ts inheritance to the twenty-first century currently remains subject to negotiation' (2006, p. 1). A brief consideration of what such 'negotiations' must entail may bring into focus this book's initial questions concerning how theatrical texts were written and revised in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playhouses, and how the following chapters, through their findings and methods, intervene in current debates in textual studies.

The future of the New Bibliography

For much of the time in which the New Bibliography flourished, the future appeared the most assured aspect of textual studies. The earlier

work of its foundational figures – W. W. Greg, R. B. McKerrow, and A. W. Pollard – often displays a disarmingly provisional tone. Pollard, for instance, submits to the public what he calls a 'very brief and inadequate' discussion of dramatic manuscripts in *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates and the Problems of the Transmission of His Text* (1917) with the expressed conviction that later scholars' work on the documents will 'confirm or weaken' his own arguments (p. v). Similarly, Greg's study of theatrical manuscripts in *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses: Stage Plots, Actors' Parts, Prompt Books* (1931) is described by its author as 'a tentative survey of the extant material', a 'summary' presented in the hope that subsequent studies will 'follow up the trail' (I: pp. 190, 221). Underlying such offerings, of course, lies the optimistic expectation that further studies will corroborate or supersede these preliminary investigations. Written a generation after the publication of Pollard's study, F. P. Wilson's survey of *Shakespeare and the New Bibliography* (1945) offers a narrative of progress very much in keeping with these hopes. Wilson recounts advances made by New Bibliographic scholarship, including the revelation of the Pavier quartos' publication date, new understandings of the printing of the first Shakespeare folio, and advances in palaeography, which are brought in part through 'the inventions of science' that newly make both the reproduction and detailed examination of manuscripts possible (1970, p. 50). If by the time that Helen Gardner revised Wilson's work in 1970 she would preface the volume by conceding that 'some of the conclusions that seemed then secure have turned out to be ill-founded', it was only, she writes, because the 'signal advance[s]' of the 'newer bibliography' of Charlton Hinman and others had already built on and corrected the endeavours of their predecessors (*ibid*., p. v).

At much the same time as the publication of the revised edition of Wilson's text, George Walton Williams offered a startlingly assured vision of the future of Shakespearean textual studies. In an essay jubilantly titled 'On Editing Shakespeare: *Annus Mirabilis*', Williams celebrates the four publications of 1968/9 that make the academic year, in his estimation, one that 'will hereafter be taken … as the moment that epitomized the transition from old to new in the editing of Shakespeare' (1971, p. 63): Alfred Harbage's Pelican Shakespeare, Hinman's Norton facsimile of *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, Marvin Spevack's *A Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of*

Shakespeare, and T. H. Howard-Hill's Oxford old-spelling Shakespeare *Concordances*. With the Oxford concordances offering for editors an 'almost instantaneous analysis of the spelling habits of the compositors of the early editions of the plays', Williams predicts the imminent establishing of 'the finally definitive, critical text of Shakespeare' (*ibid*., p. 73). He writes

> [b]y knowing thoroughly the spelling patterns and variable practices of the compositors of a particular play, editors should be able with a reasonable degree of probability to reconstruct the original spellings used by Shakespeare and so to reconstitute, as it were, the lost manuscript of Shakespeare himself. . . . This hypothetical, recovered or reconstituted manuscript will be the finally definitive text of Shakespeare, in Shakespeare's own spelling. (*ibid*., p. 73)

If for Williams the year marks a moment of transition to the new, it is clear that this movement represents the fulfilment of an old desire: the recovery of the texts of Shakespeare's authorial manuscripts. Or, as Williams puts it, scholarly advances promise 'the possibility of seeing Shakespeare plain' (*ibid*., p. 77).

As Jowett's statement about the uncertain status of the New Bibliographic inheritance suggests, this past future now looks rather different. In large part through the work of the New Bibliographers, more is known about the transmission of Shakespeare's texts than ever before. Valuable materials have been located, collected, and catalogued, as well as reproduced in facsimile and diplomatic editions, enabling and stimulating new work. The present study could not have been conceived or undertaken without many of these resources, most immediately the reprints of dramatic manuscripts prepared for the Malone Society, which was general-edited by Greg from 1906 to 1939 and founded on Pollard's initiative. In this regard, Pollard's intention that the society produce 'work of permanent utility' is, more than a century later, showing every sign of being realized (cited in Woudhuysen 2004, p. 37). Yet Williams' confidence in attaining a 'finally definitive text' may appear to many readers now as expressing an extraordinary and naïve optimism. The pioneering work of Pollard and Greg, as well as the narrative of achievement conveyed by Wilson and supplemented by Gardner, may be construed as exercises in the modernist mythologies of progress and perfectibility – precisely the discourses that reach a height in Williams' description of how the 'world of textual criticism'

and its 'handmaiden' the computer 'groaneth and travailleth together toward perfection' (1971, pp. 73, 61). Future developments in textual studies are likely to emerge in rather more complex ways than that suggested by Williams' clean and modern 'transition from old to new'.

The New Bibliographic inheritance

Reflecting on the state of textual studies at the turn of the millennium, Barbara Mowat captures a sense of uncertainty over the future of criticism after the New Bibliography (and displays a different form of optimism) in writing of 'looking with hope towards a future in which new paradigms may be established . . . , or in which the new bibliography may find a way to explain and absorb the factual and theoretical challenges to its hegemony, or in which editing may flourish in the absence of an accepted paradigm' (2001, p. 26). Jowett's metaphor of the inheritance may offer a productive means to think about the alternatives that Mowat identifies, particularly if it is brought into contact with Jacques Derrida's notion of 'the radical and necessary *heterogeneity* of an inheritance' (Derrida 1994, p. 16). Derrida writes

> [a]n inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*. 'One must' means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause – natural or genetic. One always inherits from a secret – which says 'read me, will you ever be able to do so?' (*ibid.*, p. 16)

The inheritance for Derrida is something that is never simply given nor received complete or intelligible. Rather, it is worked out, worked through over time, constantly re-established, re-conceived, re-read in different ways. It problematizes, even as it constitutes, succession.

The notion of inheritance, understood with its attendant uncertainties of succession, is particularly apt for consideration of the writings that make up what is conveniently labelled 'the New Bibliography'. New Bibliographers and their writings have continually undertaken generational reaffirmations and critiques of the type that Derrida

describes. Such a relation is, of course, implied in the hopeful early work of Greg and Pollard, as well as by Gardner's backward glance. Peter Alexander asked fundamental questions of Pollard's categorization of 'good' and 'bad' quartos in 1929. In the mid-1950s Fredson Bowers rejected what he saw as Greg's overly simple categorization of manuscripts into 'foul papers' and 'prompt books' by proposing thirteen different forms that manuscript copy could take (Bowers 1955, pp. 11ff.). Greg's at-times scathing review of Bowers' 'depressing' publication attests to the deep (intellectual, stylistic, and perhaps national and generational) differences between critics that we now collect together under the same convenient term (Greg 1956, p. 103).

Poised half way between the emergence of the New Bibliography and the present, Honigmann's *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text* (1965) represents a conspicuous example of how the New Bibliography's processes of inheritance have been anything but a succession of passive reception. In proposing that several Shakespearean plays exist in more than one authorial version, and that as a consequence distinguishing between authorial second thoughts and non-authorial corruptions is at times impossible when two different texts of a play exist, Honigmann directly challenged the manner in which previous New Bibliographic scholars professed to detect error and identify the provenance of texts. Such '[o]ptimistic editors', he insists,

> skim airily over too many unknowables in their corrective and eclectic labours . . . not least in their reliance upon bibliography, their certainty that they can detect error, and their rules for restoring the lost original. A realistic attitude to the unknowables forces us . . . to veer away from Pollard [and his profession of a 'healthy and hardy optimism'] towards pessimism or, at any rate, scepticism.[2] (1965, p. 170)

In rejecting the 'wishful thinking' into which Pollard's 'optimism' had 'degenerated' in the work of his successors, Honigmann in effect argued that his New Bibliographic forebears 'had built their textual theories on a fallacy' (1965, p. 169; 2004, p. 83). Yet even as Honigmann's work brought him 'into collision with Pollard, Greg, and Alexander', there are clear continuities between Honigmann's work and that of his predecessors (Honigmann 2004, p. 84). While his theory of the existence of two authorial 'arch-texts' rejects the notion of a 'finalised' text and makes doubtful the possibility of distinguishing authorial second thoughts from non-authorial interventions, Honigmann's concern remains

consistent with the objective of his forebears. His primary editorial goal is the restoration of Shakespeare's text(s) from the corruptions of play- and printing-houses (1965, p. 3). Moreover, Honigmann's argument for the existence of multiple authorial 'arch-texts' demonstrates a 'reliance upon bibliography' that is recognizably coincident with other New Bibliographic work. Accordingly, in his review of 'The New Bibliography and its critics' written almost forty years later, Honigmann emplots his own work within a narrative of New Bibliography's 'steady advance of scholarship and knowledge over a period of almost a hundred years' (2004, pp. 84, 91).[3]

It is therefore with the caution that Mowat implicitly advises that one should judge the manner in which work critical of the New Bibliography may break from previous criticism. The 'revolt' – perhaps as diverse as the New Bibliography itself – in part brings a profound difference of approach to textual study, not merely by contesting the possibility of determining what Shakespeare wrote (as Honigmann did), but by challenging the very objectives of New Bibliographic practice. The desirability, and even the meaning, of 'seeing Shakespeare plain', in Williams' words, is now in question. It was not, after all, events in literature and computing departments of German universities in 1968/9 that determined the transition 'into the universe of new principles' in textual studies, as Williams reported (1971, p. 77). As suggested earlier, the profound challenges to the author and to forms of historical narrative that are most closely associated with theorists writing on the other side of the German-French border at the same time, and which have been developed through theoretical, historicist, and materialist criticism in the intervening period, turned out to have the greater bearing on future study.

Yet unsettling echoes make it difficult to judge in what senses textual studies have made a 'transition from old to new'. Paul Werstine's *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (2013), a landmark in recent textual studies written by the most readily identifiable 'revolter', offers a compelling refutation of central New Bibliographic suppositions and concepts. By analysing the bookkeeper Edward Knight's scribal practices, and in particular by surveying all extant playhouse manuscripts and printed texts marked up for production in the early-modern theatre, Werstine claims to 'disabus[e] readers of the empirical validity of "foul papers" . . . and "promptbooks" . . . as Greg used these terms' (2013, p. 221). So doing, he challenges as 'invalid' the terms by which scholars following Greg have supposed

that they may identify the sort of manuscripts that lie behind printed Shakespearean works and restore (so far as it is possible) his text (*ibid*., p. 6). But introducing his monograph, Werstine aligns his work with the 'spirit' of Pollard's attempts in *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays, 1594–1685* (1909) and the aforementioned *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates* to 'change the course of Shakespeare editing in his own time by addressing editors' attention to documentary evidence' (*ibid*., p. 1). He concludes by likening his method to the empiricist approach to textual study espoused by Greg in *Dramatic Documents* (*ibid*., p. 221).

Werstine's 'empirical study' of extant manuscripts evokes a further feeling of *déjà vu* connected to one of Greg's earliest writings, made when the New Bibliography was indeed new and Greg and Pollard were still 'revolutionary … bomb-throwers' questioning received assumptions about Shakespeare's texts (Werstine 2013, p. 10 n4; cited in Wilson 1970, p. 65).[4] In his 1903 response to Sidney Lee's introduction to the Oxford facsimile of the first Shakespeare folio, Greg savages Lee for his 'cheerfulness of assertion' and 'dogmatic manner' over the issues of play copyright, printing, and the manuscripts that provided copy for the folio (1903, p. 260). In his critique of Lee's account of copy, Greg attacks Lee's suppositions about the characteristics of manuscripts by looking at evidence provided by extant dramatic documents. Lee proposes four features as characteristic of 'prompt copy: division into acts and scenes, fullness of stage directions, indications of place, and lists of dramatis personae' (Greg 1903, p. 277). Referring to the evidence provided by the extant manuscript of Massinger's *Believe as You List* (British Library MS Egerton 2828), Greg dismisses all but one of Lee's criteria for identifying prompt copy – the fullness of stage directions – as 'points which anyone would on à [*sic*] priori grounds select', but which 'happen to be singularly at variance with the actual evidence available' (*ibid*., pp. 277–8).[5] That Werstine challenges Greg's work on the same grounds as those on which Greg condemns Lee leaves the time feeling unsettlingly out of joint and the distinction between the New Bibliographic 'advance of scholarship and knowledge' and the 'revolt' against it decidedly unsteady.

Empiricism and collaboration

The chapters in this book respond cumulatively to this moment in the study of Shakespeare's texts by attempting to develop what may,

inelegantly, be called a post-theoretical empiricist criticism – a study that attends both to the material evidence provided by the extant documents and to the interpretative forms that such attention takes. The first two chapters offer an explicit engagement with the questions of empirical textual study and the narratives of textual production raised by Pollard and Greg and given renewed meaning through Werstine's critique. The often metacritical Chapter 1 uncovers some of the conflicts in Greg's work between a commitment to documentary evidence and his suppositions about theatrical revision. By tracing this conflict I outline his influential assumptions about how Shakespeare's dramatic texts were revised in the playhouse and uncover the manner in which Greg's work identifies the fundamental challenge that the diversity of the extant manuscripts poses for empirical study. I then bring Greg's work into contact with the evidence provided by the extant manuscript of *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, which is penned by Anthony Munday. In part through discussion of William B. Long's important empirical challenge to the New Bibliography, I show how the manuscript differs from Greg's conception of what a 'properly constructed prompt book' should look like (Greg 1942, p. 156). Analysis of manuscript evidence in Chapters 1 and 2 shows that playhouse collaboration may both occasion and stand in the place of textual revision. The image of thorough playhouse textual supplementation advanced by Greg, especially in his later work, and adopted by many scholars including those critical of New Bibliographic practice, must therefore be rethought.

Chapter 2 develops the first chapter's line of critique by presenting a close analysis of Thomas Heywood's holograph copy of *The Captives*. While this manuscript has been described as inadequate for playhouse use by scholars following Greg, I argue that there is clear empirical evidence that it was in fact revised for running a performance. Interpreting the bookkeeper's revision of the manuscript in the context of early-modern theatrical practice, I show how the text is sufficient for use in the convention-heavy environment of the playhouse. As a consequence of this evidence, suppositions about what was required of playhouse texts derived from Greg's work must be abandoned. The absence within the *Captives* manuscript of the characteristics that New Bibliographic orthodoxy expects of a 'prompt book' means that future histories of early-modern drama must recognize a greater plurality of manuscripts and manuscript forms than those defined by our inherited understandings.