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978-1-108-42330-4 — King Richard II  
William Shakespeare, Edited by Andrew Gurr, Introduction by Claire McEachern  
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From the publication of the first volumes in 1984 the General Editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare was Philip Brockbank and the Associate General Editors were Brian Gibbons and Robin Hood. From 1990 to 1994 the General Editor was Brian Gibbons and the Associate General Editors were A. R. Braunmuller and Robin Hood.

## KING RICHARD II

In this updated edition of *King Richard II*, Claire McEachern provides a fresh introductory section in which she discusses the most important productions and scholarly criticism of recent years. Paying particular attention to the focus on religion in contemporary interpretations of the play, McEachern also analyses the increasing number of performances on stage and screen. Andrew Gurr's acclaimed introduction guides the reader through the play's action and politics, providing a thorough and engaging grounding in its structure, language and staging. An updated reading list completes the edition.

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*The First Quarto of King Richard III*, edited by Peter Davison  
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# KING RICHARD II

Third edition

With an introduction updated by

**CLAIRE McEACHERN**

*University of California, Los Angeles*

*Edited by*

**ANDREW GURR**

*University of Reading*



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## THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* succeeds *The New Shakespeare* which began publication in 1921 under the general editorship of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, and was completed in the 1960s, with the assistance of G. I. Duthie, Alice Walker, Peter Ure and J. C. Maxwell. *The New Shakespeare* itself followed upon *The Cambridge Shakespeare*, 1863–6, edited by W. G. Clark, J. Glover and W. A. Wright.

*The New Shakespeare* won high esteem both for its scholarship and for its design, but shifts of critical taste and insight, recent Shakespearean research, and a changing sense of what is important in our understanding of the plays, have made it necessary to re-edit and redesign, not merely to revise, the series.

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* aims to be of value to a new generation of playgoers and readers who wish to enjoy fuller access to Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic art. While offering ample academic guidance, it reflects current critical interests and is more attentive than some earlier editions have been to the realisation of the plays on the stage, and to their social and cultural settings. The text of each play has been freshly edited, with textual data made available to those users who wish to know why and how one published text differs from another. Although modernised, the edition conserves forms that appear to be expressive and characteristically Shakespearean, and it does not attempt to disguise the fact that the plays were written in a language other than that of our own time.

Illustrations are usually integrated into the critical and historical discussion of the play and include some reconstructions of early performances by C. Walter Hodges. Some editors have also made use of the advice and experience of Maurice Daniels, for many years a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Each volume is addressed to the needs and problems of a particular text, and each therefore differs in style and emphasis from others in the series.

PHILIP BROCKBANK  
*Founding General Editor*

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## PREFACE

*King Richard II* is one of the most extraordinary of all the Shakespearean crown jewels. It is the first link in the chain sometimes called ‘The Henriad’ which was the single most ambitious project Shakespeare ever undertook. *Richard II* launched his second and final attempt to identify the human element in the politics of English monarchy.

La Fontaine’s best known fable is the story of the mice who solved the problem of the local cat by deciding to tie a bell round its neck, and who found that this left them with the fresh problem of who might do the tying. La Fontaine was wryly commenting on the most agonising political problem of his time. In a monarchy, if the king as lawgiver should break his own laws and tyrannise over his subjects, who could govern the governor? Sixteenth-century Catholics appealed to the Pope, but although he excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, she lost little by it. Calvin said the lesser magistrates should prevail over the chief magistrate, but in England Parliament could not rule the ruler until thirty years after Shakespeare’s death. The ultimate test of political power in monarchies was the usurpation of a ruler. There were three such tests in English history after William the Conqueror: King John, Richard II and Henry VI. Shakespeare dramatised all three. And the sharpest and most human of the three forms of that infinitely complex human interaction which is what we try to signify by the inadequate word ‘dramatisation’ is the story of Richard II.

Seen in its political context the ‘Henriad’ begins with a constitutional problem – an unjust ruler – and answers it in human terms with the all-conquering descendant of Richard’s usurper, Henry V. The first play in the sequence is the most political, touching more painfully than any other the most sensitive issue in contemporary politics. Evidence for the pain is there in the fact that it is alone amongst Shakespeare’s plays in bearing the marks of political censorship. That pain has now gone. With the political problems of monarchy far in the past it is the play’s human element which directs our responses. We find it easier now to view it as a tragic fall rather than as the belling of an unjust cat. One of the functions of an edition such as this is to provide some of the context which made Shakespeare’s contemporaries see it as they did.

Responses in the eye and ear to the play’s powerful spectacle and poetry have changed less than the mind’s responses. Its verse was gathered into anthologies within five years of its being written. Its scenic and poetic power, however, need not make us overlook the fine detailing of the play’s language and structure, both in the delicately articulated balance of Richard’s fall and Bullingbrook’s rise and in the minutely patterned imagery. By their nature, editions are designed for the reader with more time to pause over such detailing than a theatre audience usually has. This edition therefore directs attention to the structural and political details, though always inside the framework of the dramatic performance. A section of the Introduction deals with the Shakespearean staging, emphasising the ritualistic and



*King Richard II*

x

emblematic features which would have made the political issues more obvious than they can be now.

Study of *Richard II* has consumed quite a few well-spent scholarly lifetimes. To my debt to those dying generations, I should like to add my endless thanks to all the friends and colleagues at home and abroad, especially Brian Gibbons, who have helped to deliver any of the useful things which might be found in this edition.

A. J. G.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Twenty-five editors across nearly four centuries have added their mites both to the text and the context of *King Richard II* in this edition. The biggest contributions were the earliest and the most recent. I acknowledge my greatest debts first to the editor who prepared the copy for the 1623 Folio text, and secondly to the two editors of the most substantial modern editions, Matthew Black (1955) and Peter Ure (1956). From the editor of the First Folio we have the best text of the deposition scene, a record of the playhouse adjustments to the stage directions, and alterations in the quarto text made with a care which confirms how respectful a memorial to Shakespeare the 1623 Folio was. Matthew Black's edition of *Richard II* provides, in its collation of variants and its detailed annotation, a solid basis on which all subsequent editors can gratefully build. Peter Ure's elegant and searching annotations to the text and the language, and to Shakespeare's use of his sources both historical and literary, are a model in their kind.

Even before Alexander Pope immortalised the extremes of editorial enterprise from slashing Bentley to piddling Theobald, editors of Shakespeare have tended to settle closer to the scholarly and cautious Theobald than to the corrector of Milton's metre. Pope himself flowed more like Bentley, and this edition owes something to the attention he gave to the play's metre and rhyme. Deciding that *Richard II* should appear in a version smoothed out on Popish lines involves the *a priori* assumption that the text was by intention more metrically regular than its first printers made it in effect. Most editors have been reluctant to make the Popish assumption because of the degree of editorial interference entailed. This edition has rather tentatively fingered that nettle.

The list of works which give help to editors is long and lengthening. The chief helps, together with the abbreviations used in referring to them, are recorded in the list of abbreviations and conventions. The basic help is of course the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), which has to be consulted with an eye on the corrections offered by Jürgen Schäfer, *Documentation in the OED: Shakespeare and Nashe as Test Cases*, 1980. M. P. Tilley's *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1950, with its Shakespeare appendix, is also a basic source of information, along with the additions and corrections provided by R. W. Dent, *Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index*, 1981. On pronunciation, Fausto Cercignani's *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation*, 1981, is outstanding.

Stanley Wells has examined the question of modernising the spelling of Shakespearean texts in *Modernising Shakespeare's Spelling*, 1979, the prolegomena to the Oxford Shakespeare, and I should like to acknowledge my debt to his good sense, although I have not always adopted his preferences.

Citation of lines from other plays of Shakespeare are taken from G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974. References to the Bible are by book, chapter and verse. All quotations are taken from the Bishops' Bible, which seems more likely to have been familiar at least to the early Shakespeare than the Geneva Bible.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

## 1. Shakespeare's Plays

The abbreviated titles of Shakespeare's plays have been modified from those used in the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. All quotations and line references to plays other than *Richard II* are to G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974, on which the *Concordance* is based.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Ado</i>   | <i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>                   |
| <i>Ant.</i>  | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>                     |
| <i>AWW</i>   | <i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>                |
| <i>AYLI</i>  | <i>As You Like It</i>                           |
| <i>Cor.</i>  | <i>Coriolanus</i>                               |
| <i>Cym.</i>  | <i>Cymbeline</i>                                |
| <i>Err.</i>  | <i>The Comedy of Errors</i>                     |
| <i>Ham.</i>  | <i>Hamlet</i>                                   |
| <i>1H4</i>   | <i>The First Part of King Henry the Fourth</i>  |
| <i>2H4</i>   | <i>The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth</i> |
| <i>H5</i>    | <i>King Henry the Fifth</i>                     |
| <i>1H6</i>   | <i>The First Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>   |
| <i>2H6</i>   | <i>The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>  |
| <i>3H6</i>   | <i>The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>   |
| <i>H8</i>    | <i>King Henry the Eighth</i>                    |
| <i>JC</i>    | <i>Julius Caesar</i>                            |
| <i>John</i>  | <i>King John</i>                                |
| <i>LLL</i>   | <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>                     |
| <i>Lear</i>  | <i>King Lear</i>                                |
| <i>Mac.</i>  | <i>Macbeth</i>                                  |
| <i>MM</i>    | <i>Measure for Measure</i>                      |
| <i>MND</i>   | <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>                |
| <i>MV</i>    | <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>                   |
| <i>Oth.</i>  | <i>Othello</i>                                  |
| <i>Per.</i>  | <i>Pericles</i>                                 |
| <i>R2</i>    | <i>King Richard the Second</i>                  |
| <i>R3</i>    | <i>King Richard the Third</i>                   |
| <i>Rom.</i>  | <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>                         |
| <i>Shr.</i>  | <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>                  |
| <i>STM</i>   | <i>Sir Thomas More</i>                          |
| <i>Temp.</i> | <i>The Tempest</i>                              |
| <i>TGV</i>   | <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>              |
| <i>Tim.</i>  | <i>Timon of Athens</i>                          |
| <i>Tit.</i>  | <i>Titus Andronicus</i>                         |
| <i>TN</i>    | <i>Twelfth Night</i>                            |
| <i>TNK</i>   | <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>                    |

|             |                                   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Tro.</i> | <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>       |
| <i>Wiv.</i> | <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> |
| <i>WT</i>   | <i>The Winter's Tale</i>          |

## 2. Editions

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Black             | <i>A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, Richard II</i> , ed. Matthew H. Black, 1955                         |
| Cam.              | <i>Works</i> , ed. William Aldis Wright, 9 vols., 1891–3 (Cambridge Shakespeare), IV                          |
| Capell            | <i>Mr William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies</i> , ed. Edward Capell, 10 vols., 1767–8, V |
| Dyce              | <i>The Works of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Alexander Dyce, 6 vols., 1857, III                              |
| F                 | <i>Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies</i> , 1623 (First Folio)                        |
| F3                | <i>Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies</i> , 1664 (Third Folio)                        |
| F4                | <i>Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies</i> , 1685 (Fourth Folio)                       |
| Halliwell         | <i>The Complete Works of Shakespeare</i> , ed. James O. Halliwell, 16 vols., 1853–65, IX                      |
| Hanmer            | <i>The Works of Shakespear</i> , ed. Thomas Hanmer, 6 vols., 1743–4, III                                      |
| Hudson            | <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Henry N. Hudson, 11 vols., 1851–6, V                   |
| Irving            | <i>The Works of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Henry Irving and Frank Marshall, 8 vols., 1888–90, V            |
| Johnson           | <i>The Plays of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Samuel Johnson, 8 vols., 1765, IV                               |
| Johnson Var.      | <i>The Plays of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 10 vols., 1773, V           |
| Keightley         | <i>The Plays of Shakespeare</i> , ed. Thomas Keightley, 6 vols., 1864, III                                    |
| Kittredge         | <i>The Complete Works of Shakespeare</i> , ed. George Lyman Kittredge, 1936                                   |
| Malone            | <i>The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Edmond Malone, 10 vols., 1790, V                      |
| Neilson           | <i>The Complete Dramatic and Poetic Works of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. William Allan Neilson, 1906        |
| Pope              | <i>The Works of Shakespear</i> , ed. Alexander Pope, 6 vols., 1723–5, III                                     |
| Q1                | <i>The Tragedie of King Richard the Second</i> , 1597 (first quarto)  |
| Q2                | <i>The Tragedie of King Richard the Second</i> , 1598 (second quarto)   |
| Q3                | <i>The Tragedie of King Richard the Second</i> , 1598 (third quarto)  |
| Q4                | <i>The Tragedy of King Richard the Second</i> , 1608 (fourth quarto)  |
| Q5                | <i>The Tragedy of King Richard the Second</i> , 1615 (fifth quarto)   |
| Q6                | <i>The Tragedy of King Richard the Second</i> , 1634 (sixth quarto)   |
| Rowe              | <i>The Works of Mr William Shakespear</i> , ed. Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols., 1709, III                             |
| Rowe <sup>2</sup> | <i>The Works of Mr William Shakespear</i> , ed. Nicholas Rowe, 3rd edn, 6 vols., 1714, III                    |
| Singer            | <i>The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Samuel Weller Singer, 10 vols., 1855–6, IV             |
| Staunton          | <i>The Plays of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. Howard Staunton, 3 vols., 1858–60, I                            |

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|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Steevens | <i>The Plays of William Shakespeare</i> , ed. George Steevens and Isaac Reed, 4th edn, 15 vols., 1793, viii |
| Theobald | <i>The Works of Shakespeare</i> , ed. Lewis Theobald, 7 vols., 1733, iii                                    |
| Ure      | <i>Richard II</i> , ed. Peter Ure, 1956 (Arden)   |
| Wells    | <i>Richard II</i> , ed. Stanley Wells, 1969 (New Penguin)   |
| Wilson   | <i>Richard II</i> , ed. John Dover Wilson, 1939 (New Shakespeare)   |

**3. Other works, periodicals, general references**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Capell              | Trinity College, Cambridge, copy of Q1   |
| Cercignani<br>conj. | Fausto Cercignani, <i>Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation</i> , 1981   |
| Dent                | R. W. Dent, <i>Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index</i> , 1981 (references are to numbered proverbs)  |
| <i>ELH</i>          | <i>ELH: A Journal of English Literary History</i>  |
| F (corr.)           | First Folio, corrected state   |
| Froissart           | <i>The Chronicle of Froissart translated out of French by Sir John Bourchier Lord Berners (1523–5)</i>   |
| F (uncorr.)         | First Folio, uncorrected state   |
| Holinshed           | Raphael Holinshed, <i>The first and second volumes of Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande (1587)</i> , ii                                 |
| Hunt.               | Huntington Library copy of Q1  |
| Huth                | British Library copy of Q1 (Huth 46)   |
| <i>JEGP</i>         | <i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>   |
| Mahood              | M. M. Mahood, <i>Shakespeare's Wordplay</i> , 1957   |
| <i>MLQ</i>          | <i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>   |
| <i>OED</i>          | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>   |
| <i>PBSA</i>         | <i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>  |
| Petworth            | Petworth House copy of Q1  |
| <i>PMLA</i>         | <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>  |
| <i>PQ</i>           | <i>Philological Quarterly</i>  |
| Qq                  | Q1–5   |
| <i>Ren. Drama</i>   | <i>Renaissance Drama</i>   |
| <i>SB</i>           | <i>Studies in Bibliography</i>   |
| SD                  | stage direction  |
| <i>SEL</i>          | <i>Studies in English Literature</i>   |
| SH                  | speech heading   |
| <i>SP</i>           | <i>Studies in Philology</i>  |
| <i>SQ</i>           | <i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>   |
| <i>S.St.</i>        | <i>Shakespeare Studies</i>   |
| <i>S.Sur.</i>       | <i>Shakespeare Survey</i>  |
| subst.              | substantively  |
| <i>2 Tamb.</i>      | Christopher Marlowe, <i>Tamburlaine Part 2 (1590)</i>  |
| Tilley              | M. P. Tilley, <i>A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries</i> , 1950 (references are to numbered proverbs) |
| <i>Woodstock</i>    | <i>Woodstock: A Moral History</i> , ed. A. P. Rossiter, 1946   |

Full references to other works cited in the Commentary in abbreviated form may be found in the Revised Reading List at p. 241 below.