THE WORK AND THE READER IN LITERARY STUDIES

By the late 1980s the concept of the work had slipped out of sight, consigned to its last refuge in the library catalogue as concepts of discourse and text took its place. Scholarly editors, who depended on it, found no grounding in literary theory for their practice. But fundamental ideas do not go away, and the work is proving to be one of them. New interest in the activity of the reader in the work has broadened the concept, extending it historically and sweeping away its once-supposed aesthetic objecthood. Concurrently, the advent of digital scholarly editions is recasting the editorial endeavour. *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies* tests its argument against a range of book-historically inflected case studies from *Hamlet* editions to Romantic poetry archives to the writing practices of Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence. It newly justifies the practice of close reading in the digital age.

PAUL EGGERT is Professor Emeritus at Loyola University, Chicago and the University of New South Wales. He previously held the Svaglic Chair in Textual Studies at Loyola. He has edited critical editions of works by D. H. Lawrence, Henry Kingsley, Rolf Boldrewood, Henry Lawson and Joseph Conrad and is the author of *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), which won the Society for Textual Scholarship's Finneran Award as the best book of editorial theory for 2009–10.

THE WORK AND THE READER IN LITERARY STUDIES

Scholarly Editing and Book History

PAUL EGGERT

Loyola University, Chicago
and
University of New South Wales

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108485746
DOI: 10.1017/9781108641012

First published 2019

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

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

ISBN 978-1-108-48574-6 Hardback

'Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.'

Samuel Johnson, 'Preface to Shakespeare', in Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Sherbo,* VII.*95*

Contents

Figures

Preface

Even as I was challenged by them and learnt from them I was never at ease with the dominant intellectual trends in my home discipline of English. This was largely because, from the early 1980s, I was working on a daily basis with manuscripts and other documents whose genesis and variant texts were not explicable except by concepts that had suddenly gone out of fashion.

Unfashionableness makes for discomfort, but discomfort can be generative. It breeds more than a little stubbornness if you are to find a different way, on the basis of what experience has taught you, that is new and that you can call your own. Finding a community of scholars from the late 1980s at the biennial meetings of the Society for Textual Scholarship in New York who were working with materials like mine and who were actively problematising the field of scholarly editing and its inherited tropes was a liberating experience. It seemed to draw out and to endorse my own active inquiry.

I had some of my most fertile ideas in my late thirties and early forties, but it took many more years before I fully understood their implications and where they led. This book is my report on them.

Along the way I have been assisted – been stimulated or provoked by or have learnt from – so many fellow textual studies scholars, book historians, literary historians, theorists and literary critics that it would be impossible to list them all. The endnotes mention those I am aware of, but memory is fallible and there are doubtless others of whom I remain blithely unaware. Influence can be a subtle thing.

Nevertheless I would especially like to thank the following: Peter Shillingsburg, the generosity of whose thinking has benefited mine in ways too numerous to specify for more than three decades now, including over issues where we have disagreed; and comrades-in-arms such as Dick van Vliet and Bodo Plachta, in whose company my understanding of a German tradition of scholarly editing (a challenge to my own anglophone

one) was beaten into shape through conversations that were too potentially unsettling to avoid and too absorbing to end. In more recent years interchanges with Old Norse scholar Odd Einar Haugen (University of Bergen), medievalist Michelangelo Zaccarello (University of Pisa) and my colleague at Loyola University Chicago, Ian Cornelius, have continuously reminded me why I am and will remain in the textual studies business.

I would also single out my long-time collaborator on Australian editorial and book history projects Elizabeth Webby (University of Sydney); Katherine Bode (Australian National University), whose fresh alliance of digital-humanities approaches and textual studies has impressed me; Hans Walter Gabler (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich), whose brilliant star first shot across my horizon, where it has remained, ever since I convinced him to speak at a conference called Editing in Australia in 1989; Desmond Schmidt, my technical collaborator on the *Charles Harpur Critical Archive* and a brilliant man, who taught me a form of encoding critique, a way of thinking that programmer Phill Berrie had initiated for me in a less developed form at the end of the 1990s; John Gouws for our discussions of agency; and Peter Robinson (University of Saskatchewan) whose technical fearlessness with electronic editions, as we called them in the 1990s, set the bar and whose later theorising about them stimulated some of my thinking, just as (he has told me) my own writings stimulated some of his. That is as it should be. Textual scholarship, at least when editing, can be a lonely business. But the community of scholarship redeems it, especially once you realise that all that hard editorial work has finally given you solid ground from which to speak.

Finally, I wish to thank the editors of the various journals and collections (noted in the Bibliography) who published essays of mine that I have drawn from, or used in adapted or extended forms, in various parts of this book; the readers of the MS of this book for Cambridge University Press; my research assistant at Loyola, Lyle Enright, who checked the quotations and citations for me; my commissioning editor at Cambridge, Bethany Thomas, and her colleagues Carrie Parkinson and Victoria Parrin (who coordinated production); copy editor Ami Naramor; and Chris Tiffin, who prepared the Index. It would be comforting to be able to say that any remaining errors or misconceptions in this book may be blamed on the many who have helped or influenced me, directly or indirectly, but I know the less palatable truth.