

PART XXIII

PRINTING AND RECEPTION HISTORY

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The nature of the relationship between performance and print was a live concern throughout the early modern period. In the earliest days of the theater, the publication of plays from the public stage was often little more than an afterthought. It is characteristic of this early phase of the emergent theater that the title pages of printed plays made a point of foregrounding performance history – and, often, audience reception – while frequently ignoring the question of authorship. In time, however, the idea that, when it came to marketing a printed play text, the author’s name might have as much (or even more) value as the details of the text’s performance history did begin to take hold. Playwrights’ names were then included on title pages with increasing frequency, and playwrights themselves began to pay closer attention to the implications of the fact that their work might appear in print as well as on the stage.

Today, the text of the plays is available globally on the Internet, free of charge, to all who have computer access. More than this, whereas the First Folio in 1623 presented a singular, nonnegotiable face to the world, increasingly sophisticated Web sites now present the reader with a broad range of primary scholarly materials – a few mouse clicks now opening whole libraries that dedicated book collectors would have marveled at. The First Folio’s address exhorts the purchaser of the volume: “Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe” (A3r). The modern student of Shakespeare can do just this, and more readily than ever before – in conventional editions, if that is what she wishes. But, as digital scholarship advances, she can also do much more, venturing beyond the fixed edition that has so dominated the last four centuries to explore more complex textual landscapes.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The folio editions
- Reviving the franchise
- Beyond aesthetics
- Proliferating editions
- Into the academy
- The New Bibliography
- Beyond New Bibliography

224. THE PRACTICALITIES OF EDITING: *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

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The modern editor of Shakespeare joins a line of writer-editors stretching back to William Shakespeare himself. After a moment’s thought, we realize that any writer, even a humble one of us (editors, scholars, critics, students, readers, actors), continuously edits – revising, adding and subtracting, rewording – in the process of writing. From this humble recognition, it’s a small step to what we may find in modern “complete works” of Shakespeare: two *Lears*, three *Hamlets*, perhaps two *Othellos*, and some typographically odd versions of *2 Henry IV*. This chapter pulls back the Ozian curtain that shrouds what has happened between a sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century printed text of a Shakespearean play and the one a reader or performer may read today, using *Measure for Measure* as a particular example.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Choosing the text(s)
- Identifying the audience
- Resources for editing
- Handling spelling, punctuation, and syntax

225. POPULAR VERSUS SCHOLARLY TEXTS

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Printed editions of Shakespeare's works since the eighteenth century have served different purposes and different readerships, split (in the broadest terms) between scholarly texts and popular texts. The development of scholarly texts had its roots in the eighteenth century and the various editions published by the Tonson cartel, all with ever-increasing annotations and prolegomena. At the same time, the Tonson texts made Shakespeare more accessible and intelligible by replacing the double-column format of the folio editions with a succession of multivolume texts that tended to use a much smaller page size, each page having only a single column of text. Over time, various other features modernized the texts and made them more user-friendly, culminating in the digital texts widely used today.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Eighteenth-century popular texts
- Eighteenth-century texts from Ireland and Scotland
- Nineteenth-century popular texts
- "SHAKSPERE FOR THE PEOPLE"
- Family editions
- Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke
- School editions in England
- School editions in the United States
- School editions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries
- Twentieth-century popular texts
- Digital texts and popular readership
- Nonscholarly digital texts

226. THE TEXTS OF SHAKESPEARE AND TEXTUAL THEORY

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All the existing texts of Shakespeare reflect often unacknowledged, sometimes even unrecognized, theoretical assumptions about the nature of the text and the responsibility of the editor – even the earliest printed editions. Every text reveals a set of theoretical concerns, though obviously not always a systematic and articulate editorial theory, that supplies the rationale for its production. Only as texts are realized materially do they become accessible. Only then can they delight and mean. The work of the imagination is unable to constitute itself; it is always dependent on imperfect material supports for it to be available to readers, supports that mediate what is there to be engaged.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Early editions
- The authorial text
- Alternatives to the authorial text
- Implications for editing
- Emendation
- Future possibilities

227. THE DIGITAL TEXT AND BEYOND

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Throughout the history of digital Shakespeare texts, what has turned out to matter most has been searching. Whether through a printed concordance or a Web site, this is the application of digital texts that has been very widely used. The boom in digitization of other texts has meant the development of other kinds of search-based scholarship: contextual and "keyword" studies using EEBO as well as reception studies using texts of later centuries are flourishing in a way that would not be possible without digital texts. Those kinds of uses of digital texts will probably remain the most common. But in smaller

niches – authorship studies and stylistics, for example – there is work that goes beyond simple searching and filtering. Today, most work, even in these new directions, is still usually published in the traditional ways, but we can expect to see the development of more dynamic publications: when the aim is to characterize large numbers of works and whole periods of writing, the dynamic illustration of patterns can show more than static charts.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Concordances
- Obstacles to online reading
- Populist digital editions
- Later developments
- Scholarly and expansive editions
- Past and future

228. CASE STUDY 1: *KING LEAR*

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Until the mid-1980s, all mainstream editions of *King Lear* were “conflated”; that is, they included all the materials from the two main early editions of the play, the 1608 “Pied Bull” quarto, printed by Nathaniel Butter some two years after the play was first written in 1605–06, and the version of the text preserved in the First Folio of 1623. The differences between quarto and folio divide into two seemingly distinct but ultimately related categories: larger-scale differences that reflect a reshaping, if not full-scale revision, of the play by Shakespeare himself, and some 1,000 or so smaller variants in individual words and phrases. These have been somewhat neglected in the drive since 1986–87 to prove that *Lear* affords the clearest evidence of any Shakespeare text of a revising authorial hand. As it is, the variants may in the end prove more revealing about the true relationship between the texts than the broad-sweep differences.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Quarto/folio divergences
- Convergent variants, textual cruces, and an *Ur-Lear*?
- On editing *Lear* once again

229. CASE STUDY 2: *THE TEMPEST*

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Whatever aspect we consider in the history of *The Tempest* text, nothing is more significant than the fact that this is a single-text play printed from an edited and probably expurgated manuscript, with the folio text itself printed with unusual care. Editors continue to see the play as filled with debatable issues – it comes under attack from feminists and anticolonialists. For example, Prospero, once considered a benevolent father and wise magus, is now often portrayed as an embittered and cruel colonial master, and editors once apologetic for their guilty admiration for the monster Caliban on occasion promote him to the role of the play’s mistreated hero. Nevertheless, over the centuries, the text itself has changed only in minor ways. Although single-text plays are in many ways much easier to edit than those with multiple texts, they do leave editors with pressing questions that cannot be answered.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The first edition with a named editor
- Pope’s and Theobald’s editions
- Three cruces
- Problems with single-text plays