

*Prologue*  
*The Mystery of Mrs Valentine*

In 1868, publishers Frederick Warne & Co. released an edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare* in their Chandos Classics series. The Chandos Classics was an inexpensive home library series, initially priced from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings, depending on the cover. Affordable editions of classic literature, particularly Shakespeare's plays, were a lucrative market around the mid-century, and many publishers invested in creating impressive texts.<sup>1</sup> Charles Knight, Cassell & Co., and George Routledge all published strikingly elaborate, reasonably priced, illustrated editions of the complete works.<sup>2</sup> Unlike its competitors, the Chandos Shakespeare was not illustrated, making it fairly forgettable in comparison. Even so, Warne claimed that their Shakespeare edition eventually sold over 340,000 copies.<sup>3</sup> Stephen Greenblatt has recounted the story of explorer H. M. Stanley burning a copy of Shakespeare's plays in Africa in order to protect his notes – that copy was a Chandos edition.<sup>4</sup> James Joyce owned a copy of the Chandos Shakespeare, as did Arthur Conan Doyle.<sup>5</sup>

Also unlike its competitors, the Chandos Shakespeare did not identify its editor, even though its advertising particularly described it as 'a well edited Edition', superior to other inexpensive Shakespeares 'in size of Page, Quality of Paper, Easy Reading, and General Completeness'.<sup>6</sup> The Preface of the 1868 and 1875 editions explained that

this Edition of Shakspeare has been carefully prepared from the earliest and more modern Editions. Where Commentators have differed as to the sense of obscure or doubtful passages, we have selected those readings which we believed to be most Shakspearian and best suited to a popular Edition.<sup>7</sup>

Neither edition named an editor. Warne reused the original text multiple times for variations such as the 'Albion Edition', the 'Universal Edition', and the 'Victorian Edition'. By the late 1880s, those editions were appearing with revised prefaces. The Preface of the 1889 'Universal Edition' expanded upon the editorial principles employed:

The First Folio and the Quartos have been used for the Edition; and fidelity to the original text has been preserved as much as possible. In fact, the emendations are few in number, and only made when absolutely required. No new readings have been attempted, as it is believed by the editor that the ever-increasing knowledge of Elizabethan literature – and of Shakspeare especially – has removed former obscurities, and much that perplexed the old commentators is clear and intelligible to the modern reader; new readings generally rather injure than improve the text.<sup>8</sup>

The editions released in the 1880s also provide the first indication of the editor's presence – the title pages and prefaces name 'the editor of the Chandos Classics' (Figure 0.1).<sup>9</sup>

Finally, in December of 1894, after almost thirty years in print, advertisements began to appear describing someone as the editor of the Chandos Classics, and thus, obliquely, the Chandos Shakespeare, for the first time (Figure 0.2). William Jaggard deemed this identification certain enough to include in his expansive 1911 *Shakespeare Bibliography* without the question mark with which he marked unconfirmed attributions.<sup>10</sup> The editor's name was Mrs Valentine.

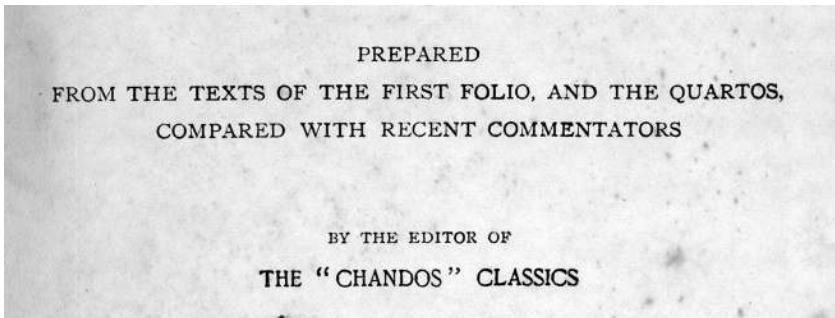


Figure 0.1 From the title page of Arthur Conan Doyle's copy of Warne's Shakespeare text, printed in the 'Imperial Poets' series, c. 1896. Image used by permission of the Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin

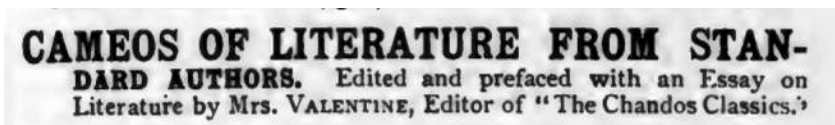


Figure 0.2 Advertisement identifying Mrs Valentine as 'the editor of the Chandos Classics' from an 1895 issue of *The Bookman* (vol. 7, no. 41, p. 163).

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In 1915, Mr. Wm. H. Peet wrote to *Notes and Queries* with information gathered from W. Fruing Warne (the original Warne's son) about Mrs Valentine:

Her full maiden name was Laura Belinda Jewry, her father being Admiral Jewry, and the place of her birth is supposed to have been the *Victory*. At an early age she became connected with the family of Lord Elphinstone, and spent some years of her maiden life in India. She married when young the Rev. R. Valentine, a clergyman of the Church of England, but he died within twelve months.<sup>11</sup>

Peet's claims seem to be a mixture of truths and slight exaggerations. Valentine was born in 1815 in Portsea, Hampshire. Her father was Lieutenant Henry Jewry, who commanded the HMS *Grecian* from 1815. Valentine's exact date of birth is unknown, but the *Grecian* was purchased by the Royal Navy on 3 November 1815, so if she was born earlier in the year, it is possible that her father was assigned to the *Victory* at that time.<sup>12</sup> The legendary HMS *Victory* was moored in Portsmouth Harbour beginning in 1812, after which she served as 'a residence, flagship and tender providing accommodation'.<sup>13</sup> In Valentine's novel *The Cup and the Lip* (1851), the heroine goes to live with her uncle, the captain of the *Victory*, and his family, who live aboard the ship itself. She describes family life aboard the ship, including an incident where the children hide in nooks and crannies to frighten visitors.<sup>14</sup> A review of her book *Sea Fights from Sluys to Navarino* describes her as 'a descendant of five generations of seamen, a lady who passed part of her childhood on board the "Victory"'.<sup>15</sup> So it seems likely that even if she was not born on the *Victory*, as Peet believed, Valentine lived on board the ship for a time during her childhood. The connection to Lord Elphinstone also appears to be a distortion of the facts. The 1841 census shows Valentine, then still Laura Jewry, working as a governess for the family of Eliza Arthur, who lived on the Royal Crescent in Bath.<sup>16</sup> Eliza Arthur's husband was George Arthur, formerly lieutenant governor of Van Diemen's Land and Upper Canada. The Arthurs had returned from Canada around 1840–41 and, apparently, hired Laura Valentine to teach their numerous children. In 1842, the East India Company appointed George Arthur governor of Bombay, a post later held by Lord Elphinstone.<sup>17</sup> Valentine may have moved with them to India, where the Arthurs remained until 1846.

Valentine's first book was *The Ransom*, a novel published in 1846, the same year that the Arthurs returned from India. The 1851 census lists her profession as 'Authoress'.<sup>18</sup> In 1853, she married the Reverend Richard

Valentine, only to be widowed a year later.<sup>19</sup> The case files of the Royal Literary Fund provide a deeper insight into this period of her life. Established in 1790 to assist writers experiencing financial difficulties, the Fund's files, lodged at the British Library, contain thousands of letters and documents about authors, well-known and forgotten, and their spouses and children. Valentine applied to the Fund for support after her husband's death. Several of the letters provided by friends in support of her request imply that he died of a fever contracted during his ministry. Valentine's letter reveals that at the time of his death, she was pregnant with their first child. Six weeks later, she delivered a stillborn baby. 'It may be very long – if I ever have strength again – before I can return to my pen for support,' she writes. 'My heart is well nigh broken and my head confused and troubled.'<sup>20</sup> One letter of support, written by Lady Cornwallis, president of the Ladies Committee that steered the Adult Orphan Institution, explains that Valentine had donated the proceeds of her novel *The Vassal* to the charity several years before, possibly worsening her situation after her husband's death.<sup>21</sup> The Fund provided her with several grants over the next eighteen months.

At some point during the next decade, Valentine did pick up her pen once more, and she completed and published several novels. After that initial period of bereavement and desperation, she moved to Battersea to live with her older sister, Mary, and their widowed mother. The 1861 Census described her occupation as 'Clergyman W[idow] and author of Tales, childrens books, Periodical articles'.<sup>22</sup> In *Notes and Queries*, Peet explains that following her husband's death

Mrs. Valentine . . . joined the staff of Messrs. Warne & Co., the well-known publishers, and rendered them very valuable service. She was practically the sole editor of 'The Chandos Classics,' and in the course of what may be called her 'business life' was on terms of friendship with many well-known literary people.<sup>23</sup>

As with the previous biographical details, Peet's claims must be taken with a grain of salt, but the in-house history of Warne, written for their centennial in 1965, confirms that she was 'Frederick Warne's editress in the early days and in fact the only female member of his staff at that time'.<sup>24</sup> Warne's own obituary in *The Athenaeum* described her as the firm's 'literary advisor'.<sup>25</sup> And when Valentine died in 1899, a note in *The Athenaeum* explained that she 'had acted as editor and confidential adviser on literary matters to Messrs. F. Warne & Co. since the foundation of the firm'.<sup>26</sup>

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A letter from Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot, to Valentine in 1867, responding to a request that Evans contribute something to a Warne publication, shows that Valentine already had a position at the firm two years after its founding.<sup>27</sup> Figure 0.3, which shows a contract between Warne and Valentine signed in 1874, confirms that Valentine's involvement dated back to the firm's inception in 1865. In exchange for a yearly increasing salary and due to 'her regard for the said Frederick Warne and for other good considerations', this contract gave Warne the rights to all published or unpublished 'books and portions of books and works and literary productions of whatever nature or kind . . . written or edited' by Valentine between 15 April 1865 and 31 December 1873.<sup>28</sup> If she began working for Warne in 1865, Valentine could easily have been involved in the preparation of the Chandos Shakespeare, first published in 1868, and the contract indicates that she was editing something during that ten-year period.

Although this proves that Valentine *could* have edited the Chandos Shakespeare, definitive proof has not yet emerged that she *did*. The only Shakespeare-related work bearing Valentine's name was the illustrated *Shakespearian Tales in Verse* (1881), an attractive volume containing verse retellings of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>29</sup> Gender may very well have been a factor in the decision not to identify Laura Valentine as the editor of the Chandos Shakespeare. Valentine wrote and edited prolifically for Warne, but her name was associated with domestic genres such as novels and children's books. Perhaps her authorial persona did not match the Chandos Classics brand that Warne wanted to develop. It was still unusual at the time for a woman to edit this kind of book; one reviewer simply assumed that the 'L. Valentine' who edited Milton's works for the Chandos Classics in the 1890s was a 'Mr' rather than a 'Mrs'.<sup>30</sup> Anonymous and pseudonymous publishing were common elements of Valentine's career – many of her books were published under the pseudonym 'Aunt Louisa', a name inspired by Warne's wife, Louisa.

Between this loss of name and the complete abdication of copyright that she agreed to in her contract, Valentine's authorial and editorial identity seems, in part, to have been annexed by the Warne firm and Warne himself. None of the early books of the Chandos Classics has a named editor; perhaps they were edited by multiple people at the publishing house, or perhaps Valentine was not involved with the Chandos Classics at all in the early years. Although incontrovertible proof has not survived, enough of Peet's claims have some basis in truth to justify our taking



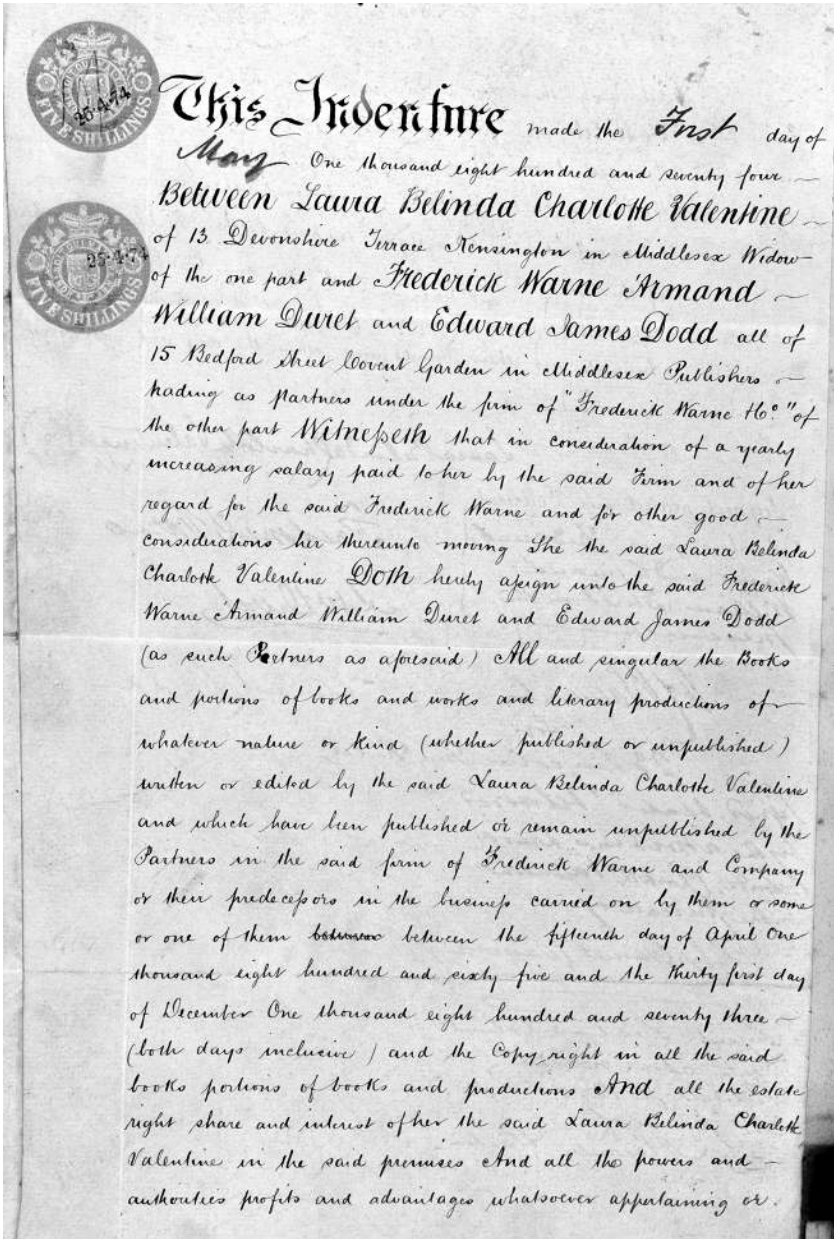


Figure 0.3 Contract of Indenture between Laura Valentine and Frederick Warne. Frederick Warne Archive. Image used by permission of the University of Reading, Special Collections

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seriously the claim that Laura Valentine was indeed ‘practically the sole editor of the Chandos Classics’, and that in the course of those duties, she edited *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, making her only the second woman to do so, in the wake of Mary Cowden Clarke’s 1860 edition (Figure 0.4). Laura Valentine’s story proves that the Shakespearean editorial tradition, as it is currently known, remains fundamentally incomplete. All of the information needed to connect Valentine with the Chandos Shakespeare was in place, but the connection has simply not been made before now. This book will explore possible reasons for that neglect, while also filling in some of the lacunae in editorial history.

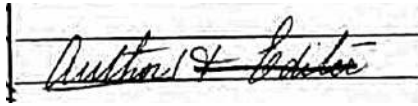


Figure 0.4 Laura Jewry Valentine’s occupation as shown in the 1891 UK Census. PRO RG 12/33/122/25. Image used by permission of The National Archives of the UK

*Shakespeare’s ‘Lady Editors’* examines women editors as a group and a cultural phenomenon, rather than as isolated and exceptional individuals. Women such as Mary Cowden Clarke, Teena Rochfort Smith, Charlotte Porter, and Helen Clarke have received attention in several excellent but closely delimited article-length studies.<sup>31</sup> However, no attempt has previously been made to comprehensively identify and study these women and the editions they produced as a driving force in the way the Shakespearean text has been shaped and transmitted. At the outset of this project, I knew of about twenty women editors who had at least been identified by name, although most were still unstudied; I hoped to find another ten or so. Instead, I found almost seventy, more than doubling my initial estimate.

This book draws on material from twenty-eight different university and library archives in the UK and the US, as well as the records of government agencies in both countries. It weaves together material from letters, diaries, ledgers, contracts, census documents, published reports, reviews, advertisements, wills, life records, and even novels to create as detailed an account as possible of the lives and work of female editors, placing them alongside over 160 editions of the plays, ranging from the eighteenth century to the present day, some edited by men, but most by women. The majority of this material has never been published or discussed in print, and it represents an enormous body of unique and original documentary evidence relating both to the Shakespeare text and

to the lives and work of scholarly women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

*The Lady Editors* builds on the work of a number of scholars, but its largest methodological debts are owed primarily to two books: *Shakespeare in Print*, by Andrew Murphy, and *Women Reading Shakespeare, 1600–1900*, by Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts.<sup>32</sup> Murphy's study, which surveys the history of Shakespeare publishing from the early modern period to the present day, in addition to being a major work in its own right, opened up vast areas of enquiry for future scholarship. His rejection of the teleological impulse underlying previous accounts of editorial history, and his insistence on including 'derivative', forgotten texts in the new narrative, are critical elements of the theory that underpins this book. In *Women Reading Shakespeare*, Thompson and Roberts persuasively demonstrated that women's work on Shakespeare could be taken seriously, both as part of the wider history of Shakespeare criticism and as a freestanding genre.

Ann Thompson, Sasha Roberts, Gail Marshall, Laurie Maguire, and Jeanne Addison Roberts have produced excellent work on individual women editors including Mary Cowden Clarke, Alice Walker, Teena Rochfort Smith, Charlotte Endymion Porter, and Helen Archibald Clarke.<sup>33</sup> By placing these individual editors within the larger context of a female editorial tradition, this book takes the next logical step in the field that they established, a step suggested by Henry Woudhuysen in a brief piece on women editors.<sup>34</sup> The concept of the social text, articulated by theorists such as Jerome McGann, D. F. McKenzie, David Greetham, and Joseph Grigely, is crucial to this project, as are the studies of textual and book history carried out by scholars such as Sonia Massai, Helen Smith, Margreta de Grazia, Gabriel Egan, and Leah Marcus. Although not directly addressed here, given its more contemporary focus, work on feminist editing by Ann Thompson, Laurie Maguire, Valerie Wayne, and Suzanne Gossett has also contributed to my thinking.

Given the vast scope of this new material covered, *Shakespeare's 'Lady Editors'* is wide-ranging; however, rather than presenting a comprehensive *fait accompli*, it is intended to open up new avenues of enquiry that can build on this research. I am particularly aware, for example, that this account excludes performance texts – texts abridged for classroom or student performance, or texts reflecting real historical performances (either published or in prompt-book form) – and I hope that this book will inspire or contribute to future research on women's involvement in that textual genre. In an ideological sense, this appeal to future collaboration and



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cooperation reflects a central concern of *Shakespeare's 'Lady Editors'* – replacing the narrowly defined, male-coded image of the solitary Shakespeare editor with an understanding of the editorial role that takes into account a wider network of contributors and shaping forces.

Gender is a social construct too complex to be contained within the simplistic male/female binary; however, over the centuries, that binary has crept into editorial discourse, infecting it with misogyny and suppressing diversity in the field, as discussed in the section entitled 'Gendered Labour, Gendered Text' in Chapter 1. Following the lead of the *Women in Book History Bibliography*, I 'define "woman" as a constructionist, not an essentialist, identity'.<sup>35</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the editors discussed in this book all identified as women, but I recognise the difficulty of making that determination, particularly for historical figures unable to speak for themselves.

Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical concerns at hand, particularly issues of gendered labour and gendered texts, introducing the concept of the domestic text and exploring how the established language, conventions, and assumptions surrounding the editorial task conspire to exclude women from Shakespearean editorial history. By profiling the women editors who functioned within the network of the New Shakspeare Society, Chapter 2 digs deeper into issues of gendered labour, focusing on how male-female collaborations can both empower and marginalise women editors. Chapter 3 moves across the Atlantic to examine a very different network – the community of women editors centred around the American women's colleges. Chapter 4 considers both the advantages and the dangers of studying editorial work through a biographical lens. In it, I present three case studies, each focused on a single editor, laying out my research process and the challenges I found along the way. Chapter 5 investigates how the rise of the New Bibliography disadvantaged women editors, demonstrating how women's success remained dependent on male mentorship and male-centred networks. The book also includes two brief "sidebars" and appendices. The first sidenote, following Chapter 2, discusses women who edited authors other than Shakespeare, or who carried out textual work other than editing. The second sidenote, which follows Chapter 3, introduces the material forms and uses of student editions of Shakespeare and proposes some approaches to developing a critical framework for the study of this neglected textual genre. Appendix A offers brief biographies of the sixty-nine women editors who produced editions prior to 1950; Appendix B is a list of all editions prepared by women up to the present day.

But first, a note on the book's title: the naming of things is important, and I have thought extensively about the terms I use to refer to textual editors who happen to identify as women. This question arose during the earliest days of this project – one reader of the initial proposal expressed the concern that 'editrix' could be seen as flippant or insulting. 'Female editors' has always felt unwieldy to me, although I use it at times. Ultimately, I chose to rely primarily on the term 'women editors', although admittedly that also grates when used in the singular – 'woman editor'. Having made this compromise, however, I still wanted to find a way to use my personal favourite description – 'lady editor'. Appealing to the ear in both singular and plural forms, I enjoy this moniker for its irreverence, and I hope to reclaim it from its often-derogatory past use. In 1869, for example, a particularly critical anonymous reviewer of Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke's illustrated edition of the plays blamed 'the numberless alterations, mutilations, corruptions, or whatever we may choose to call them' on Mary Cowden Clarke and wished that 'the lady editor had refrained from thus tampering with our great poet's language'.<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, gendered, nuanced uses of the title of 'editor' are not exclusive to the English literary tradition. In China, poet and courtesan Xue Tao (c. 768–831 CE) so impressed a governor of the Tang Dynasty that he requested that she be appointed his *jiaoshu*, or editor, an official position.<sup>37</sup> Although she never received the appointment, she was known thereafter as *nü jiaoshu* – 'female editor/collator/reviser of books'. *Nü jiaoshu* later became a euphemism for a courtesan.<sup>38</sup>

As Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts have detailed, Charles Cowden Clarke actively defended his wife's intellectual achievements, disclaiming any credit in her solo work and praising the value of her contributions to their joint projects.<sup>39</sup> Mary Cowden Clarke was significantly more likely to recognise Charles's contributions to her work than he was; in her 1860 edition of the plays, while taking pride in the thought that she was (to her knowledge) 'the first of his female subjects who has been selected to edit his works', she proudly credited Charles with preparing the glossary, even though 'his own unwillingness to diminish the Editor's credit for the whole work would fain have made him forbid this acknowledgment'.<sup>40</sup> And while their language and intentions are far from modern, the Cowden Clarkes did anticipate modern feminist editors in pointing out the value of gender diversity in editing, noting in the preface to the same edition that so peeved the anonymous reviewer that