

## SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY READERS

Who were Shakespeare's first readers and what did they think of his works? Offering the first dedicated account of the ways in which Shakespeare's texts were read in the centuries during which they were originally produced, Jean-Christophe Mayer reconsiders the role of readers in the history of Shakespeare's rise to fame and in the history of canon formation. Addressing an essential formative 'moment' when Shakespeare became a literary dramatist, this book explores six crucial fields: literacy, reading and life-writing, editing Shakespeare's text, marking Shakespeare for the theatre, commonplac-ing and passing judgement. Through close examination of rare material, some of which has never been published before, and covering both the marks left by readers in their books and early manuscript extracts of Shakespeare, Mayer demonstrates how the worlds of print and performance overlapped at a time when Shakespeare offered a communal text, the ownership of which was essentially undecided.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE MAYER is Research Professor at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and a member of the Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL) at Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier. He is the author of *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith* (2006) and of *Shakespeare et la postmodernité* (2012).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-13833-9 — Shakespeare's Early Readers  
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*A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800*

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE MAYER

*French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)*



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107138339](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107138339)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781316481349

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-107-13833-9 Hardback

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*For my mother, Jacqueline Mayer, with love and gratitude*  
*To the memory of Claude Morzadec (1936–2017)*

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## *Acknowledgements*

This book was made possible by an Andrew Mellon long-term fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library (Washington, DC) in 2010–11 and by a two-month fellowship awarded by the Huntington Library (San Marino) in 2014. I am immensely grateful to both these institutions for providing me with the time and opportunity to immerse myself fully in archival material that was absolutely vital for the project.

At the Folger, Carol Brobeck, Gail Paster and David Schalkwyk facilitated my stay and research in every way possible, as did the library's extremely competent and friendly reading room staff. I remain very appreciative of all the scholarly conversations I had there, and I especially wish to thank Stephen Galbraith, Curator of Rare Books, Frank Mowery, Head of Conservation, Heather Woolfe, Curator of Manuscripts, Georgiana Ziegler, Head of Reference, as well as my fellow long-term fellows, Anne Coldiron, Claudia Kairoff, Jennifer Keith, Jeremy Lopez and Marc Schachter for helping me shape my project in crucial ways.

At the Huntington, conversations with other fellows proved invaluable too and the library staff was swift and efficient (a particularly important factor for a short-term scholar). Special thanks go to Mary Robertson, Emeritus Curator of Manuscripts, Stephen Tabor, Curator of Rare Books, and Vanessa Wilkie, Curator of Medieval Manuscripts and British History, for all the precious information they provided and their enthusiastic support.

I also wish to express my deep gratitude to Noriko Sumimoto (Meisei University, Tokyo) and Atsuhiko Hirota (Kyoto University) – who are as passionate as I am about readers' marks – and with whom I have had the pleasure of working for many years now. Research at Meisei University Library's unique collection of rare books and manuscripts was very fruitful and our friendly seminars and workshops in Japan and abroad provided constant stimulus. I am much indebted to Professors Sumimoto and Hirota for creating these opportunities through a series of KAKENHI

grants awarded by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS).

My home institution, the Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL) at Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier, provided me with gracious and fundamental support at all times. Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, my Head of Centre, has been a warm, encouraging and understanding friend and colleague throughout the years. I am much beholden to other members of my research team for standing in for me at crucial times and for offering encouragement, inspiration and practical help. They are Brigitte Belin, Vanessa Kuhner-Blaha, Agnès Lafont, Florence March, Nick Myers, Peter Smith, Janice Valls-Russell.

Several institutions and networks of scholars invited me to present my work in progress: Kent Cartwright at the University of Maryland and Stuart Sillars during numerous Bergen Seminars. Martin Procházka was a most welcoming host on countless occasions and gave me a chance to test my work with students during the Prague ERASMUS+ programme he headed at Charles University. John Jowett and the organisers of the International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon offered me further opportunities to present my findings. I would like to thank all the colleagues and audiences who attended these events. They greatly helped me to improve my initial project.

My thanks also go to Ann Blair, Patrick Cheney, Lukas Erne, Laura Estill, Donald Farren, Ian Gadd, Stephen H. Grant, Anthony Guneratne, Adam Hooks, András Kiséry, Richard McCoy, Rebecca Munson, Ángel-Luis Pujante, Bill Sherman, Peter Stallybrass, Stanley Wells, Martin Wiggins and Laetitia Yeandle for sharing key material and providing major insights. Jeffrey Kahan has been a kind friend and a splendid scholar-advisor for many years. I am grateful to Gerard Kilroy, Nancy and Fritz Levy, Alan Nelson, Rosemary O'Day, Monica Santini and Camille Seerattan for their constant friendship and for their astute help in scholarly matters. In 2012, I was fortunate to have Margaret Vasileiou by my side as an especially pro-active and rigorous research assistant and post-doctoral fellow. Many other friends and colleagues offered their help on the way – I am sincerely thankful to all of them.

At Cambridge University Press, Sarah Stanton gave me essential and incisive initial guidance. Emily Hockley and Tim Mason took over seamlessly. I wish to thank them both for their advice, trust and efficiency at all stages of the writing and production process. The two readers of my original proposal played a decisive role in helping me turn the project

*Acknowledgements*

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into a book. Andrew Murphy made very benevolent and helpful suggestions in his clearance report.

Parts of Chapters 4 and 6 appeared respectively in earlier forms in 'Changing the Parameters of the Printed text—Shakespeare's Early Modern Theatrical Annotators and Transcribers', in *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 163–76 and 'Reading in their Present: Early Readers and the Origins of Shakespearean Appropriation', *Shakespeare Survey* 68 (2015), pp. 146–57. I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to reproduce these revised versions.

On the more personal side, I am much indebted to Alban Déléris for his unfailing friendly support, to Claude Lioux and Geneviève Ziegel for listening and steering me patiently and gently, to Jacqueline and Paul Mayer for their practical support, their faith in me and their love, to Marie-France Morzadec for looking after me so well along the years, to Hélène Morzadec for her love and for the cheerful good humour she brings to my life. Thank you all for bearing with me in difficult times. Claude Morzadec passed away during the summer when I was writing the last chapter. The book is partly dedicated to him in loving memory.

## *Conventions and Abbreviations*

Long S is regularised for the sake of typographical convenience, and tildes are silently expanded. Thorns are replaced with italicised *th*. Italicised single characters (like *upon* or *pamphlets*) indicate my expansions of standard manuscript and print abbreviations. Square brackets ([ ]) enclose any other material added by me. Angled brackets (< >) frame material deleted in the original and interlineal insertions are marked by caret symbols (^).

In the absence of internal or external clues, the dating of a particular manuscript hand is notoriously difficult. In manuscript studies, a fifty-year margin of error is customarily allowed. Thus, the dating of manuscript notes in this book is always an estimate.

Unless otherwise stated, all references to Shakespeare's plays and poetry are taken from the New Cambridge Shakespeare (NCS).

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the notes:

BL	British Library, London, United Kingdom
Bod.L.	Bodleian Library, University of Oxford
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue
Fo.	Folio
FSL	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC
HL	Huntington Library, San Marino, California
MU	Meisei University, Tokyo, Japan
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
RST	Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom
SBT	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom

*Conventions and Abbreviations*

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- STC Short Title Catalogue  
Wing Donald Wing, ed., *Short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English books printed in other countries: 1641–1700*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945–51)

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-13833-9 — Shakespeare's Early Readers  
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