Shakespeare's Early Readers : A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800

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Shakespeare's Early Readers:
A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE MAYER

For my mother, Jacqueline Mayer, with love and gratitude

To the memory of Claude Morzadec (1936-2017)

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Long S is regularised for the sake of typographical convenience, and tildes are silently expanded. Thorns are replaced with italicized *th.* Italicized single characters (like upo*n* or pa*m*phlets*)* 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, D.C.
HL	Huntington Library, San Marino, California
MU	Meisei University, Tokyo, Japan
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
RST	Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom
SBT	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom
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).

Introduction

Shakespeare's Early Readers covers the period from the publication of the first Shakespearean playbooks to the gradual disappearance of the monopoly on the publication of Shakespeare's works, held by a handful of publishers, and the opening of the market to a wider readership in the course of the eighteenth century. In sum, the monograph addresses that crucial formative early modern[1] 'moment' when Shakespeare's works began to permeate the public sphere both in London and elsewhere. His plays and poems were handed down, transformed, disseminated and appraised by his readers. All of this took place prior to the institutionalization of Shakespeare in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and well before the global dissemination of his works in the twenty-first century. By breaking the mould of the usual opposition between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century appropriation of Shakespeare, my aim is of course not only to highlight the discontinuities between earlier and later reading practices, but also to reveal their cross-generational palimpsestic nature, as readers across time entered into dialogue on the printed or manuscript page.

The book reconsiders the role of readers in the history of Shakespeare's rise to fame and in the history of canon formation – as they often attributed value to Shakespeare's works. This rise was a complex and discontinuous process involving a wide variety of institutions and of course the world of theatre itself. Readers are only part of the story – even if they remain to this day a crucial and often unseen part of it. Indeed, the central claim of this book is that the role of readers has been much understated and that the study of *actual* appropriation practices provides another important means of measuring how fame and literary value were constructed, sometimes against a variety of odds, by the will and curiosity of individuals, during Shakespeare's life time and across two decisive centuries.

Above all, this enquiry is a hymn to the archive and to what can be found there. Throughout the ten years or so during which I worked on this project, I was often asked what traces readers had left (if any) in those early books and manuscripts. While not as popular with early collectors of verse as John Donne,[2] Shakespeare (whether he was named or not) quickly became part of the manuscript picture. As for books, it is in fact rare to find one that does not bear traces of a reader – often someone from the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Ten years later, after surveying thousands of pages, my conviction is that the nature of the early readerly engagement and response was considerable. That so much had lain dormant for so long came as a surprise and encouraged me to write on the subject. To date, no book has looked at the work produced by Shakespeare's early modern readers in a comprehensive manner – that is, not only by including drama and poetry, but also by taking into account print *and* manuscript.[3] This will enable us to offer a more integrated vision of production and reception practices in the early modern period and provide us with a *much bigger* picture of the circulation of Shakespeare's works throughout the period.[4]

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[1] In this book I shall be using the word 'early modern' to refer essentially to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The reason for this is that I have not found enough fundamental divergences – at least in the field of the history of reading – to differentiate these two centuries.

[2] Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 147; 159.

In writing this study I have not consulted every single extant early edition of Shakespeare, or every manuscript that contained extracts of his works. The task would have been near impossible, or indeed futile, for reasons that will appear shortly. This book is built around what I would call a 'critical mass' of both early printed editions and manuscripts. Having collected a substantial and very varied number of examples, this 'the critical mass' helped me form an idea of the major reasons for readers to get involved with Shakespeare. This was how the chapters of this book were designed – to reflect and analyse the type of material I had found in the archive.

As we know, reading is such an idiosyncratic activity that no claim is made here to have addressed every manner of reading Shakespeare in the period concerned.[5] Nor does analysing even a considerable number of documents exclude errors of interpretation – reading readers, so to speak, can not only be baffling, especially from our perspective, but also represents a daunting challenge. As Roger Chartier argued, such acts of interpretation reflect 'the paradox underlying any history of reading, which is that it must postulate the liberty of a practice that it can only grasp, massively, in its determinations'.[6] Meaning itself is always constructed and the interpretations offered in this study are informed by what we know of the past and are never devoid of the methological concerns and biases of the present.[7] Finally, there were of course those thousands of readers who read 'silently' and never left traces of their thoughts and opinions. They were probably numerous and the dream that the whole of human experience is recoverable has to be abandoned. Yet it is my belief that those who did mark, extract and express themselves, were, in some ways at least, not too dissimilar to their 'silent' counterparts. All the elements we mentioned in this paragraph are inherent risks for a study of this nature, but, in the end, they have to be accepted and borne in mind to enable a book like this to develop its argument.

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[3] Eric Rasmussen and Anthony West's indispensable *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012) gives very valuable descriptions of annotations, but no analysis of them is provided and it is of course limited to First Folios. David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) is a mine of useful information and insights, but is primarily concerned with book theory and 'implicit' readers, rather than actual ones. Charlotte Scott's *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) is a valuable work of scholarship, but it looks at books as metaphors in Shakespeare's works and as objects on stage, which is not what the current project will be doing.

[4] Such a vision is now possible thanks to the in-depth work of old and new biographers, on the one hand, and, on the other, to decades of dedicated research in the field of manuscript studies, now combined with new technology making all this material far more accessible and searchable. See, as examples of new technology serving older research two indispensable websites: http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/index.html (for early modern playbooks) and www.celm-ms.org.uk (for literary manuscripts). Also the work of E. Leedham-Green, Alan H. Nelson for the 'Private Libraries in Renaissance England' project, a database which has recently gone online too.

[5] All the more so as 'all readers probably do not use the same reading strategy in any period, nor does any one reader always read the same way' (Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], p. 34).

The early modern period may have created 'Bardolatry',[8] but it was certainly not a time when Shakespeare's fame as a dramatist or poet was assured. We are far from the institutionalized Shakespeare that we first encountered through the school system, or indeed through his 'fragments', which have circulated and transformed themselves from the sixteenth century. These fragments we now accept as being part of culture as a whole, either consciously or unconsciously. Neither the twentieth, nor the twenty-first centuries invented extractions, cuts, spin-offs, adaptations, the transcoding of works, or the unacknowledged pilfering of literary texts.[9] Shakespeare would no longer be part of our picture were it not for the work of thousands of individuals who read and extracted his plays and poems, circulated them, transformed them and gave them a new lease of life. Ironically, this happened at a time when scholars, especially towards the end of the eighteenth century, were attempting to

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[6] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994 [1992]), p. 23.

[7] Stephen Orgel, *The Reader in the Book, A Study of Spaces and Traces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 14 and Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. 13. See also Claire M. Bourne, 'Marking Readers', *Shakespeare* (2017), pp. 1-20; 15.

[8] Although we know that the process was truly complex and even contradictory: Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet; Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 6-7 et passim.

[9] See, for instance, Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare Cut: Rethinking Cutwork in an Age of Distraction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

'reassemble' Shakespeare and when what is now known as professional textual editing attempted an impossible task – to produce the best possible Shakespearean text and then, some years later, to understand the relations between Shakespeare's source texts. Needless to say, that task is still under way.

Inevitably, the editorial endeavour and the political need to turn Shakespeare into Britain's national poet in order to counter French influence on the diplomatic and cultural terrain, specifically during the latter half of the Georgian period, may have impeded the *personal* appropriation of his works. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare's readers had lost much of their freedom of unmediated interpretation. Perhaps they never really regained it, as Shakespeare slowly became synonymous with formal education and high culture in the centuries to follow.[10] His current global status can be seen as a tribute to his works' ability to speak not only through time, but across cultures and social classes. Less favourable interpreters point out that his popularity, particularly among emerging nations, is a sign of countries needing to prove their worthiness on the cultural stage by appealing to recognisable western cultural figures.[11] As for the under-privileged, at home or abroad, there may be a lingering feeling that access to Shakespeare is the necessary condition to be part of a society that does not deem their existing personal culture sufficiently worthy.[12]

Shakespeare was an establishment playwright (a member of the prestigious Chamberlain's Men and then of the King's Men) who wrote to entertain popular audiences, mainly in the public theatre. Yet another vindication of this book's main argument is that the cultural ground was shifting. After vernacular literature, it was English drama's turn to enter the realm of literature, a terrain which was still dominated by poetry at least in the minds of the elite. Shakespeare's plays, whether as collected works or as single-play editions were partly marketed as saleable and collectable literature and as objects connected to the theatre (reminiscent of a performance, or, later in the period, as pre-publicity for a show or adaptation). Early Shakespearean editions contain little paratext, as opposed to their eighteenth-century counterparts. Nevertheless, in either case, paratexts were ways of 'pitching' an edition for a particular occasion, or, more generally, of carving an imaginary relation between the reader and the book. This explains why I have chosen not to focus at great length on them, the ground being also very well covered by other studies.[13]

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[10] See the conclusion of this book.

[11] See, as an example, Alexander C. Y Huang, 'Global Shakespeare as Methodology', *Shakespeare* 9.3. (2013), pp. 373-90 and Marcus Tan, 'Spectres of Shakespeare: Ong Keng Sen's Search: Hamlet and the intercultural myth', *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 90.1 (2016), pp. 129-40, esp. 137-8.

[12] For more on this subject, see conclusion.

The story told by this book is that of a parenthesis in time. The period it covers was one during which both the response to Shakespeare and the engagement with his works were far less encumbered, as who 'owned' Shakespeare and his texts was much less clear at that time than it is for us at present.[14] Early responses tended to be not only eager, enthusiastic and personal, but also haphazard, seemingly unconnected to the text, and not necessarily neatly packaged. We need to forget the awe frequently attached to the early modern period and simply look at it empirically, that is, with eyes that simply accept and embrace the traces the past has left. It is surprising how seldom these fragments correspond to what printed books of the time tell us about reading methods and practices. In truth, the gap between reading theory and practice was real, despite what contemporary theorists and educators claimed. As a consequence, this study prefers to focus on practice and remains wary of wishful statements.

The methodology for *Shakespeare's Early Readers* was built on the evidence gleaned from the archive. Nonetheless, it was also helped immensely by the work of many scholars in the field. As an extension to the more personal 'acknowledgements' section, I need to say a few words about the people who suggested where I should look and who ultimately brought this book to life. Lukas Erne's book on *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (2003) was probably what got me excited about the idea that there could exist not only a 'social text' of Shakespeare, but also one that may have been aimed at readers.[15] I then delved into the work of the late Sasha Roberts, who spoke so thoughtfully of the specificities of the early modern archive, of the manifold roles Shakespeare's lyrics played in the early modern period, and of the importance of women readers – an aspect I have tried to address as a man writing about a considerable number of male readers (female literacy figures remained low until the eighteenth century).[16] Roberts's work also explains why the current study concentrates more on plays than on Shakespeare's poems.

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[13] Jean-Christophe Mayer, 'Shakespeare and the Order of Books', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, special issue no. 21, https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-21/05-Mayer_Shak&theOrderOfBooks.htm; Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Thomas L. Berger and Sonia Massai, eds., *Paratexts in English Printed Drama to 1642*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[14] See conclusion in particular.

[15] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as a Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 63; 175. In his recent book, Akihiro Yamada attempts to demonstrate that the market for playbooks was on the rise because of the concurrent increase of playgoers interested in purchasing plays (*Experiencing Drama in the English Renaissance: Readers and Audiences* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). The argument is interesting and adds fuel to Erne's theory, although Yamada's figures do not seem to take into account the findings of the New Bibliographical movement, such as, for instance, those of Zachary Lesser in *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Still in the field of Shakespeare studies, Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass's seminal article 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590-1619' helped me develop an interpretative method for readers' textual transformations through the two scholars' concrete examination of how Shakespeare's works were turned into commonplaces.[17] Chartier and Stallybrass's cooperation over the years pursued the rich trans-Atlantic tradition of interest in books as material and cultural artefacts that led to what has become the 'history of books', a relatively new field of study, now represented by its association aptly named SHARP.[18]

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[16] Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 130 and passim. Roberts was very active in the field, see also 'Engendering the Female Reader: Women's Recreational Reading of Shakespeare in Early Modern England', in *Reading Women Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 36-54; 'Reading Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love: Romeo and Juliet, Othello, and Antony and Cleopatra in Early Modern England', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 108-33; 'Shakespeare "creepes into the women's closets about": Women Reading in a Room of Their Own', in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces, 1580-1690* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 30-63, or *Women Reading Shakespeare, 1660-1900: An Anthology of Criticism*, edited with Ann Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

[17] See Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass, 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590-1619', in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text,* ed. Andrew Murphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 35-56; esp.43-55. Murphy's own *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) is a unique tool for anyone, like myself, having to find his way through a maze of printed editions of Shakespeare, particularly during the Georgian era.

[18] The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing, see: www.sharpweb.org/main/. Pioneers in the field were mainly French and American scholars. To cite but a few: Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1480-1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: Verso, 1990 [first pub. in French in 1958]); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999 [first pub. 1992]); Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111.3 (1982), pp. 65-83; his 'First Steps Towards a History of Reading', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 23 (1986), pp. 5-30; and his *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990);

The fact that I have not yet mentioned the word ‘reception’ – a word that the theories of Iser and Jauss made familiar[19] – is due to the influence of another Shakespearean. Douglas Lanier underlined the usefulness of the term ‘appropriation’ to describe the circulation of Shakespeare’s works both in the early modern era and in contemporary culture. ‘Reception’ appeared too passive a term to describe such phenomena. Lanier’s personal understanding of the term ‘appropriation’ is clear-sighted. Indeed, borrowing from Shakespeare may not always be a question of contention, or of marking one’s cultural territory (as its Latin root appears to indicate, *appropriatus*, ‘made one’s own’), but can imply negotiation, collaboration and exchange.[20] I found much in Lanier’s open definition of appropriation to be particularly applicable to the processes at work in the primary sources I was studying. Lanier himself was no doubt inspired by the writings of Roger Chartier’s mentor, Michel de Certeau, a pioneer French social historian who attempted to rid readers of the fetters of poststructuralist theory by giving them more freedom of movement: ‘Far from being writers […] readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it for themselves’.[21] Both Lanier’s and De Certeau’s definitions were particularly helpful when interpreting the findings of this book.

This brings me to speak of key influences outside the field of Shakespeare studies proper. For instance, H. J. Jackson’s *Marginalia, Readers Writing in Books* (2001), with her explicit and scholarly focus on annotations was a useful way to begin thinking about how marginalia functioned in detail. Yet, in my view, Jackson sometimes collapses readers and authors unhelpfully, and her laudable enterprise is unavoidably hampered by the historical ground she endeavours to cover (over three centuries). It is certainly difficult to speak of marginalia that ought to be commendable, or that must meet specific standards, as far as the notes we have encountered are concerned. Nevertheless, this appears to be her argument near the end of her

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Anthony Grafton, ‘Is the History of Reading a Marginal Enterprise? Guillaume Budé and his Books’, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 91.2 (1997), pp. 139-57 and his more recent *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[19] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, trans. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

[20] See Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. p. 5.

[21] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol.* 1, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 174.

book (as far as I am concerned, such strict distinctions are more likely to be valid for much later periods and in the case of well-known marginalists).[22]

William H. Sherman's *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (2008) was paradigm shifting for this study. Sherman considerably enlarged the concept of marginalia (including intellectual comments as well as everyday markings).[23] For him, as for me, what mattered was that these books (especially printed books) had been 'used', that they had been read for a purpose (scholarly or mundane), or a set of purposes – and, more often than not, with fervour. Importantly, Sherman tried to look for what he described as the 'imagined actual reader' – a more historical reader –steering clear of poststructuralist, disincarnated and certainly over-theorized 'imagined', 'implied', or 'ideal' readers, concepts that were ill-adapted to the evidence at hand.[24]

The idea of a 'used' book is one which bears traces of life and activity and this is fundamentally what this project is interested in.[25] It should be clear by now that we shall not busy ourselves with the pristine, 'washed', 'cropped', or sometimes made-up[26] book retailed by a number of booksellers in the nineteenth century for a *clientele* of collectors seeking to buy the 'perfect' Shakespeare (unaware that early modern printing processes never produced such books anyway) and no doubt persuaded that a perfect book would get them closer to that almighty figure, the 'Author'.[27]

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[22] See for instance H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia, Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 205-206; 209-210.

[23] See William B. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 16-17 and his chapter entitled 'The Social Life of Books', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 164-171, esp. pp. 165-7. Directly related to Sherman's project, is Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio's, *Book Use, Book Theory 1500-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005). The book is insightful in the same way as Sherman's and contains a wealth of illuminating illustrations. Similarly, see also Roger E. Stoddard's, ed., *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1985).

[24] Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, pp. 96; 100. For a long list of these abstract readers, see his *John Dee and the Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 55 and Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader Response Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 7.

[25] Orgel writes cogently that books 'always needed something more that could be supplied by the reader – commentary, explanation, something to help us remember it, or even simply something to make it ours, something to make it not absolutely dead' (Orgel, *The Reader in the Book*, p. 8). As Robert Davenport put it less sophisticatedly in his address 'To the knowing Reader', '*A Good Reader, helps to make a Book'* (*King John and Matilda* [pub. 1655], cited in Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642-1660* [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995], p. 238). See also Steven N. Zwicker, '"What every literate man once knew": tracing readers in early modern England', in *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*, ed. Robin Myers, Michel Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2005), pp. 75-90; esp. 85.

Shakespeare's Early Readers is concerned with 'historicizing the experiences of various readers', as Heidi Brayman Hackel contends in the first chapter (entitled 'Towards a material history of reading') of a monograph that was to become a manifesto for 'Material Studies', now a burgeoning discipline.[28] Like Hackel, I 'reject the category of "the reader" as an essentialized, ahistorical subject' and certainly regret that the demise of affect deprived the history of reading of precious ways of understanding the reading process until recent years, as Karin Littau contended.[29] This book goes some way towards reintroducing affect and more generally emotional response (in parallel with cognitive response) into the reading experience. More generally, I completely endorse Chartier's statement that 'a text exists only because there is a reader to give it meaning'.[30]

My fundamental contention and central argument will be that Shakespeare was – to gloss Crites in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668) – 'pushed by many hands', including those who wrote in the margins of his books, or took great pains to extract, transform and pass on his works in writing.[31] To address my subject, I have chosen to divide my argument into six chapters.

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[26] Many extant early Shakespearean editions lack, or lacked pages. In the past, books could thus be 'made up' again through a variety of processes: a scribe could be hired to copy (and sometimes imitate) the missing script, a modern printed page could be substituted, or an original page could be bought and inserted. As remarkable as it may seem, there was a market for original Shakespearean pages. For details, see Peter Blayney, *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, DC: Folger Library Publications, 1991), pp. 36-40.

[27] Orgel also sees the desire for pristine books and the cult of Shakespeare as intimately related (*The Reader in the Book*, p. 25).

[28] In her *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-16; at 7.

[29] Hackel, *Reading Material*, p. 18; Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 9.

[30] Chartier, *The Order of Books*, p. 2.

[31] 'It has been observed of Arts and Sciences, that in one and the same Century they have arriv'd to a great perfection; and no wonder, since every Age has a kind of Universal Genius, which inclines those that live in it to some particular Studies: the Work then being push'd on by many hands, must of necessity go forward' (John Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie, an essay* [London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1668], p. 9. Wing D2327).

To give the study a firm basis, the first chapter ('Literacy and the Circulation of Plays') answers a number of essential questions. For instance, it offers up-to-date information about the ownership and the reading of plays in the early modern period. It reveals who Shakespeare's readers were and sheds light on the social and monetary value of his works. Owning did not necessarily mean reading and, conversely, reading did not always necessitate the ownership of books. This will lead us to focus on some of the many shades of literacy in seventeenth and eighteenth century England. Naturally, the social spectrum of his readers widened considerably over the decades.

Literature, including Shakespeare's texts, informed the lives of many early modern individuals. Indeed, as will become clear in Chapter 2 ('Life in the Archives: Shaping Early Modern Selfhood'), early material incarnations of Shakespeare's text interacted with and were transformed through their contact with their readers' universe of mundane objects and social relations, since they also bore the imprints of these individuals' desires, fears and frustrations. Traditionally looked upon as a desecration of books, 'graffiti' in Shakespearean editions celebrate both the work and the author of the inscriptions. Some of the graffiti in these editions could be considered to be forms of life-writing. As this chapter argues, associations between the self, the book and the world can help individuals feel more grounded—they enable readers to establish their sense of place and their awareness of belonging to a community.

The question of the 'true' text and of who should be allowed to tamper with it was a crucial concern during the whole of the early modern period, as will be apparent in the course of the following chapter (Chapter 3: 'Readers and Editors of Shakespeare—a *Concordia Discors*'). The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century communal culture of correcting the text is often opposed to that of the eighteenth century when editing gradually became the domain of a handful of editors in charge of deciding the 'true' meaning of Shakespeare's words. While many eighteenth-century editors found it difficult to depart from the 'received text' of Shakespeare (established by previous editors), a large body of readers who owned early editions of the playwright were busy examining these copy texts. Some, predictably, were intent on adapting Shakespeare's quartos and folios to the received text (that is, they wished to edit the text by modernizing it in the light of eighteenth-century editions). Others, however, emended early editions either according to their own rules and uses, or by contesting the modern editions, noting differences and challenging modern editors. If the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of the editor as an alleged supreme authority over Shakespeare's text, they also witnessed in parallel the development of genuine personal interest in the text of Shakespeare on the part of readers who claimed their autonomy through textual editing. As Shakespeare joined the canon of England's national literature, the activity of reclaiming his language as the language of the nation through emendation, modernization or, on the contrary, the conservative preservation of archaisms (and sometimes errors) could constitute a new frontier of reading.

The links between the circulation of Shakespeare's early editions and the performance or revival of his works on stage have received relatively little attention. Thus, the traces left by those who annotated, cut, interleaved, transcribed, or sometimes pulled apart these editions for dramatic purposes remain understudied. Chapter 4 ('Early Modern Theatrical Annotators and Transcribers') reconsiders the all-too-often assumed divide between the world of print production and that of theatrical production. It also looks at the long publishing tradition which continued to foster exchanges between the world of readers and that of theatre people between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. The common features and diversity of annotating practices among performance-oriented readers is the focus of the latter part of the chapter, which relies on examples of professional and amateur 'theatricalized' printed texts, as well as manuscript playbooks. Even when they worked within the bounds of the so-called 'authentic' book, seventeenth-century theatrical annotators shifted the borders of the text by opening it up to new aesthetic possibilities and reinventing its performability. Eighteenth-century revisers worked in the same way. If sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed plays annotated for the theatre are uncommon, early Shakespearean manuscript play texts are extremely rare. The chapter closes with a number of case studies of this nature. Ultimately, I claim that if Shakespeare is still performed today worldwide, it is because, throughout the early modern period, there were people who changed the parameters of the printed text by rescripting his works, making them as flexible as was necessary to serve their aesthetic, personal, or ideological needs, as well as those of their audiences.

Etymologically, reading (*legere)* is fundamentally about plucking, gathering and assembling. The reading of Shakespeare is no exception and Chapter 5 ('Commonplacing: The Myth and the Empirical Impulse') will provide ample proof that commonplacing, that is, the collecting and classifying of excerpts used to garnish one's own speech or writings with other people's thoughts and words was a practice ingrained in early modern culture. If Shakespeare's works were plundered by commonplacing readers, it may have been because the style adopted by Shakespeare (and a few others among his contemporaries) was consciously inspired by the commonplace tradition. The aim is to understand what drew readers to commonplacing, despite the method's long-recognised deficiencies. We shall examine what I call the ‘empirical impulse’ to compile, collect and sometimes classify Shakespearean extracts. The drive was no doubt fuelled by a growing Shakespearean nationalist myth. However, there could be side effects: the interest in collecting and using a fragmented Shakespeare led to a sense of overkill. Compilation could make Shakespeare too common in the eyes of some. Yet the empirical impulse to build collections had positive consequences as well: since Shakespeare’s works could be disarticulated, distilled, fused, misread and reinjected, they survived through engagement and process.

Our final chapter entitled ‘Passing Judgement on Shakespeare’ is divided into two parts. Part 1 (which is focused on the seventeenth century) deals with: ‘Shakespeare and the Early Formation of Aesthetic Taste’ and Part 2 (which concentrates essentially on the Georgian era) is devoted to ‘Shakespeare and Communal Cultural Dialogue’. Both parts address the book’s central question, which could be formulated candidly in the following way: what did early modern readers really think of Shakespeare’s works?

While there will never be a hard and fast answer to such a question (for reasons already mentioned), I argue that as early as the first part of the seventeenth century, readers were sensitive to well-constructed plots, that they were interested in characters and in the expression of emotions, and that they formulated critical and aesthetic comments on Shakespeare’s works. Well before the classification and appreciation of plays according to neo-classical standards at the Restoration and during part of the Augustan age, and prior to the elevation of good literary taste as one of the foremost public virtues in Georgian Britain, readers were making vital critical statements during Shakespeare’s lifetime, or in the decades immediately following his death. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the time factor began to affect the reception of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, the Restoration brought new interest in Shakespeare – but mostly as dramatic material to pilfer or reinterpret. It is at this moment that readers can be seen transitioning between the Old and the New.

Part 2 nuances the scenario of Shakespeare’s rise to fame, at least as far as his reading public was concerned. In fact, I demonstrate that a number of readers fought against, or tried to distinguish themselves from, the then increasingly available critical printed ‘mantra’. For some, the playwright and poet was aesthetically appealing because they saw that parts of his texts could serve specific political agendas, those of English nationalism in particular, but not exclusively. Others used Shakespeare obsessively to showcase their literary tastes. Some remained resolutely independent, partly cut off from the influence of mainstream criticism, and produced remarkably idiosyncratic aesthetic responses. Then, there were those who had a true passion for Shakespeare’s textual universe and strove – often against considerable difficulties (especially when they were women) – to become shapers of literary taste through his works. Before the school system turned him into a set author in the course of the nineteenth century, early Shakespeare remained a genuine site of excitement, but also of self-interest, of shrewd criticism and of intensely personal expression.

Chapter 1

Literacy and the Circulation of Plays

The move from a society steeped in oral culture and relying on communal art forms such as drama to circulate stories, cultivate its dreams and address its issues, to one in which literacy and the printed book provided people with more individual means of access and response to the same stories is one which had vast and complex consequences.[32] It will be the argument of this chapter—and more generally of this book as a whole—that Shakespeare's works took on a special role in this fundamental societal evolution.

It is evident in plays such as *2 Henry VI* that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were aware not only of the possibilities created by the rise of literacy, but also that it could be a source of social tensions and divisions. The half humorous-half serious ring of the rebellious Jack Cade's accusations against Lord Saye testifies to this fact. Cade's concern is about 'poor men', who 'because they could not read, thou hast hanged them; when indeed, only for that cause, they have been most worthy to live' (4.7.35-7). At the latter end of the period explored in this book, Shakespeare editor and man of letters Samuel Johnson looked back on the first decades of his own century and on the journey covered since then by his contemporaries. Commenting on a 1712 pamphlet publication, he wrote in 1779: 'it is boasted, that between November and January eleven thousand were sold; a great number at that time, when we were not yet a nation of readers'.[33] Johnson knew that his 'nation of readers' was still rife with social inequalities, but he was also conscious that greater access to books and to printed plays had forever changed individuals' approach to culture.

Our main focus here will be on how the many evolving shades of literacy, together with the increasing circulation of books throughout society, facilitated the reading of plays and of Shakespeare's works. Indeed, the aim of this chapter is to lay the ground for the rest of the book by revisiting the issue of early modern literacy, in order to determine who could read and afford Shakespeare's works in print. We shall then turn to the readers themselves, especially the early buyers and collectors of Shakespearean editions, who were more numerous than was previously thought. We shall also show that buying books was not the only road to reading Shakespeare. Borrowing and lending were common practices, within the family circle and beyond. Moreover, individual collections had the potential to serve the needs of many other readers and, from the seventeenth century onwards, a whole array of public libraries and institutions diversified possibilities of access to Shakespeare's plays and poems. Readers, collectors, publishers, public authorities, or simply local people invented new ways of accessing Shakespeare's works. Many of these changes affected the reputation of play reading itself and helped Shakespeare make his mark in print.

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[32] See David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture, England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 197.

[33] Johnson is referring here to Swift's pamphlet the *Conduct of the Allies*. See Johnson's *Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the works of the English poets*, 10 vols. (London: printed by J. Nichols, 1779), vol. 1, p. 33. ESTC: T044190.

Literacy in Early Modern England: Who Could Read Shakespeare?

'From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd', wrote John Heminges and Henry Condell—Shakespeare's fellow actors—in their preface 'To the great Variety of Readers', which appeared in the first folio of Shakespeare's works (sig. A3^r).[34] One should be wary of statements made in paratexts of printed literature because those who produced the books naturally imagined a market for them which did not necessarily reflect reality. Nevertheless, it is true that the 1620s corresponded to a period of 'recovery of literacy' up until the Civil War when literacy suffered another setback.[35] Heminges's and Henry Condell's statement also reminds us in passing that literacy was, as we shall see, a notion far removed from our present day conception and that it came in many shades and variables.

Looking at the figures of literacy produced by historians it is of course hard to believe that the claims of the First Folio's editors are anything other than wishful thinking. Indeed, two thirds of the male population and nine tenths of the female population were still unable to sign their names at the time of the English Civil War. Many were taught to read printed texts, but because they had to leave school at an early age, or because teaching standards were poor, they could not read manuscript texts, nor could they write. There were also strong regional and social differences. At the outset of the seventeenth century, only 22 per cent of the men in London were unable to sign their names. In the same period, 70 per cent of London tradesmen could read and write compared to 50 per cent in the north of England. 34 per cent of Essex husbandmen and 33 per cent of rural weavers were equally skilled. Furthermore, there were great gender inequalities, for at that time 90 per cent of women could not sign their names. These figures paint a general picture, but should not be considered as totally accurate. What is more unquestionable is that readers tended to be male and urban (many lived in London). They were mainly members of the middle class, the aristocracy and the clergy, even if some men whose profession did not require them to be literate could read. Needless to say, the skills of the latter varied enormously.[36]

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[34] *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies* (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623). STC.: 22273.

[35] David Cressy*, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 171-2.

The inability to write was not necessarily synonymous with illiteracy. Historically, it was only in the late nineteenth century that the notion of literacy was defined as the ability to read *and* write.[37] In Tudor times those skills were taught separately and despite the above-mentioned figures, there were signs that increasingly large sections of the population were gaining access to the world of printed books. While there were always fluctuations and setbacks, historians point to the significant overall improvement of reading skills from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. If in 1600 70 per cent of men and 90 per cent of women had insufficient or non-existent reading skills (with the regional and class variations underlined above), the figures had fallen respectively to 50 and 70 per cent by 1700.[38] Jonathan Barry argues that not only 'the middling sort', but also the trading and farming classes progressed greatly during this period and that the pattern of growth continued during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[39]

Moreover, by 1700 printed books were indisputably 'part of everyday life' for a great number of people and a 'pervasive element of culture and society in direct and indirect ways'.[40] Even the illiterate would notice them being sold on stalls or hawked on street corners. But well before that, there is concrete evidence that playbooks were sold in Elizabethan and

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[36] Ibid., pp. 2, 72, 100, 118-9, 130-4.

[37] Jonathan Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective', in *Popular Culture in England,* c. *1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 69-94; p. 92.

[38] Joad Raymond, 'Introduction: The Origins of Popular Print Culture', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to* 1660, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1-14; p. 4.

[39] Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture', pp. 69-94; p. 77.

[40] Raymond, 'Introduction: The Origins of Popular Print Culture', p. 7.

Jacobean playhouses.[41] Books in general even became important metaphorical properties on stage and in Shakespeare's plays in particular.[42] Throughout the period, people lived in 'a shared print culture', but did not take part in that culture in the same manner, as exposure to print could vary from the oral (listening to books read aloud) to the written (reading printed literature).[43] Nonetheless, a defining characteristic of the era with which we are concerned, is that however poor and/or lacking in reading skills they were, people knew where to go and who to turn to, in order to find help. Certainly, from 1750 onwards, the literate 'formed a bridge between the worlds of the educated and the uneducated' and the scope of professions able to read and help others broadened from the clergyman and school teacher to shopkeepers, doctors, autodidacts of various kinds and councillors: 'No one person, no representative of a single institution, could any longer be expected to command a monopoly of wisdom'.[44] As early as the seventeenth century a substantial part of learning already took place outside the schoolroom: at home, in the family, or in workshops or fields, 'where laborers taught themselves and one another'.[45] Communal spaces like barbers' shops also 'acted as conduits of information between the literate and the illiterate'.[46] Likewise, passages from the Bible, daily news, popular stories, or plays could be read aloud by family members, friends or workmates.[47]

Heminges's and Condell's appeal to the whole gamut of readers, including the humblest ('him that can but spell'), could have been a marketing ploy involving a certain amount of wishful thinking. Yet other playbook paratexts had directly targeted apprentices, craftsmen, and manual labourers. As we shall see, the price of playbooks may have been high for people of modest means, but readers were not always buyers of course —they could be borrowers too. Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday, or The Gentle Craft* (1600) is addressed 'To all good Fellowes, Professors of the Gentle Craft; of what degree soever', while Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London* (1615) bears a dedication 'To the honest and hie-spirited Prentises The Readers'.[48] Thus, one should not underestimate the appeal of printed plays and of Shakespearean playbooks for those at the lower end of the social scale. After all, a number of dramatists and writers became literate despite their modest backgrounds. Shakespeare was the son of a glover, Christopher Marlowe the son of a shoemaker, Ben Jonson the posthumous son of a clergyman, Edmund Spenser the son of a cloth merchant, Henry Chettle, the son of a London dyer, while Thomas Deloney was a silk weaver.[49]

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[41] Tiffany Stern, 'Watching as Reading: The Audience and Written Text in Shakespeare's Playhouse', in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 139; 141-2.

[42] See Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[43] Tim Harris, 'Popular, Plebeian, Culture: Historical Definitions', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, pp. 50-8; p. 57. See also Keith Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 97-131; p. 98.

[44] Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture, England 1750-1914*, pp. 11 and 180.

[45] Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette, Reflections in Cultural History* (New York and London: Norton, 1990), p. 174.

[46] Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes, 'Introduction: Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture', in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes (London: Centage Learning, 2006), pp. 1-17; p. 9.

[47] Brian Burch, 'Libraries and Literacy in Popular Education', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640–1850*, eds. Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 373.

The overall rise of literacy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century is indisputable, but of course it was never perfectly linear, as in times of war or crises it could recede. As we have suggested, estimates should also be taken with a measure of precaution as definitions of literacy vary and are not always a source of consensus among historians of reading themselves. Nonetheless, by the middle of the eighteenth century about 60 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women were able to sign their marriage act and those figures continued their uneven but steady rise in the ensuing decades.[50] Literacy was fostered by a combination of factors: a logocentric and primarily Protestant culture, a greater circulation of vernacular books and literature thanks in particular to the expansion of the English printing press, progress in education and the idea, which was clearly expressed during the first half of the eighteenth century, that one could read for leisure and that literacy was particularly desirable in order to meet the goals of a new society 'revolving principally around the notion of politeness'.[51]

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[48] Cited in Zachary Lesser, 'Playbooks', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, pp. 520-34; p. 530.

[49] Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print and Politics in Britain 1590-1660* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 30-1; 35. The social spectrum of a Stationer's customers seemed to be relatively wide according to Henry Parrot's satire, *The Mastiue, or Young-Whelpe of the Olde-Dogge. Epigrams and Satyrs* (London: Printed by Tho: Creede, for Richard Meighen, and Thomas Iones, 1615), sigs. H4v-I1r. STC 19333.

[50] Brian Burch, 'Libraries and Literacy in Popular Education', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland,* p. 372.

[51] David Allan, *Libraries in Georgian England* (London: The British Library, 2008), p. 11.

The Price of Printed Books: Who Could Afford Shakespeare?

While the rise of Shakespeare in print was never evident, the previous section has shown that a number of propitious conditions were in place and that if reading skills still varied considerably during the early modern period, the idea that the era suffered deeply from 'mass illiteracy' should be qualified. Building on this context, we now need to turn to another important element: the cost of buying Shakespearean printed editions. Even if one allows that playbooks could be borrowed and circulated, the purchasing price was still a far from negligible factor in the dissemination of Shakespeare's works throughout society.

The most affordable early editions were the single play or poetry volumes of Shakespeare. Typically, though not invariably, these would retail for about six pence unbound. It was rare for early owners to inscribe the price of their purchase in their books (and many of the opening pages have been lost over the centuries). A 1600 quarto edition of *2 Henry IV* does bear the mention '31 December 1610. price v ob' [i.e. 5 pence and half] and a 1595 octavo edition of *Richard Duke of York (3 Henry VI)* was acquired for 8 pence.[52] The earliest known reference to someone acquiring a Shakespeare work can be found in the diary of a London civil servant, Richard Stonley. On Tuesday 12 June 1593, Stonley (who was about 73 years old) recorded in his diary that he had paid 6 pence for Shakespeare's recently published *Venus and Adonis* ('the Venus & Adhonay per Shakspere', FSL MS V.a.460, f. 9r). Stonley's expenses show that he spent a total of 18 shillings on books that same year.[53]

Buyers of these single volumes were not necessarily wealthy, even if the editions remained beyond the means of many. To understand their cost, it is necessary to appreciate their relative value compared to other goods.[54] For 6 pence in 1600, Londoners could attend six performances in the cheapest playhouses and the sum would be equivalent to the most affordable seat in one of the more upmarket indoor theatres.[55] During the same period, an industrious artisan made about 6 shillings a week, while an agricultural labourer earned only half as much (3s). Food was notoriously expensive and could cost up to 6 pence a day (the equivalent of an agricultural labourer's daily earnings).[56] In modern terms, the 6 pence playbook would be in the area of £2.5, while the industrious artisan's 6-shilling weekly income would represent about £30.[57]

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[52] See National Library of Scotland Bute 480 and Eric Rasmussen, 'Printing and Publishing', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 353-56; p. 356.

[53] FSL MS V.a.460, f. 51r.

[54] David McKitterick, '"Ovid with a Littleton": The Cost of English Books in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 11th ser. 2 (1997), pp. 184-234; p. 188.

[55] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574*-1642, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 11-3 and Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880, Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 331, note 89.

Despite these limitations, the reprint rates of some single play editions indicate that these volumes must have sold well, or at the very least that their publishers thought that there was a decent readership for them.[58] Religious books dominated the overall market of course and in the field of arts poetry was still the ruling genre.[59] Yet some Shakespeare plays proved remarkably successful in print. Those that were most popular among readers and book collectors were Shakespeare's English history plays. On the best-seller list were *1 Henry IV* (6 editions by 1616 and 9 by 1660), *Richard III* (5 editions by 1616 and 8 by 1660), *Richard II* (5 by 1616 and 6 by 1660). 'Other successful plays were *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet* and *Pericles,* with four, four and five reprints respectively, including two per play during Shakespeare's lifetime'.[60] There is very good reason to believe that Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593; no fewer than 16 editions by 1636) sold more copies than each of the previous plays probably because, as pointed out, ‘poesy’ was the most sought-after literary genre, but also perhaps because it struck a particular chord (poetic and/or erotic) with its readers. The rest of Shakespeare’s lyric output, with the exception of another narrative poem, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), did not attract the same interest.[61]

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[56] On these estimates, see: Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642*, p. 12; Jean-Marie and Angela Maguin, *William Shakespeare* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 161.

[57] These figures remain approximations based on calculations produced by the National Archives' Currency Converter: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/.

[58] The popularity of playbooks is still a contentious issue even if Peter Blayney's opinion that playbooks were not very profitable to produce and not that popular during the Shakespearean period has recently been challenged, fairly convincingly, by Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser: 'The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005), 1-32. Blayney expounded his thesis in an essay which proved influential: 'The Publication of Playbooks', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 383-422. Farmer and Lesser argue that there was a 'boom' in the publication of printed professional plays between 1598 and 1613 'The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited', p. 7) and found that the reprint rate of playbooks was higher than that of other works ('Structures of Popularity in the Early Modern Book Trade', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005), pp. 206-13; p. 208). In his response, Blayney noted that the market share of playbooks never exceeded 2.77% for the period 1583-1642, but his figures also show a relatively sharp increase in the market share of playbooks for two crucial decades: 1593-1602 (4.18%) and 1603-1612 (3.99%). See Peter W. M. Blayney, 'The Alleged Popularity of Playbooks', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005), 33-50; p. 48.

[59] Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, 'What Is Print Popularity? A Map of the Elizabethan Book Trade', in *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 19-54; pp. 30-1.

[60] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 12.

While one must be careful not to draw *direct* conclusions about actual sales of playbooks from their production figures, the evidence, as Lukas Erne and a number of other scholars have noted, seems to point to the vitality of the market not only for playbooks, but also for single play editions of Shakespeare, a fact often over-looked due to the attention given to the publication of the First Folio and the ensuing three folios in the course of the seventeenth century. In fact, according to Erne, ‘Shakespeare’s arrival in the book trade was sudden and massive’. Likewise, for John Jowett, it is clear that ‘By 1600 Shakespeare had become the most regularly published dramatist’.[62] So while these single play editions were not within the reach of the more modest, they had managed to create a significant market before the First Folio was printed. However, their relatively low price made binding a single play volume uneconomical for buyers. Therefore, most quarto playbooks were sold stab-stitched (the early-modern equivalent of stapling), so that customers would not have to pay at least double the price for a sewn and bound copy.[63] In 1619, London publisher Thomas Pavier had the idea of producing a small series of mostly Shakespearean plays, which could be easily bound (and not stitched) in a *Sammelband*. Pavier’s venture made business sense and was cost cutting for readers in terms of binding. Many readers had adopted the technique of the *Sammelband*, which enabled them not only to preserve their purchases but also to assemble personalised volumes. The practice was relatively widespread.[64] Pavier, whose quartos were printed by Isaac Jaggard (an important agent in the printing of the First Folio, with his father William), ‘pre-empted the demand for a larger collection’, perhaps tested the market for Jaggard and certainly made Shakespeare available at prices that beat those of a collected edition of plays.[65]

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[61] Ibid., p. 13.

[62] Ibid., p. 18; John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 8.

[63] A 1619 bookbinders’ list reveals that prices for binding quartos ranged from 10 pence to 5 shillings 6 pence (Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, pp. 219-20).

[64] For a list of volumes of this nature, see, in particular, Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, pp. 219-20. For details about the practice, see Jeffrey Todd Knight, ‘Making Shakespeare’s Books: Assembly and Intertextuality in the Archives’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60:3 (2009), pp. 304-40.

[65] On the links between the Pavier project and the Jaggards, see Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 107; 119. For a slightly qualified view, see Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, ‘Shakespeare between pamplet and book, 1608-1619’, in *Shakespeare and*

Thus, the price of single editions was not out of reach, although they still represented quite an investment for those on more modest incomes.

Shakespeare's First Folio was expensive in comparison. Anthony West, citing some of Peter Blayney's unpublished estimates, notes that 'the wholesale price could not exceed about 10s' and that the publisher's cost 'was about 6s. 8d'. As for retail prices, unbound copies would have sold for about 15 shillings, while bound copies could cost between 16 shillings and £1, depending on the type of binding (the most expensive being plain calf).[66] A bound folio would be about forty times the price of a single play and represented almost two months' wages for an ordinary skilled worker.[67] Probably in November 1623, one Thomas Longe recorded on a flyleaf of Folger Fo. 1 no. 71: 'Pr*e*tium 15s' (price 15 shillings). Longe had no doubt paid this price for an unbound copy.[68]

Yet, as other folio editions appeared in the course of the seventeenth century,[69] there was a sense that it had become outmoded and its price did not rise dramatically. Near the end of the seventeenth century it was comparatively more affordable and was accessible to a wider group of readers and inscribers than before. In the course of the eighteenth century, with the recognition of Shakespeare as England's national poet and the idea that the First Folio was an important source for those wishing to edit Shakespeare's text (most eighteenth-century Shakespeare editors possessed a copy), its readership widened again, as the book remained available and affordable; that is, until the 1780s when its value literally exploded, leaving the three other folios well behind in price and narrowing the market of would-be buyers and readers.[70]

Textual Studies, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 105-33; at 132.

[66] See Anthony James West, *The Shakespeare First Folio, The History of the Book. Volume I: An Account of the First Folio Based on its Sales and Prices, 1623-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 67-8. For details on these bindings, see Frank Mowery, 'The Bindings of the Folger's First Folios,' in *Foliomania! Stories Behind Shakespeare's Most Important Book*, ed. Owen Williams and Caryn Lazzuri (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2011), pp. 32-4.

[67] Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880*, p. 331, n. 89.

[68] On this purchase price, see Peter W. M. Blayney, *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1991), p. 28.

[69] An early hand has written in the top right-hand corner of the title page of a Second Folio: 'Pretium 20^{s}./', i.e. 20 shillings' (ML, MR 0906).

[70] This paragraph is based on Anthony West's findings in *The Shakespeare First Folio, The History of the Book*. See especially pp. 12, 19, 23, 25 and 27. However, on the cultural capital already gained by the First Folio

Meanwhile, a few single play editions of Shakespeare remained available during the seventeenth century. On average they retailed at one shilling during the latter half of that period, rising to 1s. 6d. at the turn of the eighteenth century.[71] A 1631 edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* cost one early reader 6d. (title page of FSL STC 22295 Copy 3), but the 1723 edition of *Hamlet* specified on its title page: '(Price one Shilling)'.[72]

The eighteenth century is famous for its series of lavish multi-volume editions produced by prestigious literary figures—the first of these being Nicholas Rowe's 1709 *The works of Mr. William Shakespear; in six volumes*. Not so well known is the fact that it is also the era when the trade wars between publishers became so fierce that they could at times force the price of Shakespeare's works down, thus significantly widening the market of would-be buyers.[73] At the close of the period, a high end and a relatively low end market for Shakespeare's plays existed. A decisive step had been taken towards the democratisation of his *œuvre* in print. Conversely, the price of his early editions, which had at one time been quite affordable (because they were challenged by more modern versions), soared, placing them well beyond the reach of the average reader or collector.

Beginning around 1775, the new age of bibliomania significantly transformed habits of book-collecting for the coming decades. The price of a book was no longer determined by its size or format (folios, quartos, octavos), but by its rarity. Furthermore, whereas classical and continental literature was the canon at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the latter end of the period saw the establishment of a new canon of collectible books, which included not only early works such as the Gutenberg Bible, but also early editions of the dramatist and poet recognised as the nation's most pre-eminent—William Shakespeare.[74]

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in the first half of the seventeenth century, see Vimala C. Pasupathi, 'Arms and the Book: "Workes", "Playes", and "Warlike Accoutrements" in William Cavendish's *The Country Captain*', *Philological Quarterly* 91.2 (2012), pp. 277-303, esp. pp. 288-9.

[71] Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880*, p. 53.

[72] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark; a tragedy, as it is now acted by his Majesty's servants* (London: printed by J. Darby, 1723). ESTC: T035953.

[73] For details of these price wars, see Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6-7; 102-6; 108-9.

[74] Arnold Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640–1850*, pp. 438-58; pp. 438-9, 447-8. George Steevens lamented in 1793 that the First Folio 'is now become the most expensive single book in our language' (*The plays of William Shakspeare. In fifteen volumes. With the corrections and illustrations of various commentators. To which are added, notes by*

Early Buyers and Collectors of Shakespeare

Shakespearean editions were already bought and collected at the end of the sixteenth century, well before the Georgian era, when reading vernacular literature for leisure became socially acceptable and even a sign of good taste. The number of these early collectors had not been properly recognised before the work of scholars such as Alan H. Nelson and Lukas Erne with their detailed surveys, to which I am indebted.[75] In what follows I shall not be simply repeating these findings. I will try to show the signification of the figures cited by Nelson and Erne within the wider context of book buying habits and practices in the early modern period. I also intend to expand their surveys to the end of the eighteenth century—not to cover every single private collection in that period (which would be an impossible task), but to point to the fact that ownership of Shakespeare's works was far more socially diverse than was previously thought.

Early owners of Shakespeare's plays and poems were, as we shall see, by no means negligible in number, but—particularly at the beginning of the period under consideration—they still represented an exception pointing to a more general rule. Indeed, one must not forget that the majority of personal collections were made up predominantly of books in Latin and printed on the Continent, works in English being the minority. English printing alone was not yet capable of covering most of the intellectual, practical or recreational needs of those who assembled private libraries.[76]

In this context, individuals who at the beginning of the seventeenth century owned large numbers of Shakespearean editions were readers and collectors who had special interests, which did not necessarily reflect those of the majority, but they laid important ground for future decades. At a time when few institutional libraries could compete with individual

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Samuel Johnson and George Steevens. The fourth edition (London: printed [by H. Baldwin] for T. Longman et al., 1793), vol. 1, p. 447. ESTC: T033036.

[75] Alan H. Nelson, '*Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles:* From the Earliest Years to 1616', in *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*, ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2005), pp. 49-73. Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, esp. pp. 186-232.

[76] Pamela Selwyn and David Selwyn, '"The profession of a gentleman": books for the gentry and the nobility (c. 1560 to 1640)', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, eds. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 489-519; p. 511.

collections (Cambridge University Library held 464 volumes in 1583 and the Bodleian Library some 2,500 volumes when it opened in 1602),[77] these owners were the first to read and collect printed plays and poems in English for private purposes. Moreover, their accumulated books could potentially be loaned within or outside the family circle and would often be donated to form greater public collections after their deaths. Thus, largely unbeknown to them, collectors of Shakespeare's works were early trend setters and, along with British booksellers, would steadily increase the circulation of Shakespeare in print, and eventually facilitate access to his works and foster their appreciation.

If the 'great era of country-house libraries' was no doubt the eighteenth century, the preceding period saw the rise of some notable collections, especially among the members of the English establishment (the nobility, courtiers, the gentry, the high clergy and high-ranking civil servants), those who had the means, the need and the desire to accumulate books.[78] Sometimes these private libraries went well beyond what a single person could read or use in a lifetime. The largest sixteenth-century personal collection was probably that of John Whitgift (1530/31?–1604), the archbishop of Canterbury, which amounted to about 6,000 volumes and which after his death in 1604 was dispersed and formed parts of various institutional libraries.[79]

The place of Shakespeare's works in early modern private collections must be understood in the context of the overall size of those libraries. Furthermore, it is useful to bear in mind that what was considered to be a large collection varied in time. 200 or more books in the 1560s may have amounted to a substantial library, but in the 1630s high-end private collections exceeded 1,000 books, some reaching several thousands.[80] Whether English or continental, books were increasingly sold in smaller formats (quarto or octavo) and were therefore cheaper and easier to collect—hence the importance of some Shakespearean quarto collections in a number of private libraries.[81] We shall now take a closer look at those early collections, first in terms of the number of playbooks they contained. Then we will show how far Shakespeare's works spread across society.

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[77] Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-10; p. 4. However, these figures grew steadily and sometimes very swiftly: the 1605 Bodleian catalogue includes almost 7,000 books. See *The first printed catalogue of the Bodleian Library 1605, a facsimile* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[78] Selwyn and Selwyn, '"The profession of a gentleman": books for the gentry and the nobility (c. 1560 to 1640)', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, pp. 489-519; p. 489.

[79] Barr and Selwyn, 'Major ecclesiastical libraries: from Reformation to Civil War', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, pp. 363-99; p. 383.

[80] Selwyn and Selwyn, '"The profession of a gentleman": books for the gentry and the nobility (c. 1560 to 1640)', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, pp. 502-3.

In the first half of our period, a handful of bibliophiles are particularly remarkable for the extent of their collections and for their as yet uncommon special interest in playbooks. These happen to be collections in which Shakespeare is also proportionally well represented. Surpassing most of the early bibliophiles, Edward Conway, second Viscount Conway (1594-1665) possessed around 1636-40 no fewer than 349 'English plays', classified under that title, in just one of his libraries, the Irish seat of Brookhill, where he had a collection approximating 8,000 volumes. Among his English plays were twenty quartos by or attributed to Shakespeare.[82] Conway was a politician, an avid book collector and a scholar-critic, who valued plays and vernacular literature.[83] T. A. Birrell surmises that Conway may have been 'buying plays like newsbooks, on a standing order'. This could also have been the case of another outstanding collector of playbooks, the antiquary Ralph Sheldon (1623–1684) of Beoley, Worcestershire, whose library contained a Shakespeare First Folio and some 560 quarto plays bound in 56 volumes, when it was auctioned in the eighteenth century.[84]

Likewise, Sir Edward Dering (1598-1644), who owned 'possibly as many as 240' plays, had them assembled into volumes. They too were acquired in bulk. By spring 1624, Dering had fourteen such volumes.[85] He was a courtier, a politician and an active antiquary (one of the founders in 1638 of the 'Society of Antiquaries'). His library totalled an estimated 2,000 printed books, including two copies of the First Folio which he bought in December 1623.[86]

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[81] Leedham-Green and Webber, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, p. 4.

[82] Conway had another library in London. See Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, pp. 207-8.

[83] James Knowles, 'Conway, Edward, second Viscount Conway and second Viscount Killultagh (*bap.* 1594, *d.* 1655)', in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55441.

[84] T. A. Birrell, 'Reading as pastime: the place of light literature in some gentlemen's libraries of the 17th century', in *Property of a gentleman: the formation, organisation and dispersal of the private library,* eds. R. Myers and M. Harris (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1991), pp. 113-31; pp. 124, 114-5.

[85] Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade,* pp. 200-1.

[86] Richard Ovenden, 'The libraries of the antiquaries (*c*. 1580-1640) and the idea of a national collection', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640*, pp. 527-61. The two pounds he paid in his 'Booke of expences' suggest he purchased two copies. N. H. Krivatsy and L. Yeandle, 'Sir Edward Dering', in R. J. Fehrenbach and E. S. Leedham-Green (eds.), *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A*

He also had a passion for live theatre both as a spectator and as an adaptor of plays for the private stage.[87] In or after 1623, he produced a conflated version of *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* based on a copy of Q5 of *1 Henry IV* (1613) and the second issue of the 1600 quarto of *2 Henry IV.* This suggests that he may also have owned some Shakespearean plays in quarto.[88]

The other two leading figures in the field of playbook collecting were: the courtier and author Sir John Harington (bap. 1560, d. 1612) with at least 135 plays, of which 20 were either by or attributed to Shakespeare[89] and the gentleman and letter-writer Henry Oxinden (1609-70), whose 1647 catalogue contained 122 playbooks, including nine Shakespeare related quartos.[90] Plays (including Shakespeare editions) were also present in the collections of George Buc (1560-1622), Sir William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) and of course of many other contemporaries, but not in quite the same proportions.[91]

If the size of a collection is an apt indicator, another way of looking at Shakespeare's circulation in print is to examine society at large in order to determine which categories of people could afford to own a Shakespeare edition. Over the course of two centuries, the social circulation of print editions of Shakespeare was more diverse than one might imagine. Owners became a vast community consisting not only of the British establishment of course, but also of priests of various religious denominations, members of the middle class (who did not always hold the same political views), artists and theatre people, eighteenth-century editors, early modern women, readers across the British Isles and on the Continent, and even working class readers.

Establishment Buyers

One characteristic feature of the Shakespearean volumes owned by members of the English establishment, particularly aristocrats, is that these books frequently remained in family collections for several centuries. This is the case of the First Folios acquired by the Arundell,

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Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists, 3 vols. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 256-7, entry 4.547:1-2.

[87] T. N. Lennam, 'Sir Edward Dering's Collection of Playbooks, 1619-1624', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16 (1995), pp. 145-53; pp. 146-7.

[88] See chapter 4 for details.

[89] Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 198.

[90] However, Oxinden was probably not the original owner of the collection. See ibid., p. 199.

[91] For details on the beginning of the period in particular, see, Alan Nelson, 'Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles: from the earliest years to 1616', passim.

Bridgewater and Ellesmere, as well as Newdegate families. One copy of the First Folio remained in the continuous ownership of the English peerage from *c.* 1660 to 1990, when it was acquired by Meisei University in Japan.[92] At least two early English monarchs played a part in the appreciation and collecting of Shakespeare's plays. Charles I (1600-1649) famously owned a copy of the Second Folio (now in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle), which he annotated.[93] Charles also had a Sammelband of eight playbooks, which carries the title 'Shakespeare, Vol. I.' on its back cover and probably dates back 'to the years immediately following 1631'.[94] Out of the eight, only the last play in the volume, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Q3, 1631), can in fact be attributed to Shakespeare, the rest being regarded by scholars as 'apocryphal'.[95] The volume shows that even in the period following the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio the dramatist's canon was continuing to fluctuate. It is indicative also of the 'personal and haphazard' nature of the Royal Library.[96] Indeed, due to the vicissitudes of history, royal collections did not offer quite the same stability as some great aristocratic collections. Yet some monarchs contributed to the preservation of early printed editions of Shakespeare, most notably George III, who greatly added to his ancestors' collections, which had been bequeathed to the British Museum. In 1800, he bought back Charles II's Second Folio for the Royal Library at Windsor Castle and no fewer than twenty-seven early quartos now in the British Library come from George III's King's Library.[97]

Not so high on the establishment ladder, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*bap.* 1689, *d.* 1762), was a prominent lady of letters and the wife of Edward Wortley Montagu (1678-1761). She collected early plays which she assembled in nonce volumes adding her initials ('M' or 'Ma') to them and often inscribing some short comment on the work at the beginning and end of each play.[98] The volumes now form the nucleus of the Bute Collection of English plays currently housed at the National Library of Scotland. It was through a series of family acquisitions that her collection continued to grow: first of all, thanks to her son-in-law, the third Earl of Bute (1713-92), and then to her grandson, the first Marquis of Bute (1744-1814), who acquired the Shakespeare quartos and increased the collection substantially. The latter now totals 39 items (16 quartos printed before the First Folio), while the Bute collection itself contains 1,266 English plays (with editions dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century).[99]

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[92] Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 144-5, 240-1, 745-6, 836.

[93] T. A. Birrell, *English monarchs and their books: from Henry VII to Charles II* (London: The British Library, 1987), pp. 44-5.

[94] Peter Kirwan, 'The First Collected "Shakespeare Apocrypha"', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62 (2011), pp. 594-601; p. 600.

[95] That is, *The Puritan*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, *The London Prodigal*, *Mucedorus* and *Fair Em*.

[96] Birrell, *English monarchs and their books*, p. 4.

[97] Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', p. 450. For the British Library quartos, see: www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/quartos.html

Thus, even if those aristocratic or gentry collections remained for a time within family circles (which in some cases did not preclude some items being lent outside that circle) these social classes played a fundamental social role in the preservation and transmission of Shakespeare's works to future generations of readers. Moreover, those who catalogued their collections with a great degree of precision provide us with fascinating information on which Shakespearean works they owned and even on where they were situated in their house and on the shelves of their library. For instance, the politician and third baronet Richard Temple (1634-1697) wrote down a shelf-by-shelf 'Catalogue of Books taken anno 1694' in a manuscript now at the Huntington Library (f. 13).[100] Interestingly, among his 'Bookes in ye 18 shelf behind ye door' are the following:

Shakespear Workes
folio
Ben: Johnson's workes
Folio (f. 35v) (Figure 1)

[INSERT:

Richard Temple, 'Catalogue of Books taken anno 1694', MS ST 365 (f. 35v). By permisssion of the Huntington Library.]

All of the books on that shelf are folios, but there also seems to be an attempt to build a kind of personal canon, as Shakespeare's Folio is surrounded not only by a translation of Homer's *Iliad* and some historical works, 'Antiquitates Oxonienses', 'Memoirs de Henry le Grand', but also by works of literature ('Mountaigns Essays in English', 'Boccacio Novelle', for instance) and theatre. Shakespeare's Folio sits right next to 'Ben: Johnson's workes' and not far from 'Sr Wm Davenants'. Another Restoration dramatist is represented a little further along the shelf with 'Four plays by S^{r} Will Killigrew'. Clearly, older dramatists like Jonson, and of course Shakespeare, were still worth having in one's library near the end of the seventeenth century.[101]

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[98] Marion Linton, 'The Bute Collection of English Plays', *Times Literary Supplement* [London, England] 21 Dec. 1956, p. 772. *Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive*. Online ed.

[99] http://shakespeare.nls.uk/collections.

[100] HL MS. ST 365. Ensuing references will be given in the text. I am grateful to Rosemary O'Day for indicating this manuscript to me.

Members of the establishment were instrumental in setting a canon of collectible books, which other social classes would emulate, but some went further by making a show of their bibliophilic tastes, or of their passion for Shakespeare. A famous case is Sir John Suckling (*bap.* 1609, *d.* 1641?) who had himself painted by Van Dyck holding a copy of either the First or Second Folio in 1637-38 (the portrait is now in the Frick Collection in New York). Suckling, who was also a poet and writer, staged himself with the volume open at a page of *Hamlet.* The motto on the rock he leans against in the painting, 'Ne To Quaesiveris Extra' ('seek not outside thyself'; Persius, Satires, i.7), could be an attempt to fashion himself as a writer claiming to be as independent of the ancients as Shakespeare allegedly was. Furthermore, it may have been a way of recognising his own indebtedness to the poet and dramatist.[102]

One final aristocrat—John Ker, third duke of Roxburghe (1740-1804)—should be mentioned, not so much for the use he made of the Shakespeare folios' 'cultural capital', but rather for the remarkable size of his personal library (an estimated 30,000 volumes). This close friend of George III was an obsessive book collector (the term 'bibliomania' was coined at the beginning of the following century to describe the practices of persons like him) and, towards the end of his life, he turned to early English plays and helped to make these volumes even more fashionable to collect and preserve.[103]

Clergymen Across the Religious Spectrum

While Shakespeare's works could be found in the libraries of many affluent members of the establishment, they also appealed to the clergy. A series of bishops, in particular, owned copies of the First Folio, proving that the church was certainly not averse to plays from the public theatre. A churchman by the name of John Cosin bought a copy *c.* 1630. At the

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[101] As for the folio, it could have been any of the four volumes.

[102] See Tom Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John (*bap.* 1609, *d.* 1641?)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26757.

[103] Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', p. 450-1. Brian Hillyard, 'Ker, John, third duke of Roxburghe (1740–1804)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15452.

Restoration, Cosin became Bishop of Durham and subsequently bequeathed the book 'to the clergy of his diocese in 1672'.[104] Another volume was probably the property of John Hacket, Bishop of Lichfield (1592-1670) and was passed down through generations of his descendants until the nineteenth century.[105] Of course, those churchmen were very much part of the establishment and they often operated in similar circles. Thus, Thomas Percy (1729-1811), writer, keen reader and Church of Ireland bishop of Dromore, who owned a First Folio,[106] visited artists and literary figures, such as David Garrick, Samuel Johnson, Elizabeth Montagu, and Joshua Reynolds (who painted his portrait), when he was in London.[107]

What is more surprising perhaps is the attraction that Shakespeare's works in print exerted on clergymen across the religious spectrum. One copy of the First Folio now in private hands, was acquired *c.* 1699 by the noted non-conformist Presbyterian minister, Dr. Daniel Williams (1643-1716) and was held by the Dr. Williams Library Trust until 2006.[108] Shakespeare's works were part of Catholic and, more specifically, of Jesuit culture too. The Folger Library's Fo. 1 no. 55 was no doubt owned or used at some point by Edward Scarisbrick (1639-1709), who inscribed his name in it. Scarisbrick was a Jesuit who assumed the name 'Nevill' in 1659 when he joined the Order.[109] After serving as a missionary, he was appointed royal preacher in 1687. A year later, at the outbreak of the revolution, he managed to escape to France. Scarisbrick had been educated at a Jesuit College in Saint-Omer, northern France, from 1653 to 1659. He taught humanities at the college from 1664 to 1670 and later returned as head of studies in 1675. The institution had a strong tradition of staging plays and two plays in the recently discovered Saint-Omer First Folio bear traces of theatrical use: *1 Henry IV*, probably during the second half of the seventeenth century, and *Henry V* in the course of the eighteenth century.[110] Further evidence that the Jesuits engaged with Shakespeare's plays is supplied by Martin Wiggins's suggestion that the Jesuit Francis Clarke (1619-1656) had used a copy of the First Folio to write his Latin tragedy *Innocentia Purpurata*, which he composed in Saint-Omer.[111] Jesuits at the nearby English College in Douai may also have owned a copy of Shakespeare's Second Folio. Indeed, their six transcripts of *Twelfth Night, As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth* (dated '1694/5 9° Martij') appear to be based at least partly on the text of the Second Folio.[112] Folger Fo. 2 no.7 was once the property of St. Alban's College (the English College), in Valladolid, Spain. This copy bears manuscript corrections to the text, marks of censorship (including the omission of *Measure for Measure)* and the seal of the Jesuit censor.[113] Catholics were no less eager to collect, preserve and use Shakespeare in print than members of other denominations. Copies also remained in their hands for extended lengths of time. A First Folio acquired by John Milner (1752-1826), Vicar Apostolic of Winchester and writer, remained at his death in a Roman Catholic clergy-house in Winchester until it was acquired by the first Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth, John Vertue (1826-1900).[114]

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[104] Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 25. This is Durham University Library's Cosin W.2.11, also West 7.

[105] FSL Fo.1 no.78. See also Rasmussen and West (eds.), *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 543.

[106] Ibid., p. 535.

[107] Roy Palmer, 'Percy, Thomas (1729–1811)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com /view/article/21959.

[108] Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 760-1.

[109] On Scarisbrick, see G. Holt, 'Scarisbrick , Edward (1639–1709)', *ODNB*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19931.

[110] Bibliothèque d'Agglomération de Saint-Omer, shelfmark inv. 2227. A digital facsimile can be consulted at: http://193.70.42.186/idurl/1/18140.

The evidence gathered here suggests that religion was not necessarily a barrier to purchasing and using Shakespeare's works in print. Individual readers, as well as religious communities were clearly able to make these works serve their specific needs. Moreover, in appropriating these books they fostered their circulation, made them available to their followers and ensured their preservation.

Members of the Middle Class

Nor should members of the middle class be overlooked in accounts of early owners. What is striking in this case is that, from the seventeenth century onwards, people holding radically different political views appreciated Shakespeare. For instance, Colonel John Hutchinson (1615-1664)—one of the signatories of King Charles I's death warrant—was most certainly the owner of a First Folio now held by the Folger Library (Fo. 1 no. 54). Hutchinson eventually died in Charles II's gaol at Sandown Castle. Conversely, the first owner of Folger Fo. 1 no. 13 was a royalist military officer, Colonel John Lane (1609-1667), 'who sheltered

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[111] M. Wiggins, 'Shakespeare Jesuited The Plagiarisms of "Pater Clarcus"', *The Seventeenth Century*, 20.1 (2005), p. 15.

[112] See chapter 4 for details.

[113] See Brian Cummings, 'Shakespeare and the Inquisition', *Shakespeare Survey* 62 (2012), pp. 307-22.

[114] Now ML MR1944. See Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 833.

King Charles II in his country house, Bentley Hall, during his flight after the Battle of Worcester in 1651'.[115] Recent research reveals that men of action and politicians of all sides owned copies of the First Folio. Two examples were Admiral Robert Blake *(bap.* 1598, *d.* 1657), who achieved a number of naval victories for Cromwell over the royalists in the English Civil War, and another admiral, Sir Eliab Harvey (1758-1830), who was also a Member of Parliament and was to command the HMS *Temeraire* at the Battle of Trafalgar.[116]

Many other middle class owners led less tumultuous lives. From the early days on, these buyers came from a multiplicity of professions, which again is testimony to the circulation of print Shakespeare throughout society. As we know, the first recorded buyer of a Shakespeare edition was a civil servant and commoner, Richard Stonley, who was a Teller of the Exchequer under Mary and Elizabeth and had a library of 'some 410 volumes' in his London residence.[117] Another commoner by the name of Edward Pudsey (*bap.* 1573, *d.* 1612/13) compiled a commonplace book around 1600, transcribing extracts from a large number of printed books, including seven Shakespearean playbooks, which he probably owned: *Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet*.[118]

Commoners with antiquarian interests were not unusual among the owners of Shakespeare's works. For example, Anthony Wood (1632–95) had a large library, of which 1,000 items could be classified as literature. More than half of these were ballads, but Wood's taste for ephemera extended to the theatre with twenty-one plays in his collection. He possessed three Shakespearean editions: *Venus and Adonis* (1630), the Benson edition of Shakespeare's *Poems* (1640) and a 1655 copy of *Othello.*[119] The record keeper Scipio Le Squyer (1579–1659) acquired nearly 500 printed books and over seventy works classified in his 1632 catalogue under 'Poesy'.[120] Among these were *Venus and Adonis, Romeo and Juliet*, and the 1609 edition of *Pericles*.[121] Le Squyer may have owned more Shakespeare plays, such as *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke* (1600), which he had bought but which was not listed.[122] Omissions, especially of ephemera, were not uncommon in early modern book lists.

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[115] Ibid., 307.

[116] Ibid., pp. 75 and 362.

[117] Nelson, '*Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles',* p. 61.

[118] Bod.L. MS Eng. poet.d.3 and (for four leaves) SBT MS. ER 82/1/21. See chapter 5 for details.

[119] Nicolas K. Kiessling, *The Library of Anthony Wood* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2002), pp. xxi-xxii and 544.

[120] Nigel Ramsay, revised by Vivienne Larminie, 'Le Squyer, Scipio (1579–1659)', in *OED*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37668.

[121] See F. Taylor, 'The Books and Manuscripts of Scipio Le Sqyer, Deputy Chamberlain of the Exchequer (1620-59)', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 25 (1941), pp. 137-64.

Similarly, a London notary public like Humphrey Dyson (*c.* 1582-1633) was able to assemble some 1,130 printed books, including sixteen plays, among which was a copy of the first issue of the 1609 edition of *Troilus and Cressida.*[123] In the same city, at about the same time, Thomas Johnson I (*d.* 1626), a merchant tailor, could seemingly afford a copy of the First Folio.[124] Men in the judicial professions were attracted to the same volume: Gilbert Spearman (1675-1738), barrister-at-law, John Ord (1729-1814), a lawyer at Lincoln's Inn, or the Middle Temple lawyer and legal writer Francis Const (1751-1839), were all First Folio owners.[125]

Medical professions were also well represented among owners of Shakespeare's works. A London apothecary of St Giles, Cripplegate, by the name of Elias Sutton (fl. 1690) was once the purchaser of the same volume. Richard Wright, MD *(c.* 1742-1786), fellow of the College of Physicians in 1775, collected rare books, including a First Folio.[126] The Folger Library's copy of *The ancient physician's legacy to his country* (1733) by John Dover is bound with 58 pages of manuscript notes dating back to the mid 1750s.[127] A doctor no doubt made the notes, which consist of many medical receipts, remedies and accounts of patients treated. Among these is 'A List of My Books' which mentions, among other titles, 'A Volume of Plays' and '9 Volumes of Shakespears plays' (pp. 104-5). Under 'Books not bound' are three Shakespearean plays: 'Macbeth', 'Hamlet Prince of Denmark' and 'King John' (p. 107). On the following page, under 'plays', the anonymous owner has listed another six playbooks:

> Romeo & Juliet
> Julius Caesar
> Othello Moor of Venice
> Henry 8th.
> Richard iii
> As you like it […]

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[122] See Nelson, '*Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles',* p. 64.

[123] Ibid., pp. 65-6.

[124] Ibid., p. 180.

[125] Ibid., pp. 215, 655, 387.

[126] Ibid., pp. 530, 577.

[127] FSL W.a.244.

Henry 4th. 2d. part

Whether in folio, quarto, or octavo formats, Shakespeare in print had clearly reached the early modern middle class. As in the case of the aristocracy and more generally of the English establishment, some editions could stay in families of commoners for several generations. A First Folio, which remained in the Manley family from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, is proof of the phenomenon.[128]

Theatre people

Theatre people were an obvious category of owners. Actors, playwrights and theatre managers naturally contributed to the circulation of Shakespeare in print, some more than others, of course. This process began very early in the period. Edward Alleyn (1566-1626), actor and theatrical entrepreneur, had a library of some 40 books and almost certainly purchased Shakespeare's *Sonnets* the year of their publication (1609).[129] Folger Fo. 1 no. 67 may have belonged to Elizabethan actor James Tonstall (*fl. c.* 1583-1619), who had been successively a member of the Worcester's Men and of the Admiral's Men in the late sixteenth century.[130] Dulwich College Library in London holds a copy which was in the ownership of another theatre person—William Cartwright (1606-86), who played for Queen Henrietta's Men and then joined Thomas Killigrew's new King's Company at the Restoration.[131] A First Folio now owned by Meisei Library (MR3600) was once the property of the theatrical manager Charles Killigrew (1655-1725), then of the Restoration playwright William Congreve (1670-1729), and after that of Henrietta Churchill Godolphin, second Duchess of Marlborough (1681-1733), with whom Congreve had had a lasting love affair.[132]

Eighteenth-century theatrical owners of early and later editions of Shakespeare include the playwright Thomas Southerne (1660–1746), actor and playwright David Garrick (1717-79), patron of the arts and librettist Charles Jennens (1700-73), actor and theatre manager Stephen George Kemble, (1758-1822) and playwright James Boaden (1762-1839). Among these men,

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[128] Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 774.

[129] Nelson, '*Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles',* p. 56.

[130] FSL Fo. 1 no. 67. Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 506.

[131] Ibid., p. 839.

[132] Ibid., p. 67. A. Gurr, 'Cartwright, William (1606-1686)', in *ODNB*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4824.

Jennens possessed a substantial collection of early Shakespearean plays, while Garrick was a bibliomaniac.[133] His dramatic library was unique and was bequeathed to the British Museum in 1779. The British Library currently holds 40 early Shakespearean quartos from Garrick's collection.[134]

Eighteenth-Century Editors

With the rise of the editor in the eighteenth century and the desire among the *literati* to see the Shakespearean text established on more secure ground, early editions of the dramatist and poet became more and more sought after.[135] All the great eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare possessed several, if not a large number, of these early printed texts. Of course, the task of editing Shakespeare attracted many people whose profession was not always directly related to the world of literature. For instance, Richard Warner (1713?-75), who owned all four seventeenth-century folios, had interleaved a copy of a Tonson 1734 edition of Shakespeare's works and at one time contemplated producing a new edition himself. Warner was a botanist, as well as a literary scholar.[136] So the urge to edit Shakespeare in both professional and amateur circles fostered the circulation of Shakespeare in print and in certain cases led again to the acquisition of vast collections. Perhaps the most prodigious collection of early playbooks and poems owned by an eighteenth-century Shakespeare editor was that of Edmond Malone (1741-1812). 770 volumes containing *c*. 3,000 items were presented to the Bodleian Library shortly after Malone's death.[137] In this collection were seven quarto volumes of early single-volume editions of Shakespeare.[138] These were working copies for Malone, but they were also meant for preservation. A feature of Malone's bound volumes was that all his quartos were entirely disbound and the leaves inlaid into paper mounts. The framing of the original pages was designed to allow him to annotate without marking the original. The practice may now seem very unorthodox—it was nevertheless the way in which a great many early editions remained extant.

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[133] Ruth Smith, 'Jennens, Charles (1700/01–1773)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14745 and Peter Thomson, 'Garrick, David (1717-1779)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10408. Southerne owned at least a Fourth Folio (FSL S2915 Fo.4 no.33) and Boaden a First Folio (Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 851). A 1773 edition of *Hamlet* has a provenance note indicating that it was bought by Kemble (see MU MR 1479).

[134] See www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html.

[135] See chapter 3 for details.

[136] G. S. Boulger, revised by D. J. Mabberley, 'Warner, Richard (1713? –1775)', in *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28765.

[137] L. W. Hanson, 'The Shakespeare collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Shakespeare Survey* 4 (1951), pp. 78-95, p. 81.

[138] Bod.L. Arch. G d.39.

Early Modern Women

While theatre people and Shakespeare editors were fairly obvious types of owners, early modern women go regularly unnoticed. Perhaps because their numbers are so low in general statistical surveys of literacy in that period, women have not often been associated with book collecting. Nonetheless, they too had personal libraries that could sometimes contain a large number of playbooks. We have already mentioned Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's substantial collection of early plays for the latter end of our period. What is not so well known is no doubt the fact that women assembled and used collections of Shakespeare's plays much earlier in the period. Some even had a prominent role in the history of print Shakespeare.

In the 1627 catalogue of her London library, which comprised more than two hundred titles, Frances Egerton (*née* Stanley), Countess of Bridgewater (1583-1636), had seven volumes of 'Diuers Playes' and an additional volume 'attributed to and with plays by Shakespeare'.[139] This volume, entitled 'Diuers Playes by Shakespeare' seemingly dates back to 1602. Despite the fact that the volume has not survived (its plays being disbound and partly dispersed), Lawrence Manley has been able to reconstruct it partially and argues that 'here, more than twenty years in advance of the First Folio, is a "complete" volume containing every one of Shakespeare's plays that were in print by 1602, with the exception of the bad quarto of *Henry V*. . . and the bad quarto of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*'.[140] Moreover, and as Lukas Erne has pointed out, Frances Egerton should go down in the history of Shakespeare's printed works as the first person to produce a bound collection of Shakespeare's works, before the 1619 Pavier Quartos (printed to form a nonce-collection) and before the First Folio itself.

Other seventeenth-century women could also compete with men, as far as the sheer size of their libraries was concerned. Frances Wolfreston (1607-77) had a collection of almost a thousand books, 48 per cent of them being in the field of literature. She owned ‘numerous plays’ (10 Shakespeare quartos in particular), as well as verse and storybooks, but no folios, as far as we know.[141] Elizabeth Puckering (1621/2?-89), however, did own a Second Folio. She also had a respectable collection of poetry and drama and as a girl had often frequented the London theatres. Puckering liked to mark her ownership with ‘Eliz’ or ‘EP’ in many of her books.[142] It is unusual to find *direct* testimonies of women reading Shakespeare in the seventeenth century. So Lady Anne Merrick’s (*fl.* 1638) letter of 21 January 1638 to one Mrs Lydall is especially precious and enlightening. Writing from her house near Silsoe in Bedfordshire, Merrick talks about her feelings of isolation: ‘howe lonelie and solitarie the countrie at this tyme is, soe tedious indeede to me’. She wishes she could be in London to see plays both old and new. Yet, for lack of such opportunities, she adds, ‘I must content my selfe here with the studie of Shackspeare, and the historie of woemen, all my countrie librarie’.[143] If the study of print Shakespeare is seen as a worthy but restrictive activity compared to the prospect of attending live theatre, the letter strongly suggests that Shakespeare’s works were available in print to some women, as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, even in a library which was clearly very limited.

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[139] This catalogue is now held by the Huntington Library, Ellesmere manuscript collection (EL 6495). See Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 202.

[140] Lawrence Manley, 'Shakespeare and the Countess of Bridgewater: Playing, Patronage, and the Biography of Books', Paper presented at the Shakespeare Association of America Conference, San Diego, April 2007, pp. 6-7.

Working class buyers

Like women, working class readers rarely appear in lists of buyers of Shakespeare’s plays. As we shall see later in this chapter, those on more modest incomes were more likely to borrow books, rather than purchase them. Nevertheless, books became increasingly available in smaller and cheaper formats and, as suggested earlier, those from poor backgrounds who had set their minds on learning to read could often count on semi-literate, or better educated people in their circle of family or friends to help them. Thomas Tyron (1634-1703), the son of a rural Oxfordshire plasterer, had begun to learn to read while herding sheep, with the help of some of his fellow shepherds. He perfected his reading skills later on in life, while he was apprenticed in London and could afford to purchase more books and pay for tuition.[144] Stephen Duck (1705-56) began as an agricultural labourer in Wiltshire. He then became acquainted with literature thanks to a friend who, while in service in London, had been able to buy a few dozen books. Among these books were seven of Shakespeare's plays, as well as works by Dryden, Virgil, Seneca, Ovid, or Milton, and copies of the *Spectator.* Duck managed to read those twice, but not without the help of a dictionary. He later went on to become a poet and those early literary models, as well as his experience as a labourer, infused his work.[145]

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[141] P. Morgan, ‘“Frances Wolfreston and ‘Hor Bouks”: A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector’, *The Library*, 6th Series, 11.3 (1989), 200; 203; 204; 207. On her collection and for evidence that she annotated plays, see Claire M. Bourne, ‘Marking Readers’, *Shakespeare* (2017), pp. 1-20; 8-9.

[142] David McKitterick, ‘Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering’, *The Library* 1.4 (2000), pp. 359-80; pp. 372, 374-7.

[143] *Calendar of State Papers*, Conway Papers, p. 142, cited in Sasha Roberts, ‘Engendering the Female Reader: Women’s Recreational Reading of Shakespeare in Early Modem England’, in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 36-54; p. 44.

International owners of Shakespeare

While print Shakespeare broke social and gender barriers, the dramatist's works began to circulate nationally and internationally. When not in London, aristocrats kept copies in their country seats, as we have seen. Other categories of people also contributed to the circulation of the books. Soon early editions of Shakespeare reached the Continent and beyond. The story of how Shakespeare's works were disseminated abroad would warrant a whole book. We shall therefore focus here on only a handful of early significant examples.

As mentioned, copies of Shakespeare's works reached France (Saint-Omer; Douai), and Spain (Valladolid) in the seventeenth century through the Jesuit networks of the Counter-Reformation, which maintained English Colleges and libraries furnished with English books, including vernacular playwrights.

Moreover, Folger Fo. 1 no. 75 was owned by a seventeenth-century Dutch poet and diplomat by the name of Constantine Huygens (1596-1687), who signed his name in it as 'Constanter'. Huygens went on two diplomatic missions to England: the first in 1618 and the second from December 1621 to 1st March 1623, but since the printing of the First Folio was probably completed in November 1623, it is more likely that Huygens acquired the book in The Hague, possibly 'from an English bookseller who had escaped to Holland during the

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[144] Giles Mandelbrote, 'Personal owners of books', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640–1850*, pp. 173-89; p. 178.

[145] M. Spufford, 'First steps in literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographers', *Social History* 4 (1979), pp. 407-35; p. 424-5. John Taylor, London waterman and poet, may have read, if not owned, at least four Shakespearean plays, as the quotations and allusions he made to these works attest. See Wheale, *Writing and Society*, p. 104.

English Civil War'. Rasmussen and West point out that 'this volume is the first known copy to have left England'.[146] The first copy of a First Folio to reach American soil was possibly that belonging to Thomas Hawkins (1617-1677). Hawkins emigrated from England and settled in Essex County, Virginia.[147]

Early Lenders and Borrowers of Shakespeare

It should be clear by now that the number and extent of personal collections, which was in constant flux over two centuries, created opportunities for people to access Shakespeare's works, particularly for those who otherwise may not have been able to purchase a great many editions. As we shall see, the practice of donating, lending and borrowing books was well in place from the beginning of the period and continued throughout. Before looking at a few examples of Shakespearean editions which were donated, lent or borrowed during that period, it is necessary to comprehend the significant changes which occurred in the world of libraries over two centuries. The history of libraries is beyond the scope of this book, so all that can be offered here is an outline.

At the beginning of our period, ordinary people read and borrowed books primarily within small circles of friends or family. They could also borrow from other modest collections, such as those maintained informally by barbers and tobacconists, or, later in the period, by coffee-houses.[148] Booksellers played their part too. Their network was spread across the provinces and they also ran a profitable second-hand trade, thus usurping 'what we would now see as the functions of libraries'.[149] Public libraries managed by municipal authorities or privately run by a board of trustees were founded relatively early in the period: Newcastle (1597), Norwich (1608), Ipswich (1612), Bristol (1615), King's Lynn and Colchester (1631), Leicester (1632),

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[146] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. 'Constantijn Huygens', www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/277799/Constantijn-Huygens. See also A. Leerintveld, 'Ex libris 'Constater' Boeken uit de bibliotheek van Constantijn Huygens', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis,* 16 (2009), 151-76 and Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 531.

[147] Rasmussen and West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 446.

[148] Joanna Innes, 'Libraries in context: social, cultural and intellectual background', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640-1850,* pp. 285-300; p. 290.

[149] Clare Sargent, 'The early modern library (to *c.* 1640)', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume I To 1640,* pp. 51-65; pp. 52-3.

Wisbech (1654), Barnstaple (1664), Bedford (1700), to name but a few.[150] Yet it was not until the eighteenth century that these and other forms of libraries began to play an important role. In fact, and although this was of course a gradual process, book historians regard the 1750s as a significant period.[151] This was when books really moved into the 'public arena' and when a whole array of public libraries and institutions considerably diversified possibilities of access to Shakespeare's plays and poems. It was a time when alongside the developing public and parish libraries, other successful institutions appeared: book clubs (between 600 and 2,000 in the Georgian age), subscription libraries, commercial lending libraries, or circulating libraries.[152]

Thus, while access to Shakespeare's works in print was primarily through private ownership and the lending and borrowing of books often remained limited to comparatively small and informal circles at the outset of our period, the development in the eighteenth century of an 'associational world', encompassing a great number of individuals of both genders and of various social classes and localities, was a decisive factor, as far as the dissemination of books and literature was concerned.[153] These evolutions are reflected in a number of Shakespearean case studies which we shall now examine before closing this chapter.

Print Shakespeare could be acquired through donations, lending or borrowing. Wills, private records and library inventories are the usual testimonies of the incessant traffic of books across the generations. A Shakespeare edition could be inherited, and could also be a conscious gift from one living person to another, or to a community. Two examples of early gifts of Shakespeare's First Folio are quite famous. Augustine Vincent (*c.* 1584-1626), a heraldic officer and the author of a work (*A Discoverie of Errours*), which had been printed on the same press and at the same time as the First Folio, received a copy of Shakespeare's works from the printer himself, William Jaggard.[154] The Donors' Book of the Vicars Choral

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[150] Michael Powell, 'Endowed libraries for towns', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640-1850*, pp. 83-101; pp. 83-5.

[151] Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley, 'Introduction: the changing world of libraries—from cloister to hearth', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640-1850*, pp. 1-6; pp. 2 and 4.

[152] Ibid, pp. 3-4; David Allan, *Libraries in Georgian England* (London: The British Library, 2008), pp. 15, 16, 26, 64, 119 and passim.

[153] Ibid., p. 14. Wheale speaks of a '"weaving" of text into culture' (*Writing and Society*, p. 91).

[154] On one of its opening pages, FSL Fo. 1 no. 1 bears an inscription by Vincent dating from the year the Folio was printed: 'Ex Dono Willi Jaggard Typographi. ao. 1623'.

Library at Hereford Cathedral also records an early gift made in 1622 by the mayor of Hereford, Philip Traherne, who was the uncle of the poet and writer Thomas Traherne (*c*. 1637–74).[155]

That buyers could be lenders was nothing really new, even in the sixteenth century. Before buying Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, Richard Stonley had apparently been in the habit of lending books within his family circle. An entry in his diary made on 4 March 1581 indicates his desire to give his grandson books that he had previously lent.[156]

The inside of the back cover of Folger Fo. 1 no. 73 bears the following inscription: 'Lent a gontlema = [sic]... [amount effaced] opon [sic] this Book. for. three Weeks. July. 18: [i.e. 17] 84:'. In this case, its owner, either a private individual, or, more likely, a bookseller, lent the folio for a fee. Others appear to have been more generous with their collections. Reverend John Bowle (1725-88), who was a vicar in the village parish of Idmiston (near Salisbury), was a scholar-cleric who made contributions to various literary works, including Steevens's edition of Shakespeare. Bowle loaned some 200 books from his private library between 1750 and 1785. Among these loans were 'various editions of Shakespeare'.[157] As we have witnessed, it was common practice among bibliophiles and Shakespearean editors to consult each other's libraries. The diaries of literary editor and book collector Isaac Reed (1742-1807) not only confirm this, but are also indicative of the wealth and variety of libraries at the disposal of Shakespearean editors, or simply of people who wished to consult Shakespearean editions, in the second half of the eighteenth century.[158]

More modest readers recorded the Shakespeare editions they borrowed from far less prestigious libraries. This is the case of a late eighteenth-century anonymous diarist who read an impressive number of Shakespeare plays over a short period of time—26 July to 28 August 1799. Interestingly, the plays were borrowed from his chapel library and he himself appears to have been a religious dissenter. In passing, this shows once more the extent of Shakespeare's availability in print by the end of the eighteenth century—his works being somewhat unexpectedly present in (some) provincial chapel libraries. In just over a month, the diarist, beginning on 26 July ('I have read The Tempest, & the two Gentlemen of Verona in this 1st vol. of Shakespeare'),[159] claims to have read a total of eleven plays, including a majority of comedies, with the addition of *Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth.* This was not only active, but also informed reading, the diarist adding short critical comments for many of the plays he consulted.[160]

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[155] West, *The Shakespeare First Folio, The History of the Book*, p. 6.

[156] FSL MS V.a.459, f. 50r.

[157] Graham Best, 'Libraries in the parish', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume II 1640-1850*, pp. 324-44; p. 336. For the catalogue of these loans, see BL Add. MS 30374, ff. 78v-81v.

[158] See Diaries of Isaac Reed, FSL MS. M.a.24, pagination: 'F' and Isaac Reed, *Diaries, 1762-1804*, ed. Claude E. Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), esp. pp. 118 and 207.

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This chapter has established the demographics of Shakespeare's reading public. The conjoined forces of book collecting, book production, circulation, as well as the various shades of early modern literacy made for an uneven but distinct presence of Shakespeare in print. His circulation in print was, of course, dependent on other factors, which will be the subject of the rest of this study. Shakespeare's works were appropriated by their readers because they continued to live on the stage and because Shakespeare's language, increasingly seen as the language of the nation, had not only to be edited and 'perfected', but also collected for further use. Early editions of Shakespeare's works, as well as eighteenth-century editions became familiar to a larger portion of the population and in some cases they informed their lives. All of these evolutions were never linear processes—they were also dependent on theatrical revivals and were closely tied to the complex reshaping of the literary canon which took place during the early modern period, when Shakespeare and other authors became useful instruments in establishing the tastes of a 'polite' society, which began to picture itself as 'a nation of readers'. Indeed, around 1773, it was possible for Richard Graves to have one of his characters comment on these changes humorously: 'people are more *cute* and *cleverer* now-a-days, than they were formerly. Why there is our George, the Butler, can read a play, or a sermon, better than our Curate'.[161] Ultimately, many of these transformations depended on engaged readers—those we have begun to highlight in this chapter and whose actions effected cultural shifts. We shall now endeavour to track down these movements, primarily through the material traces which these readers left in books and manuscripts of the period.

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[159] Diary of a Sheffield dissenter, FSL MS. M.a.4, p. 5.

[160] See chapter 6 for details of his tastes.

[161] Mrs Molly speaks this in Richard Graves's novel *The spiritual Quixote: or, the summer's ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose. A comic romance*, 3 vols. (London: printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1773), vol. 3, p. 134. ESTC: T072189.

Chapter 2

Life in the Archives:
Shaping Early Modern Selfhood

One answer to the question of why Shakespeare has become so important to us today lies in the largely untold story of how, since the sixteenth century, thousands of living, breathing readers have used Shakespeare's text to talk about themselves and to make sense of their lives. While the advent of Shakespeare as a major literary figure may have been related to nationalistic or institutional agendas, the work of individuals was also of significant importance in his rise to fame.

Often overshadowed because of the understandable aura of the stage, the non-linear, circuitous narrative of how, in fashioning Shakespeare, these individuals fashioned themselves and their lives, needs to be recounted. As social historians of the book have pointed out, books have 'life cycles', 'biographies' and their meaning as artefacts is intimately connected to the 'trajectories' they are made to take. These journeys through time and space lend 'social lives' to books.[162] As readers gradually gained access to Shakespeare's editions in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their awareness that the book is not only a material but also intellectual and symbolic entity ever in the process of becoming, helped them in fact to come to terms with their own sense of being caught in the flux of time.[163]

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[162] See Robert Darnton, 'What Is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111.3 (1982), pp. 65-83; p. 67; Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3-63; p. 5; Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 64-94; p. 67. William H. Sherman, 'The Social Life of Books', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 164-171; p. 166 et passim.

[163] As Juliet Fleming has cogently put it, 'The book is a thing that differs from itself, at all the moments of its production, and at all the moments of its consumption' (Juliet Fleming, 'Afterword', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010), pp. 543-52; p. 552).

For these readers, annotators and extractors, 'the edge of the page did not mark a boundary between verse and life, but a place where connections between them were vividly portrayed', as Adam Smyth cogently put it.[164] The traces left by early modern readers make it difficult for us to hold on to disembodied postmodern visions of Shakespeare's text, floating in a decontextualized and dematerialized ideological vacuum. However fragmentary, such traces point to the interpenetration of the sensible and of the mental, of the material and the intellectual, of the physical and the symbolic. They place Shakespeare's works in a world where 'sensible life is lived as it is thought' and where the early modern self is not unified, but 'a fascinating composite, shifting between the spiritual and the mundane … the pressure of "immortal longings" and the secular concerns of everyday endurance'.[165]

Early material incarnations of Shakespeare's text interacted with and were transformed through their contact with their readers' universe of mundane objects and social relations, as they could also bear the imprints of these individuals' desires, fears and frustrations. Our definitions of selfhood actually need to be more inclusive as 'a human being's world of meaning extends well beyond their empirical self, to objects, things and other people in their environment'.[166] Indeed, the idea of an 'extended self' is not a pure invention of contemporary literary criticism. It was also a sentiment that could be familiar to early modern individuals. Thus, the seventeenth-century English poet Thomas Traherne wrote: 'A secret self I had enclosed within, / That was not bounded with my clothes or skin'.[167]

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[164] Adam Smyth, *'Profit and Delight': Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640-1682* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), p. 44.

[165] Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 145. Philippa Kelly, Lloyd Davis, and Ronald Bedford, 'Introduction', in *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices*, ed. Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, Philippa Kelly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 2. I am aware of the dangers of applying terms such as 'self', 'selfhood' or 'individual' to the early modern period. The modern self did not emerge as if by miracle in the Renaissance and for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the term 'individual' continued to be construed as '*that which cannot be divided without ceasing to be what it is*', as Kelly, Davis and Bedford remind us usefully (ibid.). Nevertheless, it would be foolish to deny that our early modern ancestors did not have a consciousness of self or subjectivity. My aim is to broaden our understanding of the contexts in which early modern readers encountered Shakespeare's texts and to look at how this encounter may have *shaped* these readers' lives (hence my title). While in the course of this study I will be venturing some remarks on the construction of early modern selfhood, I will not be directly concerned with the history of individualism. This history is too multidimensional to be treated in the space of a single chapter. On these methodological issues, see also: Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 14 and 18 and Elizabeth Heale, 'Songs, Sonnets and Autobiography: Self-representation in Sixteenth-century Verse Miscellanies', in *Betraying our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway and Helen Wilcox (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 59-75; p. 59.

In this chapter, I shall first try to map out the broad aspects of the material world of readers, showing how mundane and textual objects circulate and coalesce with traces of human activity. Then, I shall look at how graffiti in early editions of Shakespeare can have a monumentalizing effect on the work, but can also empower readers' selves. Building on these discussions, I will offer a detailed examination of the intimate transactions between selfhood, the Shakespearean text and the world. This will lead me to study social networks, but also readers' use of numerical symbols in their editions and their relation to dates and time. The last two sections will endeavour to give some account of the impact of Shakespeare on these early modern readers' daily lives. While critics have often read Shakespeare to construct abstract theories of early modern selfhood, this chapter will focus on *concrete* encounters between early modern readers and his texts, revealing the importance of Shakespeare for the many individuals of the period who used his books to pursue existential quests.

Mapping the Material World of Shakespeare's Early Modern Readers

The careful reverence in which we hold early modern books and manuscripts is indispensable to the work of conservation but tends to make us less conscious of these documents' intimate lives. If we wish to have some idea of how early modern individuals lived with their books and with Shakespeare's printed works in particular, we need to have a more integrated vision of the circulation of textual and physical objects within a universe oscillating between the sensory, the intellectual or the symbolic.

Usually unnoticed or disregarded, marks of human activity in early editions of Shakespeare are as numerous as they are revealing of the parallel lives led by books and their producers and owners. In Folger Library Folio 4, no. 33, traces of a compositor's hair—which had fallen on the press as the book was in print—are still visible on the page bearing 'The Names of the principal *Actors*' and the 'Catalogue' of plays. While in Folger Folio 1 no. 63—a much annotated copy, which also bears traces of red candle wax—a rusty mark left by a pair of scissors can be seen on a page of *King Lear* (p. 298, rr3v).[168] The object was perhaps at some point left in the book by the binder who assembled the volume or a reader may have used it as a bookmark.

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[166] Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 145.

[167] Thomas Traherne, *The Poetical Works*, ed. Bertram Dobell (London: published by the editor 1906), p. 51.

Equally ambivalent is a pin found and carefully preserved in the gutter of two pages of *3 Henry VI* in Folger Fo. 2 no. 10 (pp. 158-9, q4v-q5r). Pins were commonly used in the binding of books, but they were sometimes employed by readers to mark pages. Other everyday objects easily available in domestic surroundings also appear to have been used by readers as they progressed through their Shakespeare: a key, which was probably used as a bookmark, has produced a rusty mirror image on two pages of *Romeo and Juliet* in Folger Fo. 1 no. 78 (pp. 56-7, cc4v-cc5r). Likewise, the imprint of a pair of spectacles is still visible on a page of *Macbeth* (p. 49, Eee1r) in Folger Fo. 4 no. 5. Large rings on the same page indicate that this was also a place where cups or glasses may have been left. In Folger Fo. 2 no. 48 a large purplish-red stain on a page of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* looks very much like spilt Claret wine (p. 57, D6r).[169] These traces indicate that reading Shakespeare—far from being solely an intellectual activity—was associated with physical pleasures such as drinking or sometimes smoking. Small burns are quite frequent in early Shakespeare editions and are likely to have been caused by sparks coming from a hearth or by someone smoking with the book in their hand. In his 1793 edition of Shakespeare, George Steevens commented humorously about the First Folio in particular that 'It should seem that most of his readers were so chary of their time, that … they fed and studied at the same instant'.[170]

Likewise, small personal objects find themselves accidentally trapped inside editions, such as the button that was found (and later preserved) between scenes 2 and 3 of Act 2 of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in Folger Fo.2 no.22 (pp. 46-7, D5v-D6r). Conversely, some readers make a point of representing objects pertaining to the outside world within the covers of their Shakespeare editions. On the second flyleaf of a volume of Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works, one of the book's owners has made very skilful drawings of a series of tools: a pen knife, pins, scissors, a pencil and a pair of tweezers.[171]

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[168] This is also mentioned and illustrated in Peter Blayney, *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Library Publications, 1991), pp. 32-3.

[169] Confirmed by Frank Mowery, Head of Conservation, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., personal correspondence, 19 November 2010.

[170] *The plays of William Shakspeare. In fifteen volumes. With the corrections and illustrations of various commentators. To which are added, notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens* (London: printed [by H. Baldwin] for T. Longman et al., 1793), vol. 1, p. 446. ESTC: T033036. See also Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 304.

Just as personal objects migrated into early books, poetry and literature could be transmediated and transformed into objects. But after sojourning in the world of everyday objects and participating in an economy of human exchange and of social relations, the extracts could also go back to the world of books. In her study of the Elizabethan 'Posy', 'a short and portable epigram' lifted from works of literature, Elizabeth Fleming cites numerous instances of short literary extracts being carved on trees, inscribed on rings or bracelets, or embroidered onto clothes and then occasionally copied back into books.[172] Such processes encourage us to rethink our view of the place of literature in early modern individuals' lives. From the outset, Shakespeare's texts acquired new meaning through their transmediation and the material world affected the activity of reading his works—the sensory, the intellectual and the symbolic often blended, as the traces and objects we have examined indicate. The physical *and* intellectual dimensions of reading anchored Shakespeare existentially.

Graffiti as Self-Fashioning: Monumentalizing Shakespeare and Empowering the Self

Some inscriptions found in Shakespeare's early editions, as well as in other books of the period, appear unconnected to the subject matter of the work itself. Often looked upon as desecrating for books, none the less in most cases such graffiti celebrate the work and the author of the inscriptions at the same time. It is common to find parts of the preliminary epistles in honour of Shakespeare copied out by readers in the opening pages of the folios (as in Folger Fo. 1 no. 28 for instance). What can be regarded as penmanship exercises or pen trials, may be seen either as attempts at self-expression sparked by Shakespeare's work, or as confident assertions by extremely literate individuals of their mastery of the written medium.[173]

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[171] These surround a canon with a crest. See: *The works of Mr. William Shakespear: in six volumes: adorn'd with cuts / revis'd and corrected, with an account of the life and writings of the author, by N. Rowe, Esq.* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1709), vol. 5, second flyleaf recto, FSL PR2752 1709a Copy 1 Sh.Col. Other drawings in this volume include a sailing ship seemingly with an English flag on first flyleaf recto and fish, birds or strange creatures on third flyleaf recto.

[172] Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England*, pp. 42-3.

[173] On this point, see Jason Scott-Warren, 'Reading Graffiti in the Early Modern Book', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010), pp. 363-81; p. 368.

In Folger Fo. 1 no. 32, on the page bearing Hugh Holland's epitaph 'Vpon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenicke Poet, Master William Shakespeare', one late seventeenth century reader has made an incomplete attempt at self-expression, which may also have been a tongue-in-cheek joke or a pen trial:

margarit by is my name and
with my peen I wright this same
and if my pee*n* hade ben better
i sholld[174]

In Folger Fo.1 no.28, an eighteenth-century reader has inscribed on the verso of the Hugh Holland epistle more confident lines, which are as much about self-expression as they are about praise of Shakespeare: 'For by instinct I find / Thou art one of *th*e kind / Thou art one of *th*e kin'.[175] On the recto of the page containing the epistle, the same hand has inscribed Shakespeare's name several times.

In some heavily marked early editions, readers seem to compete in their claims of ownership of the book and for their right to inscribe their names against Shakespeare's. This is very much the case of Folger Fo. 2 no. 32, in which a series of eighteenth-century readers have left traces. The names 'William Shakespear' 'Iames Wightwick' appear together and upside down in a bottom margin of *Cymbeline* (p. 414, ddd1v). Page 38 of *Coriolanus* bears the inscription 'Anne Clarke her hand and book the lord of heaven upon her' (dd1v). Other hands have been there too: 'Patrick Coogan his hand' on a page of *King Lear* (p. 321; tt3r). In Folger Fo.1 no.54., a late seventeenth-century reader by the name of Olivea Cotton has signed her name above Leonard Digges's epitaph to Shakespeare: 'To the Memorie of the Deceased Author Maister W. Shakespeare'.[176]

Some readers even attempt to take over not only the physical but also the symbolic space of the book with their self-affirmations. George St George covers the entire inside margin of a page of *Hamlet* with 'George St george his book and god convert him I am y*ou*r humble Servant to command' (Folger Fo.2 no.49; p. 281; qq1r). On the closing page of *Antony and*

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[174] 'and if my Pen had been beter I had made | a pretie Leter' wrote one 'John Jones' similarly in a 1609 edition of *Pericles* (sigs. I1v and I2r; eighteenth-century hand, SBT SR35.26 (3189)).

[175] This may have been a quotation taken from Thomas d'Urfey's *The Richmond heiress, or, A woman once in the right* (London, 1693), sig. A4. Wing D2769. The line is part of a song in Act 2 of the play: 'For by Instinct, I find, thou art one of the kind'.

[176] For other examples, see John Lister's signatures in FSL Fo.1 no.70, or Joseph Batailhey's in FSL Fo.1 no.76.

Cleopatra (p. 388, aaa6v), he writes 'Georg[e] St georg[e] is a rouge [*i.e.* rogue] / and owns *thi*s booke. / Per me Scripta Georgius St. george / november the 25—Anno domini—1711'. Situating the self in time, this inscription is a somewhat transgressive affirmation of status too. Even more mischievous is this note, possibly directed at other readers, left on the the last page of *Hamlet* (sig. qq1v) in a First Folio that belonged to Dr Williams's Library in London: 'But I desier the readerers mougth to kis the wrighteres arse'.[177]

In the case of the Shakespeare folios, the books' physical size combined with their prestige as cultural objects and expensive commercial items can lead to extravagant expressions of the self. For instance, in Folger Fo.3 no.8, the blank page after *Twelfth Night*, facing the opening leaf of *The Winter's Tale*, is entirely covered with the inscription 'John Barnes His Book 1762' drawn in ink, with decorative dots (p. 275, Z6r). Some owners defended their books as if the object were part and parcel of themselves. A seventeenth-century reader by the name of William Joyse wrote this warning across the margin of a page in his copy of *Bel-vedére or the garden of the Muses* (1610): 'I will rite my name for to betray Hee who steales / my booke away: will: Joyse his booke'.[178]

As more and more women gained access to Shakespeare's editions there is clear evidence that some of these female readers wished to make a stand. This is very much the case in the opening pages of FSL Fo. 1 no. 23, as well as in the volume itself. The book contains several striking examples of female ownership. Mary Child, a mid-seventeenth-century annotator inscribed her name on different pages. On the last page of *Romeo and Juliet*, she stated firmly her right to the book: 'Mary Child is the true posseseor of this booke' (sig. Gg1r). Elizabeth Brocket (*fl*. 1695-1712), whose husband's bookplate appears at the beginning of the same volume, made the same strong ownership claims. While her husband (William Brocket (1717-91)) had no doubt purchased the volume, she appears to have been the only one to truly engage with it. Elizabeth Brockett signed her name on three different dates (1695, 1702, 1712) on the page opposite her husband's bookplate (sixth front flyleaf recto), thus constantly reinstating her claim to and interest in the book. The phrase 'Elizabeth Brockett Her Book' is traced in large characters several times on the same page as well.

Even more revealing of Brockett's determination to appropriate the Folio as a female reader is a twenty-four line poem—Lady Mary Chudleigh's 'To the ladies', which appeared in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703).[179] The transcription (which differs slightly from the printed version) appears before the folio's paratext and occupies almost the whole of the verso of the fourth front flyleaf. The opposite page is blank, apart from Elizabeth Brockett's very large calligraphed signature. The manuscript lines begin with 'Wife and Servant are the same, / And only differ in the Name'. They go on to emphasize the difficulty for a woman to express herself: 'Like Mutes alone she Signs must make / And never any Freedom take. / But still be govern'd by a Nod'. The poem ends on lines that lend a noticeably militant and even polemic tone to the volume's preliminaries:

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[177] The Folio is now in private hands in the U.S.

[178] [John Bodenham, ed.], *Bel-vedére or the garden of the Muses* (Printed at London: By E[dward] A[llde] for Iohn Tap, and are to be sold at his shop at Saint Magnus corner, 1610), p. 57; Folger Library STC 3190 copy 2. The warning is repeated on p. 191 and on sig. Q4v.

> Shun, O shun, that wretched State,
> And all the fawning Flatterer's Hate.
> Value you selves [sic] and Men dispise,
> You must be proud if you'd be wise. (Figure2)

[INSERT: Transcription of Mary Chudleigh's poem 'To the Ladies', Folger Fo. 1 no. 23, verso of fourth front flyleaf. By permission of the Folger Library.]

It is obvious that 'owning' a First Folio by annotating it in this fashion could be for an early woman, such as Elizabeth Brockett, a statement of intellectual independence and freedom in a volume bought by a man.

Many of the inscriptions we have examined can be seen as traces of the way in which culture operates as a cycle. Indeed, the Shakespeare folios in particular create their own sense of prestige through their format and the manner in which their paratextual material has been configured. To write in such a book is for many early modern individuals a source of prestige and is in some regards empowering.[180] But such writing—often self-consciously ostentatious—inevitably adds further prestige to the book and is a conscious or subconscious message to other potential readers. In a number of folios, individuals celebrate Shakespeare and simultaneously make a show of their own intellectual confidence gained by their ownership of the book. On the third flyleaf of Fo.1 no.45, 'The incomparable Shakespear' and the dramatist's last name are elegantly calligraphed across the page in an eighteenth-century hand. Just under these inscriptions, the words 'Knowledge & wisdom' appear. A reader again celebrates what he or she considers to be the intellectually empowering value of

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[179] Mary Chudleigh, *Poems on several occasions. Together with the song of the three children paraphras'd* (London: Printed by W.B. for Bernard Lintott, 1703), p. 40. ESTC: T097275.

[180] As Margreta De Grazia notes, 'what *one* is depends on what one *owns*' ('The ideology of superfluous things: *King Lear* as period piece', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margreta De Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 17-42; p. 34).

Shakespeare's works in Folger Fo. 3 No. 8. On a page of *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 664, Kkk5v) the word 'Knowing' has been calligraphed and the almost Cartesian and partly existential phrase 'Knowing so I am' appears on a page of *Macbeth* (p. 712, Ooo4v).

Intimate Transactions: the Self, the Book and the World

Clearly, some of the graffiti in early Shakespeare editions could be considered to be forms of life-writing. This can be the case of drawings depicting houses and the home. Among the various types of drawings found in early books, representations of houses are in fact not uncommon. The preliminaries of Fo. 1 no. 78 contain a number of juvenile ink drawings (Figure 3).

[INSERT Ink drawings in Fo. 1 no 78, preliminaries. By permission of the Folger Library.]

The proximity of the signature 'Elizabeth Okell her Book 1729' to the drawings suggests that she may have been at least one of the authors of these drawings. These could be adult primitive drawings, but because of their subject, they are just as likely to be the product of a child painting his or her most familiar universe—the house. Captured on these pages are perhaps moments when a young person is trying to come to terms with the world around her, both with her domestic surroundings (hence the drawing of the inside of the house) but also with the place of her home within a larger universe (hence perhaps the outside view of the home in the second set of drawings).[181]

In Folger Fo.2 no.49 someone has drawn a house in pencil on the title page of *The Merchant of Venice* (p. 163, O4r). Other readers go even further, as in this copy of Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare where someone has drawn a house on the first flyleaf and has added a floor map next to it with the names of three rooms written in a late eighteenth-century hand: 'Drawing Room', 'Study', 'Parlour'.[182]

Thus, the space of the book is 'domesticated' in the etymological sense of the word. While representations of domestic or familiar surroundings migrate into books, local readings of Shakespeare's text constitute other forms of 'domestication' and appropriation. Local readings 'domesticate' the text by giving it familiar spatial coordinates. Associations between the self, the book and the world can help individuals feel more grounded—they enable

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[181] The drawings appear on three pages of the preliminaries: near the Hugh Holland epistle, close to the Leonard Digges epitaph and on the page bearing 'The Names of the Principall Actors in all these Playes'. In FSL Fo.2 no.49, a small house is also drawn in pencil on the opening page of *Merchant of Venice* (p. 163, O4r).

[182] FLS PR2752 1709c copy 1.

Shakespeare's readers to establish their sense of space and their awareness of belonging to a community.

One late eighteenth-century Sheffield diarist records his readings of several of Shakespeare's plays. In the course of his diary he also mentions his passion for memorabilia on Sheffield. This prompts him to interpret the passage in which Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice* speaks of 'a hoop of gold, a paltry ring / That she did give me, whose poesy was / For all the world like cutlers' poetry / Upon a knife'[183] in relation to his much beloved city: 'Aug 14 [1799]: Finished the Merchant of Venice. Do not recollect to have ever seen the following lines before; they might be very well introduced in an account of Sheffield, to which purpose I never have seen them applied'.[184]

As the previous examples have shown, early books operate as transitional objects, which are necessarily intimately tied to individuals' lives. They act as spaces of transaction between the self and the world, as 'not-me-possessions', to borrow a term from psychologist Donald Winnicott. However, in addition to this, they are objects of transaction and exchange between human beings.[185]

Book Provenance and Social Networks

Books are part of social networks and the social value of a book increases its symbolic and intellectual value. Such relations, or 'trajectories', are often made explicit and public in the private but open space of the book. Some inscriptions point to imagined or potential journeys of the book from one individual to the other.

Often, the suggestion (whether it materialized or not) is that the book can work as an extension of the self and also as an emotional link between human beings. That Shakespeare editions could operate as symbolic and material gifts is implicit in the paratexts of all four seventeenth-century folio editions of Shakespeare's works.[186] These paratexts may in turn have encouraged others to perpetuate or reactivate the books' potential for social exchange. The last page of *The Taming of the Shrew* in a first folio held by the Library of Congress contains a presentation note written in a hand which appears almost contemporary to the publication of the volume:

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[183] *The Merchant of Venice,* 5.1.147-50.

[184] Diary of a Sheffield dissenter, FSL MS M.a.4, p. 15. The passage is copied out by him thus: '…whose poesy was / For all the world, like cutler's poetry / Upon a knife, Love me & leave me not. (ibid.)'.

[185] Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (repr. London: Routledge, 2009 [1971]), pp. 2-3; 7 and 18. On Winnicott's 'not-me possessions' and their relation to the reading process, see Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou Le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), p. 20.

[186] Take for instance John Heminges' and Henry Condell's dedication to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery: 'by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage' (William Shakespeare, *Mr. William*

> To the Right ^honorable^ Robert viscounte
> Cholmondeleighte of kelles, and the ladie
> Keatrin Cholmley his wife god send them soone
> a sonne eare [heir] Amen Amen say I ffinis
> Mr Robert Shackerley
> Arthure Manninge[187]

Interestingly, the word 'Finis', which is printed at the end of the play, is repeated here in the dedication as if the latter was a further conclusion and was tied to the text. The dedication appears to indicate that the book could have served as a gift with a performative potential. If writing one's name in a book can be empowering, as we have seen previously, it can be an attempt to invent or indeed construct relations with others. In this way, 'the history of thinking and writing about the self is also the history of relationships to others'.[188] On the pages of early books, readers leave traces not only of their domestic surroundings but also of family relations or transactions.

Beyond the monetary value of books, there is a sense in some instances that the book is representative not only of a material but also of a spiritual and affective legacy. Edward Pudsey (bap. 1573, d. 1612/13), the author of one of the largest early seventeenth-century commonplace books, which includes extracts of several of Shakespeare's plays,[189] made a specific mention of his books *and* notebooks. At his death, they were supposed to be passed on to his son, young Edward Pudsey: 'that all my books bee safe kept for him, especially my note books'.[190]

Shakespeares comedies, histories & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies [London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623], sig. A2v. STC: 22273).

[187] Ibid., sig. V1r. Library of Congress, PR2751.A1 1623 Batchelder Coll: fol. Copy 1.

[188] Meredith Skura, *Tudor Autobiography: Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 227.

[189] See Chapter 5.

[190] Edward Pudsey's son had not 'accomplished the age of nyneteen years' when the will was drawn in 1609. See Juliet Mary Gowan, *An Edition of Edward Pudsey's Commonplace Book (c. 1600-1615) from the Manuscript in the Bodleian Library* (University of London, M.Phil., 1967), p. 18. On Pudsey, see: David Kathman, 'Pudsey, Edward (bap. 1573, d. 1612/13),' in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison

Like other early modern books, Shakespeare editions are objects which are transmitted *from hand to hand* and thus inevitably create a sense of connection between generations. Indeed, as objects books are ‘culturally powerful because in practice they connect physical and mental manipulation’.[191] This allows readers to comment self-consciously on these relations as they themselves wrestle with the question of their own existential presence.

Thus, many Shakespearean early books embody what individuals would like to give both materially and figuratively to a next of kin. Some notes are written in grateful recognition of family ties, the book received by the annotator serving as visual and material proof of those ties, connections and exchanges: ‘Sarah Wharmey [?] her book giuen her by her brother jonathan [sic]’ in a 1600 quarto of *The Merchant of Venice*, or ‘Eliz: Younge Her Book given by my Grandmother Batthurst’ in a book of plays which contains Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*.[192] Some readers are far more self-conscious about their sense of generational belonging and their statements are construed as addresses to an imaginary audience, to future readers, or to posterity. The self invents its Other and the material space of the book serves as the stage which will enable the intended social meeting: in Folger Fo. 2 no. 17, a seventeenth-century hand has written on a page of *Twelfth Night*: ‘This Book which You Now Look Into was Given Me by Miss Molly Smithe and was *th*e book of an Ancient family *th*e name I bear most Lovingly’ (pp. 258-9, Y3v-Y4r).

Other inscriptions point to social relations outside or close to the family circle and to the circulation of the book in a wider world: ‘Mary Elmer her Book giuen by mr Thorold’ in Folger Fo.2 no.57 (p. 106, ii5v), or ‘This Book is my Aunt’s Elden’s of Systrand to be Sent to Mr. Benj. Elden a dyer in St. Michael’s of Coslany Norwich’ in Folger Fo.1 no. 42 (inside front cover, late eighteenth-century).

There are instances where readers are *more directly* engaged in human communication. Indeed, some pages of Shakespeare’s early editions were also literally employed to enter into dialogue with other individuals. It is not unusual to find rough drafts of letters on them, as in Folger Fo.1 no. 28, on the last page of *The Merchant of Venice*: ‘Dear, sister I hope you Gaett whell too Epson and am sorry I Colld nott’ (p. 184, Q2v [seventeenth-century italic hand?]). The same volume also has a fragmented personal message penned by an eighteenth-century reader on the back of the last page of *Cymbeline*: ‘W*he*n I W*he*n I [sic] send for you, my dear,

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71298.

[191] Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, p. 15.

[192] FSL STC 22296 Copy 2 and FSL S2927 Bd.w. L856 Copy 2 (first flyleaf recto).

pray come' (p. 399, sig. bbb6v).[193] The social life of books is inseparable from the lives of their readers. As artefacts endowed simultaneously with physical and symbolic qualities, Shakespearean editions—especially as their cultural value increased—played a far from negligible role in the establishment of social networks. They bonded individuals and helped them situate themselves in the wider world. But how should we interpret other, seemingly anecdotal traces of the everyday existence of readers in early books and how do they relate to Shakespeare's works? This will be the subject of the next section.

Shakespeare, Remedies and Bookkeeping

Turning the pages of early editions of Shakespeare or of manuscript miscellanies and commonplace books of the period, one is struck by the abundance of scribbles and writings related to the everyday lives of readers. These form 'litanies of the mundane', as Adam Smyth has called them. While some may seem very distant from the subject matter of the volumes or from literary considerations, all point to an area where Shakespeare's text meets the everyday, suggesting that his works, or those of other writers of the period, 'were in fact quotidian texts'.[194]

Miscellanies are particularly interesting in this regard. They are often the work of several hands and bring texts (literary but also historical or legal) and everyday practices together. They can be the sum of the experience of several individuals, who may not even have had a hand in the miscellany itself. By copying the texts of others or by setting down in writing elements of oral culture, the scribe who is the proprietor of the miscellany 'owns' the writings and words of others.[195] Consequently, the self constructs itself potentially through a multiplicity of others. Another feature of miscellaneous notebooks is that despite their intellectual, literary or abstract content, they are almost always turned towards the outside world. In this sense, they are exemplary of the way early modern selfhood was constructed—through the intermingling of the mundane and the profound, of the communal and the personal, of the abstract and of the practical.

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[193] Smith cites a similar example in *Shakespeare's First Folio*, p. 168.

[194] Smyth, *'Profit and Delight': Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640-1682*, p. 44.

[195] On this point, see Catherine Field, '"Many hands hands": Writing the Self in Early Modern Women's Recipe Books', in *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 49-64; p. 54.

Bound in vellum wrappers from a twelfth-century theological manuscript, the Huntington Library's Danby Manuscript (HM 60413) is a miscellany which was inscribed and added to by members of the Danby family of Kirby Knowle, North Yorkshire *ca*.1570-*ca*.1625. The volume contains two quotations from Shakespeare's *Othello*, which are mixed with remedies, household hints, legal forms, land rental, as well as poems, epigrams and sententiae. In a volume where medical remedies and recipes—including recipes for making red wax, ink, or 'to make the face fayre' (f. 39)—are so prominent, the *Othello* quotations may appear slightly at odds at first glance. Yet they too are remedies of sorts.

Lifted from the opening scene of *Othello*, the first extract begins just after Iago voices his dissatisfaction about Othello in front of Roderigo, concluding precisely with these words: 'Why, there's no remedy. 'Tis the curse of service' (1.1.35). The reader was no doubt struck by the remedy offered by Iago. Stripped of its context and of its speech prefix, the passage in question can be construed as a general consolation in such situations: 'O sir content you, / I follow him to serve my turne upo*n* him, / wee cannot be all m*a*st*ers*, nor all masters, / Cannot be truly followed […]' (f. 80).[196] Similarly, the second extract can be seen as a recipe for living a better, more contented life. Also divested of its context and speech prefix, the passage originally spoken by the Duke in 1.3.198-208 is partly cut and copied under the first quotation. This time the word 'remedy' actually appears, thus confirming the status of the two extracts in the miscellany:

> When remedyes are past, the greifes are ended
> by seeinge the worst, w*hi*ch late on hopes depended
> to mourne a mischeife that is past & gone
> is the next way to draw more myscheife on […] (ibid.)

While Shakespeare may have reached a more elevated status as an author in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is also evidence that readers and compilers continued to mix Shakespeariana with more mundane concerns. A late eighteenth-century manuscript miscellany (FSL MS W.a.285) contains three watercolour drawings related to Shakespeare.[197] But on the following pages, one finds prescriptions and detailed medical recipes and cures for various illnesses with exact dosages. All of this is mingled with a series of notes on official complaints regarding 'felonies', 'Bail' and 'disorderly persons', as well as card tricks and some bookkeeping: 'account [sic] since Xmas 1794' (f. 37r).

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[196] The whole extract corresponds to 1.1.41-4 in the modern NCS edition.

[197] See f. 5r, f. 7r and f. 11r.

Miscellanies display the composite constructions of early modern selfhood—at once individual and multiple, retrospective and prospective, as well as introspective and turned towards the outside world. If remedies, recipes and legal or historical texts are frequent even in miscellanies containing literary extracts, everyone who has looked at early books and manuscripts is also struck by the pervasive presence of figures, numbers, sums or indeed accounts. Again, these are traces of individuals dealing with their relationship with the outside world and with the necessities and careful balancing of everyday life. Also captured on the page are fleeting moments when the self-attempts to constitute itself through monetary reckonings, through transactions and through the objects it possesses: ‘The sense of identity implied by … financial accounts is constructed through objects and possessions: it is less about interiority and detachment and more about things in the world’.[198]

Thus, a poetical miscellany compiled *ca*. 1650 (FSL MS V.a.162), which contains transcriptions of Shakespeare’s sonnets 71 (f. 12v) and 32 (f. 26r) among its many extracts, bears on its first page the various signatures of its former owners, as well as some accounts, the beginning of a letter and two amusing human faces drawn in ink. The back of Ben Jonson’s epistle ‘To the Reader’ in Folger Fo.1 no.10 has an apparently trivial note regarding a rather costly purchase of sugar: ‘the 28th: off [sic] November 1628 threescore pounds off Sugar and cost 3£5^{6}’. Similarly, in a copy of the 1611 quarto of *Hamlet* (FSL STC 22277 Copy 2), the outside margin of the page where the duel is taking place in the play (N4v) is covered with early accounts of sums of money doubtless due.

In these examples, the relation between the Shakespeare text or extracts and the accounts remains implicit. But there are also moments when the cost of maintaining one’s existence and literary appreciation coalesce and when the self speaks on the page. In the top margin of a page listing ‘The Names of the Principal *Actors*’ and the ‘Catalogue’ of plays in Folger Fo.4 no.12, one can read in early eighteenth-century writing:

> I could have had ten
> pound for this Book, but would not take it. ~~wrote~~
> S. Burnes
> Sarah Burnes

Clearly the self takes pride in the ownership of the book. While Sarah Burnes is obviously conscious of the monetary value of the book, for her the object has left the sphere of commodities and has become in some way part of how she thinks about her self. Likewise, apparently trivial and disconnected accounts or lists of figures can sometimes take on new meaning in books where readers show an interest in passages related to money. In Folger Fo.1 no.75, figures and accounts appear in the margins of both *3 Henry VI* and *Troilus and Cressida*, while in other plays a series of marks point to lines concerned with riches and wealth. In *Timon of Athens*, a manicule (or pointing hand) highlights a passage spoken by a discontented Alcibiades:

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[198] Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 11.

> I'm worse then mad: I haue kept backe their Foes
> While they haue told their Money, and let out
> Their Coine vpon large interest. I my selfe,
> Rich onely in large hurts. All those, for this? (p. 88; gg6v).[199]

The same reader, it appears, has left ink brackets around two passages in the scene where Polonius gives advice to his son Laertes. Both are concerned with individuals' relationship to money: 'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy; / But not exprest in fancie; rich, not gawdies:' and 'Neither a borrower, nor a lender be; / For lone oft loses both it selfe and friend:' (p. 156, Nn6v).[200]

Some manuscript miscellanies reveal personalities who are totally obsessed with calculations and statistics. In a late eighteenth-century miscellany (Folger M.a.178), which also contains some Shakespeare extracts, the compiler has noted calculations of the number of books in the old and new testaments of the Bible, as well as in the Apocrypha (ff. 2r-3v). It is soon manifest that these notes indicate more profound concerns about death and the meaning of life. The compiler writes, 'The whole numbers of inhabitants of the earth, is supposed to be about 1000 million and reckoning 33 years for a generation The Deaths in every year must be 30.000.000' (f. 15v). This is followed by calculations for the same 'in every year', 'in every hour', 'in every minute' (ibid.). Given these concerns, the choice of Jaques's speech on the 'seven ages' of man in *As You Like It* (2.7.139-166) is in keeping. The speech is extracted and divested of its context, source and speech prefix (f. 66v-f. 67r). Shakespeare's name is calligraphed in large letters under the passage, while the title given to the extract by the compiler appears to confirm his or her attentiveness to existential matters: 'The Progress of Life'.

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[199] 3.5.107-110 in the NCS edition.

[200] 1.3.70-1 and 75-6 in the NCS edition.

Other calculations and reckonings can be more personal and even deal directly with the self. A late eighteenth-century Sheffield diarist's entry for 22 August 1799 reads as follows: 'I was weighed, & I weigh 8 stone 1 lb.' (FSL MS M.a.4, p. 26). His next entry shows that concerns about the physical self cannot be separated from literary interests: 'Aug^{t} 23 Read the tragedy of Macbeth. Mr Smith says it is the best of all Shakspeare's plays' (ibid.). Physical concerns are mingled here with reading practices and the recording of the opinion of others—the succession of seemingly trivial details on the page are so many traces of a complex life of integrated activities and relations.

Dates and Readers' Sense of Time

Prominent in diaries, dates are other sorts of figures whose frequent presence in early books and manuscript miscellanies is rarely given appropriate attention. Dates in books are often combined with signings. As we have seen, names are signs of ownership and sometimes reveal readers' social and family ties, but they can also be construed as expressions of individuals' sense of existence within time and space. Shakespeare's early editions bear witness to the construction of textual identities *within time*. Signatures themselves 'suggest and portray the gradual construction, refinement, and rehearsal of a textual identity' and this is an identity which is 'in the process of being made, reformed, practised, tried out'.[201]

In Folger Fo. 2 no. 36, a 'Mr Holland' has repeatedly inscribed the date '1671' in his book. On a page of *3 Henry VI*, the same date is calligraphed in the top margin (p. 164, r2v), while a page of *King Lear* bears the inscription 'Mr Holland is my name I say 1671' (p. 313, ss5r). Sarah Rodwell is another early modern reader who can be seen to develop a textual identity, which of course remains somewhat fragmented. In her copy of a 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems*, she leaves numerous traces of pen practice as well as this signature which dates her engagement with the book: 'Sarah Rodwell hur Book 1767' (Folger STC 22344 Copy 6, verso of title page). John Tyler has also marked his passage on a page of *Julius Caesar* in Folger Fo.2 no.58: 'John Tiler of Malverne 1690' (p. 145, nn1r). As for Walter Hastings, he has seemingly made a point of writing his motto next to his dated signature on a page of a 1639 copy of *1 Henry IV*: ‘Si fortuna me tormenta / Esperanta me contenta / Walter Hastings 1661’ (Folger STC 22287 copy 2, H4v).[202]

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[201] Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, p. 136.

Similarly, extractors occasionally like to record the moment when they inscribed a passage. In a poetical commonplace book compiled by Benjamin Coles *ca.*1730-41, long passages of the scene in *Hamlet* in which the ghost reveals the circumstances of his death and urges Hamlet to take revenge are copied. The extractor gives his extracts a title, ‘The scene in Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. The Ghost. & Hamlet’, and leaves a date at the end of them: ‘Andover, 4th 9th m°. 1730’.[203] A collection of English verse assembled by William Jermy of Norfolk (Brotherton Library MS, Ltq 20), which contains verses in imitation of Shakespeare (f. 39r), opens with an ornamental ink cartouche with the compiler’s name (f. 3r). The inscription on the next page seeks to anchor Jermy’s textual project in time: ‘A Collection of Verses upon Several Occasions by Several Hands. Begun March 26.th 1732 H: Jermy 1732’ (f. 4r). There may also be moments when readers do not wish to extract passages or mark their books extensively. In this case, they might be tempted to inscribe in time the moment when they finished reading. Thus, on the last page of a 1599 quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*, someone has written: ‘Agst. 23. 1621’ (BL C.12.g.18; sig. M2r).[204]

Such cases remind us that there is often only a thin line between the annotated book and the diary, or indeed the chronicle. This line is easily crossed by a number of readers who inscribe historical events and news in their Shakespeare editions. This again shows that however absorbing reading can be as an activity, it is never cut off from life and the world outside the book. Inscriptions related to time in Shakespearean editions can convey a sense of the urgency of life, with annotators recording momentous instances in their activity of reading. Alternatively, they could also be signs that the reading of Shakespeare helped individuals construct a sense of historical perspective. These two interpretations were not incompatible. Sometimes, a specific line in Shakespeare’s works sparks readers’ reactions. Such lines are often about death and the passing of time. At these moments, the book is used almost as a semi-private diary. In a 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s poems, one eighteenth-century reader has inscribed ‘Wm Burton Alderman ffor Welford Dyed’ next to a line in *The Passionate Pilgrim,* ‘A flower that dies, when first it gins to bud’.[205]

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[202] This motto could also be an echo of Pistol’s ‘*Se fortuna mi tormenta, ben sperato mi contenta*–’ in *2 Henry IV* (5.5.89).

[203] Poetical commonplace book compiled by Benjamin Coles, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS Lt 24, ff. 35r and 36r. The scene in question is at 1.5.1-91.

[204] See also a 1631 edition of Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* that bears ‘Novemb: 25th. 1662’ (FSL STC 22295 Copy 3; sig. K2r).

Thus, Shakespeare’s early editions allowed several generations of readers and book users to experiment with life-writing. Shakespeare’s printed text could be used not only as a personal record of public or private events, but also as a way of putting intimate feelings on paper.

Personal Feelings on the Page

Books occasionally record incursions of personal thoughts or intimate desires. The romantic annotations made by a late eighteenth-century reader on a page of *King Lear* in Folger Fo.4 no. 12 (p. 92, Hhh4v) are an apt illustration of these processes: ‘My dear I love you’ and ‘I do sware [sic] I love none but you’.

Other annotations were more closely connected to Shakespeare’s text. For instance, on a damaged back flyleaf of a 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s *Poems* one can just about make out parts of a love letter, probably inspired by Shakespeare’s volume of amatory poetry. The eighteenth-century hand is possibly that of a female reader, as the signature ‘Elizabeth Gyles her Boock’ on the same page appears to indicate. ‘My Deerest Iuell [jewel]’ seems to be the addressee and the letter mentions the desire to ‘write and loue more true’ (FSL STC 22344 Copy 10).[206]

H. Watkins’s late eighteenth-century poetical miscellany (FSL M.a.110), which contains a number of Shakespeare extracts, is revealing of the compiler’s personal journey through the playwright’s works. This is a voyage that shows him repeatedly engaged with passages dealing with death. Watkins can be seen to be hovering between feelings of horror, thoughts of consolation and the poetic contemplation of death and suicide. His choice of extracts, as well as the titles he invents for them can be taken as expressions of an existential quest. Thus, Claudio’s angst-ridden speech in *Measure for Measure*, ‘Ay, but to die and go we know not where; / To lie in cold obstruction and to rot’ (3.1.118-9) is copied with the title ‘On Death by Shakespear in Measure for Measure’ (p. 10).[207] A few pages later (p. 23), Watkins chooses

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[205] FSL STC 22344 Copy 10, sig. C1r. For later instances, see FSL Fo. 1 no. 78, sigs. P4v and gg6r.

[206] See also Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 169.

[207] That same speech—which obviously struck a chord in many readers—was also part of the extracts selected for seventeenth-century readers and destined to form the long entry on ‘Death’ and the ‘suden, feare of,

'On the fear of Death, by Shakespear, in Julius Caesar' as a heading for the more consoling passage when Caesar declares, 'It seems to me most strange that men should fear, / Seeing that death, a necessary end, / Will come when it will come' (2.2.35-7). Hamlet's famous soliloquy 'To be, or not to be; that is the Question' (3.1.58)—which is also extracted—is not construed as a speech about hesitation between life and death choices or about irresolution. It is entitled 'Soliloquy of Hamlet on Death & self Murther' (pp. 27-8) and is hence arguably interpreted by Watkins as a meditation on annihilation and suicide.

Shakespeare in People's Lives – The Place and Impact of Reading

So far the evidence we have examined has been essentially indirect. It has already helped us form a view of the material, intellectual and social place of Shakespeare's works in early modern individuals' lives. A further step will be to examine the construction of textual identities through life-writings in particular. In this final section, for reasons of space, we will concentrate on four short but very significant examples. Often partial and fragmentary, these moments when Shakespeare and his works begin to form the thread of a narrative about the self can nonetheless give us a glimpse of what it meant for an early modern person *to live with Shakespeare*. Alternatively, these narratives point to ways in which Shakespeare's works were transformed as they were taken on an increasingly large number of individual trajectories.

Sometime between January and March of 1663, John Ward (1629-81), vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, wrote the following entry in his diary: 'Rememb*e*r to peruse Shakespears plays and bee versd in *th*em *th*at I may not bee ignorant in *tha*t matter'.[208] This was Ward's second year as vicar of Stratford, where he stayed until his death. One can surmise that he was naturally eager to familiarize himself with the works of a person who had already become a local legend. On the same page of the diary, he also noted:

I haue heard *tha*t Mr. Shakespeare
was a natural wit without any

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desire to [die]' compiled by John Evans in his thousand-page manuscript commonplace book entitled *Hesperides, or The Muses Garden* (FSL MS. V.b.93, p. 184; assembled *c.* 1654-66). On the dating of this manuscript and on the circumstances surrounding its composition, see: Tianhu Hao, '*Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden*: Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England' (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Columbia University, 2006), p. 35 et passim.

[208] John Ward Diaries, vol. 9 (1662-63), FSL MS V.a.292, f. 140r.

art at all. hee frequented *th*e
plays all his younger time, but
in his elder days liud at Strat
ford: and supplied *th*e stage with
2 plays every year and for *tha*t
had an allowance so large *tha*t
hee spent att *th*e Rate of a 1000^{l}
a yeer as I hayue heard:

At the age of thirty-four, Shakespeare and his works were, for Ward, a necessary stone in the edifice of knowledge that he was trying to build for himself, as a man of science (he had studied medicine too), and as Stratford's parish priest. His notebook (one of seventeen) contains the only known account of Shakespeare's death (f. 150r) and a mention of Shakespeare's two daughters as well (f. 138v). This entry is typical of a man anxious for self-improvement in many different fields of knowledge, one who made numerous notes about books to read, things to see and people to meet in his parish.[209] Nearly half a century after Shakespeare's death, Ward was no doubt picking up some of the local 'lore' that had begun to accumulate around the playwright. Nevertheless, his notes demonstrate that Shakespeare was, at the very least, sporadically present in the vicar's cultural world. In many ways, his diary was used not only to store information, but also to jog his memory, as is indicated by the phrases 'I haue heard say *th*at', 'remember to', or 'Inquire further concerning…', which keep recurring in his writings.

Equally obsessive but far less methodical than John Ward, Samuel Pepys famously records various encounters with Shakespeare. The entries in his diaries which concern the playwright are linked to his passion for the theatre and for book collecting but some also betray personal anxieties.[210] Among all the plays which Pepys claims to have seen, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* are those which he disliked most, while *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* appear to be his favourites. In October 1660, he goes to see a performance of *Othello*, which he enjoys very much. A few years later, in August 1666, as he is travelling to Deptford, he takes a copy of *Othello* to read with him. However, this time his opinion of the play as a book is far less favourable: ‘it seems a mean thing’, he writes.[211]

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[209] See also A. L. D. Kennedy-Skipton, 'John Ward and Restoration Drama', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11.4 (1960), pp. 493-4.

[210] Megan Matchinske notes that 'what is striking about Pepys's diaries is how curiously ahistorical they are. His entries map a pattern of iteration that downplays singular events to concentrate instead on running sequences' ('Serial Identity: History, Gender, and Form in the Diary Writing of Lady Anne Clifford', in *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*, p. 74).

Pepys had in fact bought several Shakespeare editions in July 1664. In November of that year, he was learning Hamlet’s ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy and was trying to recite it without the help of the book. In his entry for 15 August 1665, and in the midst of an outbreak of plague, he mentions his dreams and his fear of death. At this moment, the lines from *Hamlet* he had learned the year before come to mind and allow him to express not only his fears but also his will to defeat death somehow: ‘what a happy thing it would be if when we are in our graves (as Shakespeare resembles it) we could dream, and dream but such dreams as this, that we should not need to be so fearful of death as we are this plague-time’.[212] Shakespeare is associated with happier times later on in Pepys’s diary. In May 1668, he enjoys a performance of Davenant and Dryden’s adaptation of *The Tempest* and wants to know the lyrics and the tune of Ferdinand’s song (‘Go thy way’) taken up by Ariel in Act 3, scene 3 of the play and composed by John Banister. Four days later, he manages to get the lyrics of the song which he had not been able to copy during the performance.

Shakespeare is part of Pepys’s broader social activities, of his everyday terrain of theatre going and book collecting. Yet Shakespeare’s works are more than a passing presence in his life. As much as they are part and parcel of the diverse flow of Pepys’s fads and mundane desires, for brief moments Shakespeare’s lines also allow him to translate some of his deepest anxieties into words. In this way, Pepys’s determination to memorize passages and transcribe the song can be interpreted as efforts to fix and internalize elements of the on-going flux of time—a project which is of course at the heart of diary keeping.

A variant of these processes is when Shakespeare and his works allow individuals to construct parts of a life story. The narrative of how they first came into contact with Shakespeare is used to describe the self’s emotional, artistic and intellectual development. Shakespeare’s words are not internalized to add meaning to life this time, it is a pre-existent memory of Shakespeare which is tapped into and reinvented to allow the self to tell its story. Moreover, even philological interests in the origin and meaning of some of Shakespeare’s words become opportunities for individuals to construct their own origins textually.

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[211] *Othello* seems, however, to have been popular as a book, judging by its many reprints during the seventeenth century. See Hazelton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved, The Restoration Versions in Quarto and on the Stage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 355.

[212] Mynors Bright and John Warrington, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 102, 118, 173, 190, 214, 236, 339; vol. 2, pp. 27, 67, 152, 309-10; vol. 3, pp. 223, 226.

In the commonplace book of the poet Henry James Pye, which was compiled *ca.* 1770-1800, one finds a number of notes on Shakespeare (FSL MS M.b.16).[213] While these are often of a critical or philological nature and would later be used to write Pye's *Sketches on Various Subjects: Moral, Literary, and Political* (1796), there are personal biographical elements which do not appear in the printed work. At one point in his commonplace book Pye embarks on a biography of his childhood years. The reading of Shakespeare figures prominently in his account: 'I had read Shakespear before I read Pope's Homer' (f. 145r). Even his philological comments on a number of Shakespeare cruxes are interspersed with memories of his childhood and of how he first understood words.

For instance, to clarify the meaning of the word 'gilt' in *Twelfth Night* and *Coriolanus*, Pye recalls the moment of his first aural encounter with the word:

> The word gilt occurs as a substantive by Shakespeare &
> is synonymous with gilding & this the commentators all tell you is obsolete,
> it may be so, but when I was a boy I never heard leaf gold called
> by any other name than gilt & I remember particularly the first time I
> heard the expression 'Silver gilt' […] (f. 32v).

'I always from a boy' and 'when I was a boy' (f. 31r; f. 32v) are expressions which tie his adult understanding of Shakespeare to his first childhood encounter with words, or with the playwright's printed works. Pye also explores his family origins and carefully traces his literary lineage back to one of his ancestors who happened to be a friend of one of Shakespeare's fellow playwrights: 'Sir Rob*er*t Pye the elder [1585–1662] was a friend of Ben Johnson [sic] as appears by the following lines' (f. 136r).

As we have seen, Pye's so-called commonplace book has many of the features of a diary. In fact, the barriers between these manuscript genres are often loose and it is difficult or indeed unproductive to limit life-writing to specific genres, as the traces left by selfhood in the early modern period are manifold. In this way, letter writing is an activity where the self constantly reinvents its relation to others. While letters may highlight the circulation of news, knowledge or ideas through social networks, some may also reveal how Shakespeare came to be interwoven in the fabric of social relations. Indeed, a number of early modern readers were trying to understand what meaning the activity of reading might have in the otherwise continuous flow of accidents, events and interruptions that everyday life inevitably brings.

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[213] Pye's commonplace book was a copy of the prepared blank-book—with engraved title and printed introduction and skeleton index—published by John Bell: *Bell's common-place book, form'd generally upon the principles recommended and practised by Mr. Locke* (London: for John Bell, 1770) ESTC N52943.

Mary Tickell, *née* Linley (1758–1787) was the wife of the playwright and satirist Richard Tickell. She also corresponded frequently with her sister, Elizabeth Ann Sheridan (*née* Linley), who was married to the playwright and politician Richard Sheridan.[214] Mary's letters to her sister in fact form a journal of everyday events and were written on a daily basis. A number of these are preserved by the Folger Shakespeare Library, and although Mary did not always date them, the Folger letters appear to span the period between 1785 and 1787 (MS Y.d.35 [129-144]).

These letters are precious because they combine two perspectives. On the one hand, they actually describe the instances when Shakespeare was read. These are of course fleeting moments but they give us some idea of how the reading of Shakespeare could fit into some individuals' lives. On the other hand, they show their author reflecting on the activity of letter writing and of life-writing. How indeed does one report on one's reading and how does that activity fit into the fabric of life itself? These are two questions which Mary Tickell's letters ask. Life-writing is by essence a self-reflexive genre and it is thus logical that the writer should consider the textual means employed to construct her life narrative—a narrative which is precisely employed as a means of self-discovery.

Revealingly, the first instance of a reading of Shakespeare is described as a communal activity, but one to which Mary Tickell seemingly regrets not being able to lend appropriate value. Probably from Ipswich in 1785, she writes

> my prospect of the
> Day is confin'd to seeing him take Horse after Dinner
> and reading Shakespears Historical Plays after tea
> to Bill [her brother] & Jane – not much to be made of that
> you'll say – so I won't waste my Paper in mere Words
> but wait tomorrows hidden Fate - (f. 131r) (Figure 4)

[INSERT: Letter by Mary Tickell (1785), MS Y.d.35, f. 133r. By permission of the Folger Library.]

The next mention of Shakespeare is found a couple of pages later in the same letter. What dominates in this instance is the unfortunate interruption of the communal reading caused by irruptions from the outside world—her husband and a friend arriving. The interruption was not the first apparently:

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[214] On the two sisters, see W. F. Rae, 'Tickell, Richard (1751–1793)', rev. Rebecca Mills, *ODNB,* Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., May 2010, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27431 and Suzanne Aspden, 'Linley [Sheridan], Elizabeth Ann (1754–1792)', *ODNB,* Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., May 2009, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25364.

> Sunday Morning
> Just as I had sent Bill into the Study for the 6th:
> Vol: of Shakespear, in came T [her husband, Mr Tickell]– with the Sieur Reid, & poor
> Henry the sixth was laid on the Shelf once more, - (f. 133r)

Another letter of possibly the same year, written 'Monday' at '4 o clock', shows that reading Shakespeare could also be a private activity for Mary Tickell: 'so adieu we shall have one more walk & I go to my Shakespear in the Evening' (f. 139r). However, elements in the correspondence indicate that the letters she received from her sister—which she calls 'journals', as they are in essence diary-like—could be read aloud as much as Shakespeare and other literary authors were read in the presence of members of the family (see ff. 279r-v). Shakespeare was a presence which accompanied the lives of these individuals. While these moments were no doubt enriching and elevating, individuals sometimes had trouble expressing the value of the experience in precise words. This was no doubt because they were struggling through their letter writing to transform their everyday experiences into something that could be shared textually with others and that could also lend some sense to what they were living on a personal basis.

Mary Tickell wanted to produce 'a good journal'. Yet she admitted being defeated at times by what she felt was the humdrum nature of her existence:

> My Life now is so very unvaried
> that it is really impossible to dignify it into
> any lose sequence – I'm sure for these last
> three Days there has not been a quarter
> of an hours difference in them. (17 November 1786, f. 297r)

Her sense of partial failure is common to many other readers. As we have seen, selfhood is constructed through material, social, intellectual and aesthetic encounters.[215] Books bear witness to these processes and the traces we have examined previously indicate that life and the material text of authors such as Shakespeare were intertwined in ways that not every individual could easily unravel. How could Mary Tickell and others hope to account fully for that? As she wrote in December 1786: '[I] know from experience how averse a quiet Life of reading working & walking is to the quick varying accidents w[hi]ch: are the Life & Soul of a good Journal' (f. 318v).

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[215] For another use of Shakespeare in letter writing, see general Charles Lee's (1731-82) letter of manipulative and patronizing courtship to a 'Miss Robinson', dated 15 December 1775 (FSL MS Y.c.1374 (2)).

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For two characters in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Shakespeare 'is a part of an Englishman's constitution', as indeed 'we all talk Shakespeare'.[216] These now famous statements should not lead us to think that Shakespeare's rise to fame as a dramatist went hand in hand with the emergence of that elusive figure—the modern self. As we have tried to show, Shakespeare did become part of individuals' lives, but his works were engulfed in the complex and dynamic exchanges between the intertwined spheres of the material and the intellectual, the private and the social, the mundane and the symbolic.

From our modern perspective, reading is considered to be an activity that is cut off from the world of everyday concerns. For us, it is as if the reading of Shakespeare and of literature can only have an effect on life *after* the book is closed. Yet, as we have seen, all these assumptions are qualified, if not contradicted, by early modern readers' forms of engagement with Shakespeare's text *and* with the world around them. There is *life in the archives* in the sense that it is possible to reconstruct the experience of reading Shakespeare from the traces and empirical evidence left in early books and manuscripts, even if we always have to remind ourselves that such reconstruction can only be incomplete and is certainly not devoid of subjectiveness. Moreover, what is striking in the evidence we have studied is the closeness between the reading experience and the immediate intellectual *and* mundane life of these early modern readers.

Not everyone was looking for answers in Shakespeare, but nearly all of these readers were at least developing a textual identity and in some cases what could be called 'a stylistics of existence'.[217] If it is true that, as Charles Taylor wrote, 'we are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions', Shakespeare may have been particularly appropriate because of his ability to wrestle through drama with fundamental human cruxes, while eschewing dogmatic positions in an era when debates were otherwise so polarized.[218] In their moments of subjectivity, early modern readers were not necessarily persuaded, as we are, that the self is something which can be grasped and which needs to be known in order for human beings to achieve fulfilment. Thus, this chapter does not chart the linear stages leading to the epiphany of the modern self through Shakespeare. I have tried to resist the idea of a self looking from the inside at a world from which it is cut off. The evidence gathered here points to two perhaps unexpected conclusions: first, that reading Shakespeare was in a profound way an experience as *vital* as going to see his works performed (and one did not of course exclude the other). Second, that for many individuals Shakespeare was a crucial part of the elaboration of their ‘stylistics of existence’, but that this elaboration involved a vast interweaving of perspectives, one which this book will continue to explore by tackling other aspects of Shakespearean appropriation in the ensuing chapters.

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[216] Henry Crawford and Edmund Bertram make these statements respectively in a scene of the novel (*Mansfield Park*, ed. John Wiltshire [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], p. 391). The 'twist' in the first quotation is that Austen also satirizes the character for his use of Shakespeare as cultural capital, as Henry Crawford has not read any Shakespeare.

[217] Michel Foucault coins the concept in *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), esp. pp. 71 and 192.

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[218] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, repr. 2001), p. 34.

Chapter 3

Readers and Editors – a *Concordia Discors*

The wealth of corrections and emendations in Shakespeare's early editions reminds us that the quest for a more exact and more consistent text was another dominant mode of engagement with playbooks. While correcting a text may be a natural impulse, it is also a sign that one is transforming it to meet some standard, which might be personal, imposed by external norms and imperatives, or a mixture of both. Correcting is likewise part and parcel of the hermeneutic impulse, whose goal is to access meaning. Reflecting concerns about the potential deficiencies of print, or a will to find ways of encouraging readers to engage with the text, early modern playbook epistles and prefaces often encouraged their readers to carry on the work of amendment.[219]

The question of the 'true' text and of who should be allowed to tamper with it was a crucial concern during the whole of the early modern period. Early playbook paratexts oscillate between defensive statements insisting that corrections are the privilege of a small group of educated readers and the idea that it is the task of all readers to complete the text they have purchased according to their tastes and needs. In some cases, authors remind their readers that plays are meant to be performed rather than to be printed—it is hence the reader's task to amend the text and adapt it fully to the written medium.[220]

As Sonia Massai has recently observed in *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor*, 'the text preserved in early modern printed playbooks was in fact regarded as positively fluid and always in the process of being perfected'. Massai considers early modern authors, publishers and 'gentlemen readers' as annotating readers who were all involved to varying degrees in

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[219] See, for instance: George Whetstone, *The right excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra* (Imprinted at London by Richarde Ihones, 1578), sig. A3v. STC: 25347 and Terence, *Andria. The first Comoedie ... in English*, trans. Maurice Kyffin (London: by T. E. for Thomas Woodcocke, 1588), sig. A2r. STC: 23895.

[220] See John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (At London Printed by T. P. for W. C., 1606), sig. A2r. STC: 17484 and his *The Wonder of Women, or Sophonisba* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1606), sig. G3v. STC: 17488; Richard Brome, *The Weeding of the Covent-Garden*, in *Five New Playes* (London, Printed for A. Crook and for H. Brome, 1659), sig. A1v. Wing B4872. For other examples of authors (John Lyly and Thomas Lodge in particular) inviting their readers to correct their texts, see *John Kerrigan,* 'The *Editor as Reader*: Constructing Renaissance Texts', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 102-124, esp. pp. 116-7.

'perfecting' the early printed texts of Shakespeare.[221] Her work significantly redeems the 'prehistory' of editing and challenges the idea that Shakespeare's texts degenerated and were corrupted over time as successive editions built upon the mistakes of their predecessors. It also counters the idea that Nicholas Rowe was Shakespeare's first editor. Massai opposes the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century communal culture of correcting the text to achieve the best possible reading, to the world and practices of eighteenth-century editors for whom the quest for the author's intentions in the text had become a primary concern. Whereas the early modern period regarded the editing of texts as a collective enterprise, the eighteenth century saw it as the domain of a handful of editors in charge of deciding the 'true' meaning of the text—hence the 'rise of the editor' in the title of Massai's book.

Massai's extremely valuable work lays emphasis on a good many important seventeenth-century editorial practices, which had hitherto been underestimated. This chapter will follow in those footsteps, but also highlight a number of areas previously unexplored. Firstly, we shall see that early modern readers' editorial activities did not just include the perfecting or emending of texts. Shakespeare's readers corrected the text and added information to facilitate comprehension, thus creating a sometimes complex series of reading aids. Furthermore, the rise and supremacy of editors in the eighteenth century was somewhat of a contradictory phenomenon. Thomas Hanmer continued to fashion himself as a gentleman reader of an earlier period in the preface to his 1743-44 edition. For him, he argued, editing had been a private hobby ('for his private satisfaction') and he also believed that this activity ought to be practiced chiefly among 'other gentlemen'.[222]

Of course what we know of the sometimes bitter wrangling between eighteenth-century editors contradicts Hanmer's vision. What has been largely overlooked is the fact that eighteenth-century readers repeatedly attacked and contested the work of editors in the numerous inscriptions they left in Shakespeare editions. Such discussions were fuelled from the 1750s onwards by the debates that raged in literary journals destined for the same readers.[223]

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[221] Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 204.

[222] William Shakespeare, *The works of Shakespear. In six volumes. Carefully revised and corrected by the former editions, and adorned with sculptures designed and executed by the best hands*, ed. Thomas Hanmer (Oxford: printed at the Theatre, 1744), vol. 1, p. i. ESTC: T138604.

[223] See Antonia Forster, 'Avarice or Interest: The Secrets of Eighteenth-Century Reviewing', *Yale University Library Gazette* 81 (2007), pp. 167-76; esp. 167.

Moreover, while many eighteenth-century editors had trouble departing from the ‘received text’ of Shakespeare (established by previous editors), a large body of readers who owned early editions of the playwright were examining these copy texts. Some, as we shall see, were intent on adapting Shakespeare’s quartos and folios to the received text (that is, they wanted to edit the text by modernizing it in the light of eighteenth-century editions). Others, however, were either emending early editions according to their own rules and uses, or they were contesting the modern editions, noting differences and challenging modern editors. If the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of the editor as a supreme authority over Shakespeare’s text, they witnessed in parallel the development of genuine personal interests in the text of Shakespeare on the part of readers who claimed their autonomy through textual editing. Paradoxically, the editors themselves, whose self-proclaimed function was to produce texts which readers were free to make theirs, facilitated the rise of the reader. In *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), Lewis Theobald argued for instance that ‘As SHAKESPEARE stands, or at least ought to stand, in the Nature of a Classic Writer, and indeed, he is corrupt enough to pass for one of the oldest Stamp, every one, who has a Talent and Ability this Way, is at liberty to make his Comments and Emendations upon him’.[224]

The debate over who should have authority over Shakespeare’s text gained momentum in the seventeenth century and came out in the open in the following century. Well before twentieth- and twenty-first-century debates on the function of editing, editors and readers of Shakespeare entered into a discussion on the nature and purposes of editing (whether its goal should be to let a greater number of readers gain access to Shakespeare’s text, and/or whether it should be about maintaining standards of taste). The debate begged concurrent questions: how should readers experience literature? If England had indeed become ‘a nation of readers’, as Samuel Johnson famously stated, how could one build a sense of community around early texts that were so linguistically unstable?[225] How should literature be consumed and in what way should it be edited, that is, appropriated and handed down? What place should literature have in society and in nation building? These are some of the questions that this chapter will seek to answer through a detailed study of empirical readers’ editorial practices and engagement with Shakespeare’s editions during that period.

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[224] Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), cited in Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearian textual criticism and representations of scholarly labour, 1725*-1765 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 64.

[225] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* [1791] (Ware: Wordsworth, 1999), p. 782.

We shall look first at a few examples of the dismay and wonder of early modern readers at what they perceived to be incongruous or inconsistent elements in Shakespeare's text. We shall then explore the wealth of reading aids which these readers constructed, sometimes with the help of eighteenth-century editions, for those who sought to modernize the Shakespearean quartos and folios in their possession, and sometimes using their own ingenuity, as was the case of seventeenth-century readers in particular. Finally, we shall examine the motivations and practices of those who contested the work of eighteenth-century editors and sought to air their own views on Shakespeare's text in their early editions. Overall, the chapter will show that, far from being completely misguided or critically unfounded, the early modern debate around the editing of Shakespeare's works was profoundly decisive because it wrestled with fundamental questions dealing with the nature and purpose of edited texts. In fact, the editing of Shakespeare gradually became a benchmark for other types of textual editing—but without the concurrent and challenging rise of the reader this change may never have happened. Indeed, one of the important outcomes of the debate was also that editors were forced to recognise the new place that readers had acquired. Shakespeare's engaged readers were at the forefront of this movement.

Dealing with Incongruity and Inconsistency: Readers' Reactions to the Early Texts of Shakespeare

Printing errors, binding errors, textual incongruities and inconsistencies, these were the basic elements with which readers of early editions of Shakespeare were confronted. Readers' reactions are often assumed, imagined, sometimes anticipated or even ignored by editors, printers and publishers. The purpose of what follows will be to offer an inside view of the challenges with which readers of early texts were faced and of how they dealt with difficulties and reacted to them.

In a Folger Library copy of the Second Folio (STC 22274 Fo.2 no.49) a series of early eighteenth-century marginal notes on three pages of *The Comedy of Errors* shows how a reader was trying to cope with the fact that two leaves had been misbound in the volume. In order to facilitate reading, the manuscript inscriptions in the bottom margin give precise instructions: 'lose this next leafe & reade *th*e following' (H2v); 'when you haue dun this reade *th*e leafe before it' (H3v), 'passe this nex[t] leafe it being misplast [sic]' (H4v). Other readers were clearly far less at ease and could even be puzzled by unfamiliar typographical conventions. In Folger Fo.2 no.10, one late eighteenth-century reader, probably referring to abbreviated forms of printed text bearing tildes over them wrote on a page of *Henry V*: 'Why the accents over the th es [sic]' (I4r).

Questions of this nature were not uncommon in early quarto, octavo and folio editions of Shakespeare, which some eighteenth-century editors accused of being too confusing for their readers. Lewis Theobald bemoaned what he called 'The mangled Condition of *Shakespeare*', while Samuel Johnson considered that Shakespeare's language was not 'designed for the reader's desk'.[226] Be that as it may, it is interesting to see what aspects of Shakespeare's early texts readers considered inconsistent or incongruous, as this gives us an idea of how and why readers decided to engage with Shakespeare's text. In a First Folio held by The Lilly Library, University of Indiana (PR 2751.AI), an eighteenth-century reader has added a marginal remark near a passage of *The Winter's Tale* where Antigonus reports Perdita's mother's wishes: 'and for the babe / Is counted lost for euer, *Perdita* / I prethee call't'. Next to these lines one reads this logical question: 'How did the Clowne know her name after wards' (sig. Aa6v). Other passages are considered incongruous, as in a First Folio in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (RES-YK-29), where opposite Titus's 'Soft, so busily she turnes the leaues', describing the mutilated Lavinia reading a book, one late eighteenth-century reader has observed rather humorously in the margin: 'what w*i*thout hands?' (*Titus Andronicus*, Act 4, sig. dd4r).

Some readers are also unsettled by alleged topographical inconsistencies. Reacting no doubt to Horatio's 'What if it tempt you toward the Floud my Lord? / Or to the dreadfull Sonmet of the Cliffe', another late eighteenth-century inscriber left this comment in the margin of the same page of a 1625 quarto edition of *Hamlet*: 'The cliffs at Elsineur are not steep: & not in the lands of the Castle […]' (sig. C3v; FSL STC 22278 Copy 1). Other heavily annotated early editions show that readers noted inconsistencies in the plots of plays, as well as dramatic loose ends. They seemed to be especially disconcerted by the lack of verisimilitude of some passages. In Folger Fo.2 no.21, a passage from Act 1, scene 1 of *Romeo and Juliet* ('At my poore house looke to behold this night' and ensuing lines) has clearly irritated an eighteenth-century reader: 'The remaining part of *th*e Scene is very Bad: & *th*e Order to *th*e Servant, hardly consistent w*i*th his saying just before' (sig. gg6v). The same person finds further cause to complain in *Othello*, after Cassio's lines in Act 3, sc. 4, 'I humbly thanke your Ladyship':

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[226] William Shakespeare, *The works of Shakespeare: in seven volumes. Collated with the oldest copies, and corrected; with notes, explanatory, and critical*, ed. Lewis Theobald (London: printed for A. Bettesworth et al., 1733), vol. 1, p. xxxiv. ESTC: T138606. William Shakespeare, *The plays of William Shakespeare, in eight volumes, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators; to which are added notes by Sam. Johnson*, ed. Samuel Johnson (London: printed for J. and R. Tonson, et al., 1765), vol. 1, p. li. ESTC: N012071.

> + For Here *th*e Scene must needs be chang*e*d to some Publick Place:
> How else should Bianca meet Cassio? And for Cassio to Return
> immediately after his going off *th*e Stage, & yet be suppos*e*d by *th*e
> Change of *th*e Scene to be in Another Place, w*i*thout any Action
> intervening to give time for his going Thither, is an
> Absurdity (sig. xx4v)

Yet, in some cases, perceived inconsistencies could lead to pleasant surprises, especially when early editions contained passages which were cut in ensuing editions, but which were considered especially entertaining by readers. Thus, in a *sammelband* containing *1 and 2 Henry IV*, one finds the following indication in an eighteenth-century hand, on the verso of the title page of the 1604 quarto of *1 Henry IV*:

> NB
> These two plays are particularly esteem'd
> by me because they were giv'n ~~by~~ me
> by my Dear Friend *th*e late Sr. Thomas
> Twysden of Peckam in Kent, and
> because *tha*t in this Edition w*hi*ch was pub
> =lish'd by *th*e Authour, there are several
> of Falstaff's Jokes *tha*t are omitted in
> all *th*e following Impressions.
> (sig. A1v; FSL STC 22282 Bd.w. STC 22288a Copy 2)

Filling in the Blanks – Editing and the Elaboration of Early Modern Reading Aids

While some readers were clearly disorientated by textual inconsistencies, others sought to make the most of what they had, either by appreciating the uniqueness of the object they owned (as in the example above), or by transforming the material book itself, in ways which included but also went well beyond the mere 'perfecting' of texts.

In doing so, they perpetuated and personalized the on-going processes of transformation of the text which had begun before they purchased the book, but which were still plainly apparent in some editions. Indeed, a number of readers owned editions which bore original proof corrections. A page of *Othello* (sig. vv3r) in Folger Fo.1 no.47 bears at least nine press corrections and another copy (FSL Fo.1 no.50), in which Thomas Polwhele (*c.* 1700) signed his name and was probably the author of a number of manuscript emendations, also has a set of original proof corrections on a page of *Romeo and Juliet* (sig. ff6r).[227]

There is never any clear demarcation in early editions of Shakespeare between professional and readerly emendations, between corrections produced by early and later readers.[228] What stands out, however, is the relatively small number of corrections to the text made by early seventeenth-century hands.[229] Emendations are far more frequently the work of later eighteenth-century readers in particular. Thus, a copy of *1 Henry IV* (1608; FSL STC 22283 Copy 2), which bears the inscription 'John Cooper 1688' on its title page, has only one correction—the addition of the speech prefix 'Hotspur' on sig. B4v in a seventeenth-century hand. Similarly, a 1594 edition of *Titus Andronicus* (FSL STC 22328) contains only two near-contemporary emendations: on B1v the early reader has replaced 'obsequies' by 'exequies' in Titus's 'I render for my brethens obsequies' and when on sig. D4v Martius says that 'Lord Bassianus lies bereaud in blood', the last three words are changed to 'heere reav'd of lyfe'.

There are of course notable exceptions, such as a 1639 copy of *1 Henry IV*, which is no doubt one of the few Shakespearean quartos to be so copiously annotated by a seventeenth-century reader (FSL STC 22287 copy 3). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the 'editing' carried out by the annotator consists principally in clarifying the identity of characters, family relations, and characters' entrances and exits rather than in emending the text itself. These annotations are illustrative of the tendency in early readers to edit the text not only to clarify lexical meaning, but also to create a variety of reading aids for themselves. Thus, next to the speech prefix '*Nor.*', the reader has tried to identify the speaker in a marginal note: 'north:[umberland] father to hotspur' (B2r). Next to a passage spoken by Henry IV mentioning Glendower and Mortimer, one finds in the outside margin opposite the text: 'Mortimer the erle of March maried glendowers daught[er]' (B3r). When Falstaff leaves the stage a moment to meet the Lord Chief Justice saying ‘Fayth, and i’le send him packing’, the annotator has added in the margin opposite this line: ‘fals: gone to the door:’ (E1r).

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[227] On FSL Fo.1 no.47, see Charlton Hinman, 'A Proof-Sheet in the First Folio of Shakespeare', *The Library*, 4th Ser. 23 (1942), pp. 101-7.

[228] A good example of the coalescence of early and later editorial annotations is Edmond Malone's manuscript comment on an earlier marginal note in a quarto edition of *The Merchant of Venice* (1600; FSL STC 22296 Copy 3): 'an early & certain emendation' (H4v).

[229] An important exception is a Free Library of Philadelphia First Folio in which a mid-seventeenth century reader partly collated his folio with post-1623 quartos in his possession. See Claire M. L. Bourne, '*Vide Supplementum*: The Free Library of Philadelphia's First Folio in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Early Modern Marginalia*, ed. Katherine Acheson (London: Routledge, 2017), forthcoming.

A curious case, where the early annotator does not seem to have been much concerned with emending the text, is another 1639 quarto edition of *1 Henry IV* (FSL STC 22287 copy 6), in which the play is divided into acts. The act divisions do not correspond to any of the other existing seventeenth-century editions of the play and appear to be an effort on the part of this editing reader to impose some kind of personal structure. What appears to be a seventeenth-century italic hand divides the play thus: ‘Acte [sic] the first’ (A3v); ‘Acte ends’ (B2r); ‘Acte the 2’ (C2r); ‘Act [sic] ends’ (C4v); ‘Act 3’ (D2r); ‘Act en[ds] (E4r); ‘Act 4’ (G2r); ‘Acte ends’ (G4v); ‘Act 5’ (H2v).

One of the dominant modes of early editing consisted, however, in the creation of handwritten lists of *dramatis personae.* None of the early quartos had such lists and only seven out of the thirty-six plays in the First Folio were supplied with them.[230] This practice was perpetuated by eighteenth-century readers, especially those who copied lists from contemporary editions (which began supplying them systematically), thus modernizing their old quartos and folios. But some seventeenth-century readers were determined to add to or alter the few lists of characters with which their editions were furnished. In a First Folio held by Georgetown University’s Lauinger Library, someone has added a series of notes to the existing printed list, ‘The Names of the Actors’ on the last page of *Othello* (sig. vv6r) and only a couple of corrections to the text of the play. Iago, who is described as ‘a Villaine’ in the Folio, is designated as ‘Standard bearer to ye moor’ by the annotator. Cassio (‘an Honourable Lieutenant’ in the Folio) is seen as ‘that follows ye moor in hopes to fo [fortune?]’. Montano (‘Gouernour of Cyprus’) is described as ‘besom of moor’, while Ludovico’s status is less certain in the mind of inscriber ‘~~ye last brother of Othello~~ kinsman to Brabantio’.

Some seventeenth-century readers also commissioned manuscript copies of printed plays. This appears to be the case of FSL MS V.a.73, a copy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* which seems to have been made *c.* 1660 and which is based on Shakespeare’s Second Folio (1632). The manuscript differs, nonetheless on a number of points from F2—particularly in its corrections of the copy text—and also in the fact that it offers the first known list of what it calls ‘Drammatis Persona’ for *Merry Wives.* It may thus be considered to be an early

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[230] These were *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, 2 Henry IV*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Timon of Athens*, *Othello*. Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare was the first to supply *dramatis personae* for all the plays.

(manuscript) edition of the play. The seventeenth-century scribe produced a fairly comprehensive and precise list of characters designed to facilitate the reading of the play, as this was not a text primarily destined for the stage.[231] Again, this edition offers a valuable view of the various ways in which early readers would edit a play—this time from a source text and probably with the help of a scribe—and of the importance they gave to the identification of characters. Folger MS. V.a.73 shows how character identification was one of the primary modes of editing for seventeenth-century readers (together with the addition of stage directions and topographical indications) and provides a unique glimpse into how the characters of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* might have been perceived in the mid-seventeenth century. Francis Ford is described as 'A Rich jealous Curmudgeon of Windsor', Master Fenton as 'An expensive Courtier', Sir John Falstaff as 'A Fat old decayed leacherous [sic] Court Officer', Bardolph, Nym and Pistol as 'His late vnder-Officers: Now Hangers on' and the Host as 'A merry, conceited, ranting Inn-holder' (second flyleaf verso).

Even eighteenth-century readers of Shakespeare's early editions occasionally appeared to want more than they could copy from contemporary editions of Shakespeare. Probably inspired in part by a list of *dramatis personae* found in an eighteenth-century edition, an anonymous reader of Folger Fo.1 no.54 added this comment to his manuscript list of characters appended to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: 'Mr Fenton loves M Page', 'Mr Slender loves An [sic] Page' (E6v). The following leaves confirm this need for clarification and precision, as many of the history plays not only have manuscript lists of characters, but also notes on the actual historical figures they were supposed to represent (this is the case for *Richard II*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Henry VIII* in Fo.1 no.54).

Readers who edited their quartos and folios were also confronted with problems of space—like the printers and typesetters before them—especially when it came to adding reading aids such as lists of *dramatis personae.* Like the printers, they had to make the best of the blank spaces which the folios in particular still provided here and there. While the Shakespearean folios characteristically printed lists of characters *after* the plays they were related to, most readers of course preferred them to be placed *before.* Thus the feat for early readers consisted in using whatever space was available to position these reading aids in their most useful place.

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[231] On this manuscript, see G. Blakemore Evans, '*The Merry Wives of Windsor:* The Folger Manuscript', in *Shakespeare: Text, Language, Criticism: Essays in Honour of Martin Spevack*, ed. Bernhard Fabian and Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador (Zurich and New York: Olms-Weidman, 1987), pp. 57-79 and Arthur F. Marotti and Laura Estill, 'Shakespeare and the Manuscript Circulation of Texts', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 53-70, esp. p. 63.

The editorial exercise was also one in penmanship, as in Folger Fo.2 no.15, where a reader managed to cram a rather extensive list of *dramatis personae* in the right-hand margin of the title page of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (sig. D2r). Likewise, some ingenious readers used blank spaces on the final pages of preceding plays to inscribe lists of *dramatis personae* related to the following plays. In Folger Fo.1 no.75, the 'Finis' page of *Titus Andronicus* (Ee2v) bears a list of characters for the following play, that is, *Romeo and Juliet* and the final page of *King Lear* (ss3r) has a manuscript list of *dramatis personae* for *Othello.*

Some early reader-editors had hence become experts at making the best of the available space in their editions. For others, especially those who owned incomplete copies, it was more a case of filling in the blanks to make up for *missing* elements. Professional scribes could supply missing pages in quartos and folios, but there are a number of examples which show that reader-editors clearly took the mending of the text into their own hands. In a 1622 copy of *Othello* (BL C.34.k.33), the missing text near the end of the quarto (after sig. M4v) is supplied in a late seventeenth-century hand, which is not that of a professional scribe. Another example is a 1634 quarto of *Richard II* (BL C.12.g.19), where the first six pages (quire A), which are missing, have been replaced by a manuscript ink version, penned in an eighteenth-century hand by an amateur scribe. The same hand has made an awkward attempt at recreating the layout of the title page, producing in particular a rather unattractive version of the printer's colophon.

Collators, Modernisers and Inventors – the Readerly Quest for Shakespeare's Text

While some eighteenth-century readers began buying the new multi-volume editions of Shakespeare with their increasingly large critical apparatus of introductions, notes and illustrations, others either inherited, collected or held on to the older quarto, octavo and folio editions. The extent to which the owners of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions of Shakespeare engaged with these books by collating, modernizing or even reinventing them is greatly underestimated. Far from being forgotten or superseded, these early volumes attracted the attention of whole communities of readers who became directly involved in the process of editing, despite the fact that most of them had little or no connection with the book trade and the world of professional editors.

Often simply for pleasure, these readers developed a variety of skills, as well as very personal styles of editing. Some compared their books to other early editions; others imported elements from the modern multi-volume editions. Whatever their methods, their practices were never totally subservient to the work of modern editors—they often took their pick, since what mattered most to them was to serve their *own* needs as (critical) readers of Shakespeare.

Many of the new editions provided their readers with visual aids, but for those who were so inclined, creative solutions for the illustration of early editions of Shakespeare could be found. Images could be cut out from other books, as, for instance, in a 1612 quarto of *Richard III* (FSL STC 22318 Copy 2), which contains emendations in an eighteenth-century hand and an etched portrait of Richard III which has been pasted onto the fly-leaf facing the title page. The portrait (by Hollar) was a cut-out from a 1641 edition of Thomas More's *The historie of the pitifull life, and unfortunate death of Edward the Fifth, and the then Duke of Yorke, his brother with the troublesome and tyrannical government of usurping Richard the Third* (Wing M2688).

Even more creative was the solution developed by John Prater (fl. 1698-1709), who owned a copy of Shakespeare's Second Folio bound with the 'apocryphal' pages of a Fourth Folio (Bod.L. Arch. G c.9). Prater, who obviously admired Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works, produced a summary of Rowe's tentative biography of Shakespeare ('Some Account of the Life, etc. Of Mr. William Shakespeare'), which he copied onto a page of the preliminaries of his Second Folio, where the 'Names of the Principal Actors' appear. However, perhaps because Prater did not own a copy of Rowe's edition or because he could not imagine cutting anything out of it, he chose to write a short descriptive summary of each of the plates used to illustrate the plays in Rowe. These summaries were written in the blank spaces after each play in the folio, together with other information (lists of *dramatis personae* in particular) gleaned from Rowe. Prater was remarkably industrious in this and most of his descriptions are detailed and highly evocative. For example, this is his textual rendition of the plate illustrating *Hamlet*: 'Picture is hamlet holding up hands & stair [stares?] at a Ghost in armor w*i*th a Trunchion in hand *th*e Queen Sitting in a Chair 1 Chair on *th*e ground *th*e picture of a King hangin up on high' (sig. rr5v).[232] (Figure 5)

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[232] In FSL Fo.2 no.10, next to several passages, someone has added the names of the artists who illustrated them in the Boydell Gallery. Entirely devoted to Shakespeare, the gallery opened in 1789 and thirty-four paintings by eighteen artists were on show. On Bod.L. Arch. G c.9, see also: Noriko Sumimoto, 'Updating Folios: Readers' Reconfigurations and Customisations of Shakespeare', in *Shakespearean Configurations*, *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 21 (2013): http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-21/07-Sumimoto_Updating%20Folios.htm. The study of illustrated and extra-illustrated editions of Shakespeare is a field unto itself. It is beyond the scope of this book but it has recently received some noteworthy attention. See,

[INSERT: Second Folio bound with the ‘apocryphal’ pages of a Fourth Folio, Arch. G.c.9, sig. rr5v. By permission of the Bodleian Library.]

Eighteenth-century readers also imported other critical material from contemporary Shakespearean editions. Thanks to an increasingly large body of notes available in these volumes, owners of early editions were tempted to adapt these texts, that is, to modernize them, especially when the early texts failed to make sense or when there seemed to be a gap between them and modern conventions. The naming of characters in particular could be a problem and impede comprehension. One eighteenth-century reader of a 1603 quarto edition of *Hamlet* (BL C.34.k.1) seemed to be particularly conscious of this problem. A number of stage directions are thus adapted to modern conventions: ‘*Enter two Centinels*’ (sig. B1r) has the note ‘now call’d Bernardo & Francisco’ next to it; ‘*Enter Corambis, and Montano*’ (D2r) has the inscription ‘Now call’d Polonius’ and on F4r the reader writes that ‘In later Editions – Vienna Gonzago the Duke’s Name his Wife’s Baptista’.

Among the various editions which were used to modernize texts, those of Rowe, Pope or Hanmer appear to have been popular. The degree to which the early texts were adapted varied, depending on how consistent and conformist readers proved to be. For instance, in Folger Fo.2 no.22 an annotator adapted some (but not all) of the comedies to follow Alexander Pope’s 1725 edition: footnotes, scene divisions, stage directions and textual emendations are imported into the folio. The reader also copied Pope’s method of marking out passages. On the last page of *The Tempest*, immediately above ‘Finis’ is the following inscription: ‘The Beauties of this Author are markd thus ‘ ’ ’ (sig. B4r). Yet, while some plays receive a lot of attention (*The Tempest*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*), most of the rest of the volume is left in its original state.

Clearly interested in a larger selection of plays, the annotator of a Fourth Folio (1685), which is now in the Bodleian Library (Arch.G.c.13), has edited 18 of the 43 plays in the volume to conform to Thomas Hanmer’s 1743-44 Oxford edition. An ink inscription in an eighteenth-century hand on the verso of the Catalogue page (facing the opening of *The Tempest*) confirms this: ‘Corrected from Sr Tho*ma*s Hanmers Edition Printed att Oxon 1744’. The changes manifestly reflect the editor-reader’s interests, as all the comedies are covered, but only *King John*, *Richard II* and *1 Henry IV* receive attention and of the tragedies only *Romeo and Juliet* is adapted.

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for instance, Stuart Sillars’s two books: *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Less orthodox and more inventive are the practices of the annotator of Folger Fo.2 no.24. The reader has added notes selected from Thomas Hanmer's 1750-51 popular duodecimo edition (based on the text of Hanmer's Oxford 1743-44 edition). The annotator does not proceed systematically but according to his needs. Finding possibly too few notes on *Macbeth* in Hanmer's edition, he turns to Theobald's 1750 edition. The notes in the two editions are compared in order to elucidate difficult passages in *Macbeth.* The reader even invents a dual system of footnoting in order to combine notes from the two editions–the Hanmer notes have an asterisk, the others repeat the numbers in Theobald's edition.[233] When it comes to plays like *King Lear*, whose textual history is particularly complex, our reader is busy adding passages, cutting others and comparing the text of the Second Folio to that of modern editions. As a result, the margins of *King Lear* are cluttered with manuscript additions and the editor-reader even has to resort to interleaving to be able to copy a whole scene taken from Hanmer's edition, thus creating a sort of parallel text (sigs. tt2v-tt3r). (Figure 6)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no. 24, sigs. tt2v-tt3r. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Similarly, the reader of Folger Fo.3 no.20 copies notes conscientiously, while still retaining a measure of independence. Some footnotes are taken word for word from Pope's 1725 edition; others (especially the longer ones) are summarized. Moreover, manuscript stage directions sometimes differ from those in Pope. Passages cut by Pope are also encircled in ink, but in some cases the reader shows a personal interest in editing and goes to the trouble of inventing a specific system of re-ordering the scenes in the folio. On a page of *The Taming of the Shrew*, one finds, for example, this inscription: 'N.B. The scenes in *th*e 4th & 5th Acts of this Play, are misplac'd; those w*hi*ch sh*oul*d be in *th*e 4th Act are mark'd with a Star, and those which shou*l*'d be in *th*e 5th with a Cross' (sig. V1r).

Some readers use eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, as well as a variety of other books, when altering their early editions. This is the case of the reader of Folger Fo.2 no.21 who uses Lewis Theobald's edition (1733), as well as other critical works such as Zachary Grey's *Critical, historical, and explanatory notes on Shakespeare, with emendations of the text and metre* (1754), a work referred to frequently as 'Dr Grey'.[234] In so doing, the annotator comes close in fact to preparing a personal edition of Shakespeare's works.[235] Words are emended, footnotes are added and the editing often takes on a personal tone with a series of manuscript marginal comments. At the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* the reader changed the order of the verse lines of the cuckoo song by renumbering them and added this note: '+ The other Stanzas shew th*at th*e Verses sho*uld* be in this order. For Cuckow Buds Mr Whalley reads Crocus Buds. I rather think it sho*ul*d be Cowslip Flower' (sig. M6v). The reference here is to page 52 of Peter Whalley's book *An inquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare, with Remarks on Several Passages of his Plays. In a Conversation between Eugenius and Neander* (1748).[236] There are also bold attempts at editing some passages by completely transforming them. In the folio version of *Richard II*, Bushy's rather opaque speech to the Queen, which begins

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[233] See, for instance, manuscript notes on sigs. nn3v, nn4r, oo2v and oo3v.

[234] Zachary Grey, *Critical, historical, and explanatory notes on Shakespeare. In Two Volumes* (London: Richard Manby, 1754). ESTC: T101658.

[235] Folger Fo.3 no.23 is a similar example of an annotated folio which has been re-edited. In this volume, even the apocryphal plays have editorial annotations, which is rare.

> Each substance of a greefe hath twenty shadowes
> Which shewes like greefe it selfe, but is not so:
> For sorrowes eye, glazed with blinding teares,
> Divides one thing intire, to many objects,

is transformed—seemingly by the same annotator—in order to simplify and clarify it. The following version is given in ink in the bottom margin (sig. C3v):

> Each real Danger has as 'twere a shadow
> Which shows like Danger too; but is not so.
> For sorrow's Eye, like multiplying Glasses
> Divides one single Objct [sic] into many.

A comment in *Henry V* also shows that the annotator was aware of the sources of the play. Next to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Salic Law speech is this inscription: 'NB. What ever mistakes there may be in This Speech the Same are in Holingshead's History from w*hi*ch it is taken almost Verbally' (sig. j3v).

Furthermore, the reader appears to have a very personal idea of verisimilitude. Passages which do not conform to the annotator's idea are classified as 'spurious', 'unworthy' or not 'genuine'. In the scene where the French king in *Henry V* mentions the English favourably by saying 'Witnesse our too much memorable shame, / When Cressy Battell fatally was strucke', the annotator adds '+ & These 6 Lines are certainly Spurious. It is highly improper for *th*e french K. to Expatiate so in Praise of *th*e English. And besides *th*e Same circumstance of History is mentiond [sic] in *th*e First Act. p. 71 Column 1st' (sig. j6v). In *Richard III*, the scene in which the Duchess of York curses herself for having given birth to Richard, when

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[236] ESTC: T062769.

Anne bewails her husband and Stanley encourages them to flee abroad, meets with the reader's disapproval: 'This Scene is unnecessary & unworthy of Shakespear' (Act 4, scene 1, sig. t5r). Similarly, Mark Anthony's shrouded homage to Caesar, beginning 'If then thy Spirit looke upon us now, / Shall it not greeve thee deerer then thy death, / To see thy *Antony* making his peace, / Shaking the bloody fingers of thy Foes?', is marked out by the annotator and considered both too illogical and too badly written to be Shakespeare's: 'These Bracketted Lines, besides *tha*t they are an Invective against *th*e Conspirators Improper bespoke in their Hearing, consist of very Mean conceits. And therefore, as well as for the reason abovementio*ne*d, seem not to be Genuine' (Act 3, mm4v).

As we have seen, early readers were often very inventive in their way of appropriating Shakespeare's text. They devised their own reading aids and charted a textual territory which extended as far as their curiosity would take them. Modernizing and adapting early Shakespearean texts was a fairly common practice for those who owned such editions. Yet these editorial practices also involved a degree of choice and creativity. In some cases, readers began devising personal editorial principles and, as we shall discover now, this could lead them to contest the authority of editors. At its worst the *concordia discors* which ensued might take on the guise of a battle of egos, but at its best it led to a fruitful questioning and redefinition of the very purposes of editing, as the line between readers and professional editors grew thinner.

Editorial Authority versus Readerly Autonomy

What is customarily referred to now as the 'rise of the editor' in the eighteenth century, was a complex and contradictory phenomenon. Indeed, the fact that the editing of Shakespeare was primarily handed over to a series of increasingly professional editors—renowned poets and learned scholars—should not lead us to think that these changes in the production, editing and publishing of Shakespearean texts did not go unchallenged or undiscussed. In fact, these changes brought to the fore a whole series of issues about who should have access to literary texts and how that access was to be made possible. Hermeneutic issues were at stake too, as access to meaning, and particularly to so-called 'genuine' meaning fuelled considerable debate.

It is particularly interesting, especially with regard to the subject of this book, that the issue of annotations was the source of so much debate and criticism during the whole of the eighteenth century. Pope's rather elitist statement that 'Men of a right understanding generally see at once all that an Author can reasonably mean' was exemplified in his 1725 edition of Shakespeare, which presented a 'clean' page with very few notes to the reader.[237] Nevertheless, the idea that the text was self-explanatory for those who had adequate learning went somewhat against the grain of a widening market of readers who were gaining access to Shakespeare's text and whose textual needs had to be served. Moreover, as Marcus Walsh explains, Pope's statement relied 'on the assumption that the text contains a literal sense, or determinate meaning', but there was also an increasing awareness 'that it is the annotator's business to understand this sense (*ars intelligendi*) and to explain it to the reader (*ars explicandi*)'.[238] This idea was to be refined during the eighteenth century and it was to be complicated by the issue of the linguistic reliability of Shakespeare's language, as we shall see. Yet, as the reader's voice came to be heard more and more either in literary magazines and newspapers, or in the margins of Shakespearean editions (in the form of manuscript notes), there was a sense that this work of mediation could go too far—hence a potential *concordia discors* and sometimes a tug-of-war between readers and editors. Indeed, as we progress through the eighteenth century there is a growing questioning and even rejection of 'the scholastic commentary … generally perceived and portrayed as self-obsessed, self-serving, parasitic, not seeking to explain the text but to replace it'.[239]

The work of editors—especially in its perceived excesses—had in fact become the subject of ridicule in literary and journalistic circles. As Jean Marsden points out, 'often a useful foil for an argument, the figure of the idiotic critic became a favorite object of abuse'.[240] Indeed, satire and sarcasm directed against famous literary figures proved to be quite popular, particularly because these practices involved the public who were supposed to buy these editions. The view was that publishers and their editors had flooded the market with their demented annotating frenzies. In the *Covent Garden Journal* of April 1752, Henry Fielding wrote:

> Sir,—You are sensible, I believe, that there is nothing in this Age more fashionable,

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[237] This was a claim that Pope made in his translation of the *Iliad*: *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, Vol. 7: The Iliad of Homer*, Books I-IX, ed. Maynard Mack *et al.* (London: Methuen and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 82.

[238] Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 25.

[239] Ibid., p. 25.

[240] Jean Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 106.

> than to criticise on Shakespeare: I am indeed told, that there are no less than 200 Editions of that Author, with Commentaries, Notes, Observations, &c. now preparing for the Press; as nothing therefore is more natural than to direct one's Studies by the Humour of the Times, I have myself employed some Leisure Hours on that great Poet. I here send you a short Specimen of my Labours, being some Emendations of that most celebrated Soliloquy in *Hamlet*, which, as I have no Intention to publish Shakespeare myself, are very much at the Service of the 200 Critics abovementioned.[241]

Fielding goes on to offer a number of fantastical emendations of Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' speech, his target being Warburton's methods of emending the text of Shakespeare in his 1747 edition. In an earlier work, chapter 8 of his *Miscellanies* (1743), entitled 'The Adventures which the Author met on his first Entrance into *Elysium*', he had imagined an afterlife meeting between the famous actors Thomas Betterton (1635-1710) and Barton Booth (1681-1731) and Shakespeare during which the latter reacted to the two actors' dispute regarding his meaning. Fielding's Shakespeare expressed his views in no uncertain terms:

> Faith, Gentlemen, it is so long since I wrote the Line, I have forgot my Meaning. This I know, could I have dreamt so much Nonsense would have been talked, and writ about it, I would have blotted it out of my Works: for I am sure, if any of these be my Meaning, it doth me very little Honour.[242]

The subject of how and *how far* the text of Shakespeare should be mediated, in particular by the use of annotations, continued to spark debates throughout the eighteenth century. The views on the issue were never totally unanimous, since some defended the value of a critical apparatus of notes. Nonetheless, what was considered particularly counterproductive for readers was the sheer volume of notes and also the conflation of annotations from previous editions.

Near the end of the century, the opinion that the annotating practices of editors had overstepped the mark was becoming commonplace, according to the *British Critic* in 1794: 'it is now a very general opinion, that poor Shakespeare is ... over whelmed and oppressed with notes till his delightful pages become absolutely terrific'.[243] Despite the fact that he saw his work as editor as far less conjectural than his predecessors, claiming that he had not loaded readers with a conflated body of unhelpful notes in his 1790 edition, Edmond Malone still felt he had to justify himself, as 'an idle notion has been propagated', he complained, 'that Shakspeare has been *buried under his commentators*'.[244]

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[241] Henry Fielding, *The Covent Garden Journal*, no. 31, 18 April 1752, in *The Criticism of Henry Fielding*, ed. Joan Williams (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 70.

[242] Henry Fielding, *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, esq.* [1743], ed. Hugh Amory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), vol. 2, p. 40. See also, in the same vein, Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones A Foundling* [1749], intro. Martin C. Battestin, ed. Fredson Bowers (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1975), book X, Chapter 1 ('Containing Instructions very necessary to be perused by modern Critics'), p. 523.

But there was a larger linguistic problem, which had both hermeneutic and nationalist consequences. Many of the notes produced by editors and many of the readers' needs concerned the clarification of Shakespeare's language and the correction of mistakes. Yet to what standard should Shakespeare be corrected? Both Warburton and Johnson were acutely aware of this problem and knew full well that establishing a national language and a national literature on firm ground was an arduous task, not least because the unstable language of a prospective national literary author such as Shakespeare could not serve as a linguistic standard.[245] Warburton complained that the English language was still 'destitute of a Test or Standard to apply to, in cases of doubt or difficulty':

> For we have neither GRAMMAR nor DICTIONARY, neither Chart nor Compass, to guide us through this wide sea of Words. And indeed how should we? since both are to be composed and finished on the Authority of our best established Writers. But their authority can be of little use till the Text hath been correctly settled, and the Phraseology critically examined.[246]

This 'wide sea of Words' was one that Shakespeare's publishers, editors and readers had embarked upon, ever since Shakespeare had appeared in print. Such inevitably circular reasoning made the editorial task even more susceptible to criticism. If editors had trouble dropping anchor, then readers themselves might be tempted to navigate their own course and adapt Shakespeare's text to their own standards.

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[243] Cited in Marcus Walsh, 'Literary Scholarship and the Life of Editing', in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isabel Rivers (London; New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 191-216; p. 204.

[244] William Shakespeare, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare, In Ten Volumes*, ed. Edmond Malone (London: Printed by H. Baldwin), vol. 1, Preface, p. lv. ESTC: T138858. Andrew Murphy traces similar complaints as far back as 1749. For details, see his *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 99-100.

[245] See also Chapters 5 and 6.

[246] William Shakespeare, *The works of Shakespear in eight volumes. The genuine text (collated with all the former editions, and then corrected and emended) is here settled: Being restored from the blunders of the first editors, and the interpolations of the two last: With a comment and notes, critical and explanatory. By Mr. Pope and Mr. Warburton*, [edited by William Warburton] (London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton et al., 1747), vol. 1, p. xxv. ESTC: T138851.

Lexicography and textual criticism were embarked on the same boat and no one illustrates this predicament better than Samuel Johnson. Even if his *Dictionary* appeared nine years before his edition of Shakespeare (published in 1765), Johnson had been working in parallel on these two projects and was conscious of the problems posed by the interdependence of lexicography and textual criticism. He had in fact used Warburton's edition to collect illustrative quotations for the *Dictionary* and when he was nearing completion of it he wrote to Thomas Warton in 1755 that he had experienced the same predicament as Warburton: 'I now begin to see dry land, after having wandered, according to Mr. Warburton's phrase, in this vast Sea of words'.[247]

The lexicographic debate was naturally tied to the on-going project of consolidating England's cultural and political independence. Thus, it is not surprising that it should be given such prominence. The question of who had the right to establish Shakespeare's text and meaning could take on a nationalistic twist. In such cases, even well-seasoned editors such as Edmond Malone might fall prey to xenophobic criticism. Malone's reactions to these attacks are still visible in his own copy of Joseph Ritson's *Cursory criticisms on the edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone* (1792). In this pamphlet, Ritson wrote unabashedly that 'Mr. Malones apprehension arises from his ignorance of the English language' explaining, in a sentence marked out with a cross and where the word 'Irish' has been underlined by Malone, 'But such is the absurd consequence of an Irish editor attempting the illustration of an English author'. A few pages later Malone again marked out and underlined another of Ritson's outrageously nationalistic statements: 'It is much to be lamented that the legislature has not prevented this misconceiving, blundering foreigner from dishonouring and debasing the margin of Shakspeare by such palpable absurdities'.[248] Despite and perhaps because of their rise to prominence, eighteenth-century editors had to face criticism from all sides: competing editors or would-be editors, journalists, or nationalist writers pointed at their foibles and more generally helped to turn editing into a debate of national importance.

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[247] Cited in Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, p. 149. This paragraph is indebted to Jarvis's analyses, esp. pp. 127-8.

[248] Joseph Ritson, *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone* (London: printed for Hookham and Carpenter, 1792), pp. 78, 82-3. This pamphlet is part of a *sammelband* of 12 different works published between 1780 and 1801, assembled by Malone (Bod.L. Mal. 150 (4)).

Editing had thus entered the public sphere and this once silent activity, which had been the domain of a privileged few, working for themselves, or for the reading pleasure of another privileged few, was becoming an activity of domestic significance, in which potentially everyone might participate. What the editors had made available could turn against them and the *concordia discors* between editors and their other potential contenders in the public sphere also betrayed 'a compound ambivalence about the relation between experts and the public'.[249] There is no better proof of these tensions than readers' often ironic notes in their books or manuscript miscellanies on editors themselves or on the subject of editing.

In a verse miscellany which belonged to Archbishop William Sancroft (1617-93) and in which he copied extracts from *Cymbeline* and *Othello*, one finds an early criticism of literary editors and commentators among Sandcroft's list of 105 numbered jokes entitled 'Oxf[or]d Jeasts [sic]': '59. Bad Com*m*entators spoil *th*e best of Books. / So God gives meat, *th*e Devil sends *th*e Cookes'.[250] Later, some eighteenth-century amateur compilers and anthologists would collect satirical extracts attacking editors more directly. Mary Capell copied *ca*. 1740-51 'A Sonnet upon Mr: Warburton' in her anthology of eighteenth-century verse. In her miscellany, which contains over eighty manuscript poems, she transcribed these lines that directly target Warburton:

> Tongue-doughty Pedant; whose ambitious mind
> Prompts Thee beyond Thy native pitch to Soar,
> […]
> Much hast thou written more than will be read;
> Then cease from Shakespear thy unhallow'd rage,
> Not by a fond o'erweening pride mis-led,
> Hope Fame by injuring the Sacred Dead:
> Know, who would comment well his Godlike Page,
> Critic; must have a heart as well as head.[251]

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[249] Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 43.

[250] Bod.L. MS Sancroft 53, p. 5 (reverse of notebook).

[251] Mary Capell, Anthology of eighteenth-century verse, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS Lt. 119, ff. 170r-171r. The author of the satirical sonnet was Thomas Edwards, who had attacked William Warburton's 1747 edition of Shakespeare for its pedantry and sloppiness. The sonnet is in Edwards's *The Canons of Criticism and Glossary: Being a Supplement to Mr. Warburton's Edition of Shakespear. Collected*

Another eighteenth-century reader by the name of Sarah Burnes appears to have been even more blatantly critical of Warburton. On a page of a Fourth Folio in which she has also signed her name (Folger Fo.4 no.12), next to Strumbo's line in *Locrine* where the character complains that 'this is my luck, that when I most would, I cannot be understood: so that my great learning is an inconvenience unto me', Sarah Burnes added this short but cutting remark: 'Mr Warburtons case' (sig. Bbbb1r).

Sarcasm against Shakespearean editors was not limited to Warburton. In 1740 a marble statue of Shakespeare by Peter Scheemakers was completed and placed in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner. At around the same time, an anonymous satirical and somewhat bawdy poem, ridiculing Thomas Hanmer and physician and book collector Richard Mead (1673–1754)—who had also assisted Shakespearean scholar and editor Lewis Theobald—was transcribed in a collection of satires, ballads, and songs compiled by members of the Smyth family of Heath, near Wakefield, West Yorkshire:

> Upon Shakespear's monument being erected in West=
> minster Abby, with a blank scroll in his hand.
> Thus learned Meed, to Hanmer spoke;
> This empty scrowl, is all a Joke.
> Something there should be thought on for't
> Exceeding plain, exceeding short.
> But very deep & very pat.
> And fit for Shakespear to point at.
> A Boy who heard them, hit upon't
> Drew out some Charcoal, & wrote C—t.[252]

Some early editions of Shakespeare also contain manuscript statements which question editorial methods and the transformation of Shakespeare's early texts in subsequent editions. In a Third Folio currently held by the British Library (c.39.i.20), an anonymous eighteenth-century reader added two leaves at the back of the volume with notes. On one of the leaves (f. 2r), one reads:

> This third impression in fol: of his Comedies. Histories and Tragedies, published according to the true Original Copies. But since have been published many other

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from the Notes in That Celebrated Work and Proper to Be Bound up with It (London: C. Bathurst, 1750), p. 14. ESTC: T201005.

[252] Smith family, Poetical miscellany or commonplace book, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS Lt. 11, p. 253.

> editions of these plays. Single and collected, wherin the editors have been very licentious, in altering, omitting, & adding to this edition without any authority, according to their humours and imaginations.

It is particularly interesting that readers challenging eighteenth-century editors should do so in their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions of Shakespeare. While some modernized their quartos and folios, others used the copy text of Shakespeare in order to vent their frustration at the received text which eighteenth-century editors had produced and perpetuated, despite the partial efforts of these editors to examine early editions of Shakespeare. Focus on the so-called irresistible rise of the editor in the eighteenth century has in fact obliterated these often strong reactions by readers to the methods of professional editors. In the last section of this chapter, we shall concentrate on two particularly revealing case studies—two challenges to eighteenth-century editing by especially self-conscious readers—which should help us reconsider how textual debates around Shakespeare's works transformed reader-editor relations during this period.

Dissing the Editors: Two Case Studies

The first reader we shall study is someone whose identity remains unknown,[253] but who clearly had a good knowledge of all the major eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, from Rowe (1709) to Capell (1768). The inscriber's notes could not have been written before the latter date (as Capell's is the latest edition cited) and the hand is definitely eighteenth-century. This reader is particularly outspoken when expressing views on editing. The annotator is a person who possessed at least two Shakespearean folios and who clearly did not hesitate to mark and compare early editions. The inscriptions we shall be looking at are in Folger Fo.3 no.22, but there is evidence that the reader owned another early Shakespearean volume (and perhaps more). This is someone who is clearly interested in comparing early texts. On a page of *The Tempest*, the reader writes about a potential emendation: 'In my other Folio I have at large shown, & from this Instance, how inacurately [sic] Shakespears Plays were 1st printed' (sig. A3r). Nor was the annotator disconnected from intellectual circles, as a comment about Milton's epistle in the preliminaries ('An Epitaph On the admirable Dramatick *Poet*, William Shakespeare') indicates in passing: 'wrote by Milton when he was only 10 years of Age, as I have frequently been informed by Men of Letters'.

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[253] Despite various searches in databases, including Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

However, most striking are the repeated and often blunt attacks against Shakespeare's editors. The reader begins with those involved in the printing of the Third Folio. Indeed, the title of the edition is altered by the annotator to 'A most detestable & most wretched Edition of Mr. William Shakespear's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies'. (Figure 7)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 3 no. 22, title page. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Heminge's and Condell's promise that the works of Shakespeare are 'offer'd to your view cured and perfect' is challenged by the reader who remarks 'I wish this was true but *th*e Number of Com*m*entators & *th*e various Editions since *thi*s Edition prove *tha*t *thi*s Edition is far from perfect or being cured as it is here called' (sig. a1v).

While the reader appears to be aware of the problems of the copy text (that is, the text of the Third Folio), the bulk of the annotator's remarks is concerned with the shortcomings of eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare. Writing a footnote about a line in *The Tempest* where Prospero uses the word 'trash', the annotator remarks 'yet what abundance of nonsense has been wrote by the late Editors on this word & Passage' (sig. A1v). Commenting on a passage of *As You Like It* in a marginal gloss, the reader complains again about a number of contemporary Shakespeare editors: '*tha*t compleat beetleheaded blockhead Warburton has pretended to understand it as a Description of Beauty & if I mistake not Theobald & his friends are all fools alike' (sig. R4r). On the same page and about a passage spoken by Rosalind ('Over the wretched? what though you have no beauty / As by my faith, I see no more in you'), which the annotator seeks to clarify by a gloss, he/she writes: 'Now *thi*s obvious construction of *tha*t Passage reconciles every Line *tha*t follows but *th*e Fools, *th*e Idiots, *th*e Com*m*entators, & Publishers hitherto of our Author have not one of 'em understood *th*e plain meaning of *th*e Passage'. At times, one can hear the reader in private dialogue, as the annotator begins to conjecture about Rosalind's line 'I saw her hand, she has a leathern hand' in Act 4, scene 3 of *As You Like It*: 'If this a Description of her Beauty see page 199 *th*e 2^{d} Column, then I am wrong there & have prated like a fool. but [sic] if this does correspond with what Ros. then says of Phebe I am right & not said a word too much there. veritas [sic] magna est & prevalebit' (sig. R5v). Likewise, the reader writes a long note which covers three margins of the opening page of *All's Well That Ends Well* and challenges Warburton's and Johnson's explanations of the Countess's line in Act 1, scene 1, 'If the living be enemy to the grief, the excesse makes it soon mortall'. The annotator concludes his lengthy note in characteristically self-conscious style:

> indeed I beg pardon for having said so much on so plain a Passage only when 2 Lamed Publishers of our Author have so egregiously misunderstood the Text & Mean*in*g of our

> Author, I thought it might look flippant in me if I did not take some extraordinary Notice of 'em, & make it appear to every Capacity how wrong they were. see my other note here. [this one is crossed out and illegible].

The reader even seems to have examined the 'apocryphal' plays, which is a relatively rare occurrence in the case of eighteenth-century annotators, who often completely disregarded them. On the title page of *Cromwell*, is written, 'Something, in some few Parts, like a Play, but alas! not the Pen of a Shakespeare' (sig***), whereas on the opening of *The Puritan* a note just under the title states: 'a wretched Performance, not a Line of it, the Pen of Shakespeare, me Judice' (sig. ¶B6r).

Yet perhaps the most important annotation of all is when the reader accuses eighteenth-century editors of failing to acknowledge the instability of their copy text. Such an argument could only come from someone who had studied early editions closely. In a margin of *The Tempest*, one senses much irritation:

> Johnson, Capel, Rowe & *th*e rest, if any more, of *th*e Editors of our Author, what are ye about ye Blockheads, *tha*t you do not tell your Readers as you go along, of these real Imperfections in the Work & tell them *tha*t all *tha*t can be expected from a Publisher is to give to *th*e World his genuine Words & Meaning, & not to amuse mankind by tell [sic] saying My Edition is a compleat Edition. When you ought to know that the Work itself is not a compleat Work. (sig. A3r) (Figure 8)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 3 no. 22, sig. A3r. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Even though from our perspective this reader's concern for a 'genuine' meaning may still appear misguided, the annotator of Folger Fo.3 no.22 came close to the realisation that there is no perfect original text and that, as a result, it is impossible to go back to a state of so-called completeness.[254] Early editions represent states of a text which, as we know, remains in some respects unfinished and unstable.

Behind the exaggerations and the egotistical statements, such marginalia are also an affirmation of readerly independence which not only feeds on mainstream editorial discourse, but also challenges it, sometimes in eccentric ways, but occasionally in a fruitful fashion.

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[254] One reader of a Second Folio currently in the Bodleian Library (Arch. G c.9) also noticed differences between early texts by collating them. Thus, for instance, in *Titus Andronicus*, the annotator remarks '18 lines here wanting which are in the 4to. 1605' (sig. pp3r) and in *Hamlet* the inscriber writes, 'in Orig: here with 60 lines being the 2 scene' (sig. rr1r) and 'wanting here several lines of conversation, which are inserted in the 4.to 1605' (sig. rr4v).

These statements are thus part of the complex and tormented intellectual history of editing in a period when the boundary between amateur and expert was still contested.

Another remarkable case is that of Shakespeare annotator, surgeon and apothecary John Sherwen (bap. 1748, d. 1826), who was also an amateur literary scholar and a frequent contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. What is fascinating in the case of Sherwen is that his marginalia and criticism of eighteenth-century editorial methods were made possible precisely because of the growing belief in editorial circles that readers should be made free to express their views and choices and that editing was more about giving readers choices than about imposing them. In his much marked and interleaved copy of Shakespeare's Second Folio (FSL Fo.2 no. 53), Sherwen had in fact made his, Samuel Johnson's hymn to personal reading, to the extent that he had transcribed it onto one of the front flyleaves of his folio:

> Notes [said Dr. Johnson] are often necessary, but they are
> necessary Evils. — Let him, that is yet unacquainted
> with the Powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to
> feel the highest Pleasure that the Drama can give,
> read every Play, from the first Scene to the last,
> with utter negligence of all his Commentators. When
> his Fancy is once on the Wing, let it not stoop at
> Correction or Explanation. When his Attention is
> strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn
> aside the Names of Theobald or Pope. Let
> him read on through brightness and Obscurity,
> through Integrity and Corruption; Let him pre
> serve his Comprehension of the Dialogue and
> his Interest in the Fable. And when the pleas=
> =ures of Novelty haue ceased, let him attempt
> Exactness, and read the Commentators. (Fourth flyleaf recto)

In the preface to his 1765 edition of Shakespeare, Johnson had stated the two principles which were to guide many amateur readers like Sherwen—on the one hand the basic and irrevocable freedom of readers to find their own reading pleasure in a text and on the other their freedom to choose or discard whatever was made available to them in the critical apparatus. Therefore, in Johnson's mind, the rise to prominence of the editor was not incompatible with the autonomy of the reader. Indeed, in the same preface Johnson had rejected dictatorial conceptions of the editor. For him, the purpose of editing was to enable readers to develop intellectual judgement:

> The reader, I believe, is seldom pleased to find his opinion anticipated; it is natural to delight more in what we think or make, than in what we receive. Judgement, like other faculties, is improved by practice, and its advancement is hindered by submission to dictatorial decisions …[255]

Like other readers who contest the work of professional editors, Sherwen enjoys exposing their perceived shortcomings or deficiencies. Reading a text with an editorial eye is for him an intellectual challenge and a way of displaying his independence and astuteness. Commenting on a line spoken by the King in *Henry IV, part 2*, 'Vneasie lyes the Head that weares a Crowne', he notes in the margin: 'The original Thought is in Horace — Somnus Agrestium Lenis Virorum non humiles Domos Fastedit. which has escaped the Notice of all his learned Commentators' (sig. g6r).

When he decides to side with one or several editors it is not because he is particularly influenced by them but because they happen to agree with his own findings. In a signed note on the front flyleaves of his Second Folio, he remarks that his collation of the First and Second Folios has led him to believe in the superiority of the latter. He himself mimics the language of the editors by addressing a hypothetical 'reader' at one point in his analysis:

> In collating this Edition with the first folio of 1623
> I have had an excellent opportunity of judging of
> their comparative Merits, and I do not hesitate
> to affirm that I agree most cordially with Mr
> Tyrwhitt, Mr Steevens and Dr Johnson in
> rescuing it from the Censures of Malone.
>   I have found it again and again more
> correct than that Edition; and as a proof
> of what I say refer the Reader with Confi=
> dence to Loves Labour lost pages 137 & 138 where
> he will find four ^or 5^Instances ^of^ unquestionable Rest=
> =orations from the Corruptions of the Folio 1623.
> he will find similar Instances in every play
> and in every act I might almost venture to say

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[255] Johnson, *The plays of William Shakespeare, in eight volumes*, vol. 1, p. lv.

> in every Page . . J S. (Fourth flyleaf verso)

Sherwen's remarks are often astute and there are times when his open challenges to the authority of professional editors lead him to important realizations. By comparing the quarto (1600) and Second Folio versions of *Henry IV, Part 1*, he realizes that the Archbishop's speech in Act 1, scene 4 beginning 'Let us on: / And publish the occasion of our Armes' appears only in the Folio version and points out that 'They who tell us that Shakesp. never altered or corrected should attend to this excellent Speech added by him after the first Edition' (sig. g2v).

Yet there are moments when his statements appear to be less well founded and to be based more on personal intuition than on independent scholarship. Sherwen owned a copy of Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works. Only volume 6 of Sherwen's copy of this edition has survived (FSL PR2752 1709a Copy 8 Sh.Col.). Volume 6 contained *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* and the seven plays which were first added to the Third Folio (1664) of Shakespeare's works (of which only *Pericles* is considered by modern editors to be part of the Shakespearean canon). While admitting that the debate may never be settled, Sherwen nevertheless expressed his conviction in this volume that the so-called Shakespeare 'Apocrypha' could well be attributed to the playwright:

> they undoubtedly all of them contain very visible marks of his Hand. And some of them are far more worthy of the modern Stage than much of the modern Trash that finds its way there. I have no Doubt but a Revival of the Life and death of Lord Cromwell would be a very productive Representation: and the London Prodigal would act well. (First flyleaf recto)

Sherwen never explains what these 'visible marks' are and his personal convictions appear to be based on subjective, not to say snobbish arguments ('the modern Trash'). He also finds *Sir John Oldcastle* to be authentically Shakespearean on the basis of what he calls 'coincident Expressions' and takes pride in upholding his own views against the opinions of Steevens and Malone: 'It seems my Fate often to differ from those Gentlemen — Nearly the whole of it is in my Opinion worthy of Shakespeare and many Passages in his best Manner — there are in it also many coincident Expressions' (title page of the play).

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'Without such Notes, these Passages in subsequent Editions would be liable, thro' the Ignorance of Printers and Correctors, to fall into the old Confusion: Whereas a Note on everyone hinders all possible Return to Depravity; and for ever secures them in a State of Purity and Integrity not to be lost or forfeited'.[256] In the light of this chapter and particularly after studying the inscriptions left by the anonymous reader of Folger Fo.3 no.22 and those by surgeon and apothecary John Sherwen, Lewis Theobald's statement in his 1733 edition of Shakespeare's works appears to be partly wishful thinking. From the readers' point of view, textual notes were indubitably an improvement, but certainly did not lock meaning forever, as Theobald appears to have hoped.

As we have seen, the increasing number of annotated Shakespeare editions available created a situation in which readers were free to pick and choose which notes were closest to their needs. The presence of printed annotations could also be understood by some readers as an opportunity to challenge editors on their choices and to exert or make a show of their own intellectual capacities. A reader like John Sherwen was still in some regards similar to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gentlemen amateurs who perfected their texts. Nevertheless, the vast difference was that eighteenth-century editors had given a new significance to the work of emending literary texts, in particular Shakespeare.

As a result of the work of these eighteenth-century editors, the once private activity of perfecting and annotating Shakespeare's text had become a way of expressing one's 'Taste' and of looking for that holy grail of eighteenth-century editing, the author's 'intent'.[257] Nonetheless, despite the best efforts of the editors, the two notions were not fully grounded theoretically and could be construed subjectively by many readers. Margreta De Grazia has argued that 'The coveted privilege of 'perfecting' the Shakespeare text was taken from the 'dictatorial' editor and invested in the general readership unaccompanied by any stated principle of selection whatsoever'.[258] Thus, if one adopts the readers' perspective, as we have tried to do in this chapter, the 'rise of the editor' was paradoxical.

This paradox can be explained by the fact that editors sought to entertain close links with their readers through an ever expanding body of prefaces and annotations. While early Shakespearean readers had comparatively little editorial material at their disposal and were mostly driven by curiosity and their need to perfect the text to access meaning, later readers were, in contrast, encouraged to join the conversation around Shakespeare's text. The anonymous reader of Folger Fo.3 no.22 and surgeon and apothecary John Sherwen were no doubt under a dual influence—that of an older 'gentlemanly' tradition of perfecting the text and that of eighteenth-century editors, who encouraged their readers to appropriate the Shakespearean text and join the circle of those who were engaged in philological debate.

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[256] Shakespeare, *The works of Shakespeare: in seven volumes*, ed. Lewis Theobald, vol. 1, pp. xliv-xlv.

[257] Paul Nelsen, 'Chedworth and the Territoriality of the Reader', *Reading Readings: Essays on Shakespeare Editing in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Joanna Gondris (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), pp. 140-63, esp. pp. 146, 156. On taste, see Chapter 6.

[258] Margreta De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 69.

In his 1709 edition, Nicholas Rowe claimed that he did not want to be prescriptive: 'I won't prescribe to the Tastes of other People'.[259] Samuel Johnson's wish in his 1765 edition had been to go beyond scholastic acrimony and rather than trying to supersede all previous editions, he had been keen to stress that the variorum character of his own publication reflected his views of editing as a 'co-operative process of improvement', according to Simon Jarvis.[260] The variorum edition was a way of reducing futile and unproductive textual controversies between editors, but it opened a new Pandora's box of intervention by readers: 'If the reader is not satisfied with the editor's determination', advised Johnson, 'he may have the means of chusing better for himself'.[261]

Johnson's wish was amplified by a number of editors. In 1766, Steevens published an advertisement 'To the Public' requesting assistance for a variorum revision of Johnson's edition arguing precisely that

> No edition with notes critical and explanatory, can be furnished by the application of one man, but what will be found defective in as many particulars [. . .] there is scarce a reader of Shakespeare but is in possession of some knowledge which another will continue to want; and is able to illustrate from his profession, or track of reading, what may have escaped the researches of the most industrious commentator.[262]

Similarly, book collector, patron of the arts and Shakespeare editor Charles Jennens (1701–1773), wished to supply readers with notes which would empower them and lead them to autonomy. His stated aim, argued James Boswell, was ‘to enable every reader to become his own Critick, by furnishing him with all the varieties which the folios, the quartos, or the suggestions of Commentators could afford’.[263]

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[259] Nicholas Rowe, *The works of Mr. William Shakespear; in six volumes. Adorn'd with cuts. Revis'd and corrected, with an account of the life and writings of the author* (London: printed for Jacob Tonson, 1709), vol. 1, p. xvi. ESTC: T138294.

[260] Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, p. 166. Johnson had famously stated in the preface to his 1765 edition that 'the compleat explanation of an authour not systematick and consequential, but desultory and vagrant, abounding in casual allusions and light hints, is not to be expected from any single scholiast' (Johnson, *The plays of William Shakespeare, in eight volumes*, vol. 1, p. lix).

[261] Samuel Johnson, 'Proposals for an edition of Shakespeare' (1756), cited in De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*, p. 68.

[262] George Steevens, 'To the Public', cited in Marcus Walsh, 'George Steevens and the 1778 Variorum: A Hermeneutics and a Social Economy of Annotation', in *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Sabor and Paul Edward Yachnin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 71-83; p. 72.

The wishes of the editors had in fact exceeded their expectations. It is indeed remarkable how many early quartos, octavos and folios of Shakespeare’s work bear the traces of eighteenth-century readers assiduously editing the text. As Shakespeare joined the canon of England’s national literature, the activity of reclaiming his language as the language of the nation through emendation, modernization or conversely the conservative preservation of archaisms (and sometimes errors) constituted a new frontier of reading. Amateur editing acquired a fresh value, not only because readers got a sense that they too were taking part in the establishment of a national literary canon, but also because they began to discover their new powers.[264] One might speak of a ‘displacement of authority’, in so far as ‘subjective readings’ gained considerable ground and the new emphasis was ‘on the individual reader and the validation of individual response rather than the earlier emphasis on consensus’ between an elite group of scholarly gentlemen.[265] Amateur readers invited themselves into the editors’ debates over lexicographical questions and this was often a source of intellectual satisfaction especially as it fostered the confrontation of alternative perspectives and nurtured the hermeneutic impulse, which is always latent in the activity of reading. Their views could sometimes be misguided and even go against editors’ efforts to establish sound principles in the editing of texts, but the often close attention they paid to early texts (or copy texts), as opposed to the received texts produced by the editors, were potentially the source of significant realizations. More importantly, readers were now in a position to arbitrate and this in turn influenced the way Shakespeare was edited and published. In the increasingly competitive market of eighteenth-century publishing, their word—no longer limited to the margins of the printed page—held more and more sway when it came to attributing value to such cultural goods as edited and annotated Shakespearean texts.[266]

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[263] Cited in ibid., p. 69. Jennens was also a librettist, famous for his collaboration with Handel. He edited five Shakespeare plays between 1770 and 1774: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar*.

[264] As Michael Dobson wrote, ‘Shakespeare the Author, just as much as his *œuvre*, becomes the centre of a struggle for the right to speak for the core of the national culture’ (*The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992], p. 134).

[265] Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 5.

[266] On these issues, see Kramnick, *Making the English Canon,* p. 112.

Chapter 4

Early Modern Theatrical Annotators and Transcribers

The links between the circulation of Shakespeare's early editions and the performance or revival of his works on stage have received relatively little attention. Thus, there are few studies of the traces left by those who annotated, cut, interleaved, transcribed, or sometimes pulled apart these editions for dramatic purposes. This is paradoxical at a time when scholars and editors seem to be drawn more towards the 'theatricalized' or 'social' text of Shakespeare, than towards its alleged 'authorial' version.

This chapter will reconsider the all-too-often assumed divide between the world of print production and that of theatrical production, between the practices of so-called learned readers and those of their performance-oriented counterparts. By throwing light on stage-related books and manuscripts, I hope to enrich and perhaps qualify our notion of a 'theatricalized text'. By way of introduction I shall examine a number of literary allusions and material traces from the early modern period which point to the interdependence of book culture and the world of theatre. Then, I shall look at the long publishing tradition which continued to foster exchanges between the world of readers and that of theatre people between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The common features and diversity of annotating practices among performance-oriented readers will be the focus of a final part, which will rely on examples of professional and amateur 'theatricalized' printed texts, as well as manuscript playbooks. All together, the purpose of this chapter will be to encourage us to see how the performance of Shakespeare's text has been almost systematically dependant on the work of readers and publishers. In fact, as we shall see, the stage history of Shakespeare's works is inseparable from its book and reception histories.

Page and Stage: Two Mutually Dependent, Interconnected Worlds

The idea of a divide between book culture and the world of theatre in early modern England is of course grounded to some extent in the social divisions of a largely hierarchical culture—scholarly readers and theatre people did not necessarily rub shoulders. However, it is well known that many playwrights were themselves scholarly readers, while some so-called serious readers showed an interest in performance. Even some of the increasingly erudite multi-volume eighteenth-century editions were produced by men who had an interest in performance. Nicholas Rowe was chosen by the Tonson publishing cartel because he was the leading tragic dramatist of his time.[267] Lewis Theobald was a playwright, librettist and translator for the theatre, as well as being an editor, while Edward Capell held the post of Deputy Inspector of Plays from 1737. The latter 'produced for Garrick a cut and re-arranged version of *Antony and Cleopatra* specifically for performance.[268] Pope, however, distinguished himself by boasting of his dislike for players.[269]

One should also bear in mind that the idea of a divide between book culture and the world of theatre was nurtured by some for ideological purposes and for reasons of social self-fashioning. Thus, to go back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, in *Histrio-mastix* (1633) the mono-maniac antitheatricalist William Prynne made a conscious difference between the reading of printed plays—which remained a lawful activity (as every Christian has the right to be informed)—and the activities of seeing, writing, or acting in a play: 'admit a man may lawfully read a Play-book, *yet it will not follow, that therefore he may pen, or act a Play, or see it acted*. For first, a man may lawfully read such things, as hee cannot pen, or act, or behold without offending God'.[270] Satirist writers were also quick to point out that snobs who sought to emphasize their social differences could fabricate such divisions. In a satirical poem entitled *The Mastiff* (1615), Henry Parrot depicts a fop who makes a show of preferring the book he has just bought to the play he is supposed to be watching.[271]

In the course of the seventeenth century, the market for printed plays grew steadily and, especially at the Restoration, the worlds of readers and playgoers were closely linked and, in some cases, the two spheres had merged. In *The Unlucky Citizen*, (1673), a semi-autobiographical work by bookseller, writer and playwright Francis Kirkman, the narrator confesses his passion for the theatre, which is coupled with an appetite for collecting and reading plays. Kirkman's narrator describes himself proudly as an avid reader, book collector, playgoer, professional and amateur actor.[272]

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[267] Jean Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 68-9.

[268] 'Published in October 1758, it was first acted on 3 January 1759' (Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], p. 124).

[269] See ibid.

[270] William Prynne, *Histrio-mastix. The players scourge, or, actors tragœdie, divided into two parts…* (London: printed by E. A[llde]. *et al.* for Michael Sparke, 1633), part 2, p. 928. STC 20464a.

[271] See Henry Parrot, *The Mastiue, or Young-Whelpe of the Olde-Dogge. Epigrams and Satyrs* (London: Printed by Tho: Creede, for Richard Meighen, and Thomas Iones, 1615), sig. I1^{v}. STC 19333.

In the same way, manuscript annotations left in early editions of Shakespeare's plays indicate that some of their readers knew members of Shakespeare's company, or that they had stage-oriented concerns. In a First Folio held by Glasgow University Library (Sp Coll BD8—b.1), a reader has added personal comments to 'The Names of the Principall Actors': below the names of Joseph Taylor and Robert Benfield is written 'know', below Richard Burbage 'by report', below John Lowine 'By eyewittnesse' and below William Ostler 'hearsay'. Beneath William Shakespeare one can read 'Leass for making', perhaps indicating that he, as the maker of plays, may have acted less than other actors.[273]

The equivalent page bears similar annotations in Folger Fo. 2 no.32. The volume itself has several signatures left by seventeenth-century reader-owners: 'James Wightwick', 'John Hodgetts ... de drury lane ...', 'James Low'. On the page listing 'The Names of the Principall Actors', someone has added the following comments in a hand which appears near-contemporary to the publication of the folio: 'the best foole that ever was' next to Robert Armin, 'tragedian' next to Nathan Field, 'king' next to William Ecclestone and Robert Benfield. (Figure 9)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no 32, inscriptions next to 'The Names of the Principall Actors'. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Annotators of Shakespeare's early editions were not alone in their theatrical interests. Extractors could sometimes be attentive to the dramatic qualities of a play. Clergyman Abraham Wright (1611–90) is notorious for his aesthetic notes on Shakespeare, but he was 'also interested in how plays worked as performance texts for he is analysing them with an eye to the audience'.[274] Other seemingly scholarly readers of Shakespeare sprinkled their editions with references to adaptations of his plays by other playwrights and sometimes with notes on how these adaptations fared. In Folger Fo.1 no.45, the title page of *As You Like It* bears the following inscription in an eighteenth-century hand: ‘This Play was alter’d by Mr Cha:[rles] Johnson in the year 1725, and acted at Drury Lane Playhouse by the Name of Love in a Forest’ (sig. Q3r), while on the opening page of *The Taming of the Shrew* one reads, ‘Alter’d by Iohn Lacy and call’d Sauny the Scot or, The Taming of the Shrew’ (sig. S2v).

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[272] Kirkman republished many pre-Interregnum plays, as well as drama that existed only in manuscript form. He also made a significant contribution to the history of publishing when he brought out a catalogue of 806 English plays in 1671. See L. H. Newcomb, 'Kirkman, Francis (*b.* 1632, *d.* in or after 1680)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15672.

[273] Eric Rasmussen and Anthony James West, eds., *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 38. See also http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/july2001.html.

[274] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 8. For his comments, see Chapter 6.

References such as these to adaptations or actual productions are not uncommon in early editions of Shakespeare. On the *Dramatis Personae* page of a 1637 edition of *The Merchant of Venice* an early reader has added the names of actual actors.[275] Even when a cast list is printed, as in a 1684 edition of *Julius Caesar*, some performance-oriented readers alter the list to make it fit in with the production they have seen.[276] In Folger Fo.2 no. 53 a cast list for a production of *Titus Andronicus* is added in manuscript and preceded by the following manuscript note: ‘In 1724 This horrid Tragedy was acted for the Benefit of Mr Quin producing the Sum of 145.0.8. The Characters were as follow […]’ (sig. gg5r). In the same volume, a manuscript description of Garrick’s performance of Richard III, with Garrick’s account of his awareness of Pope’s presence in the room and of their mutual admiration, appears on the final page of *Richard III* (sig. v4v). In a copy of Rowe’s 1714 edition of Shakespeare’s works, other material elements which prove a reader’s interest in performance can be found: in volume 2, a Drury Lane playbill dated 14 February 1741 for a production of *The Merchant of Venice* (now Folger Bill Box G2 D84 1740-41 no. 1) and a cast list from an unknown production pinned to the *Dramatis Personae* page of *Twelfth Night*.[277]

In a Bodleian Library Second Folio, bound together with a Fourth Folio’s apocryphal pages (Arch. Gc. 9), the annotator (probably one John Prater) refers repeatedly to ‘Shadwell’ as an adaptor of Shakespeare’s plays. On the final page of *Julius Caesar* (nn3v), a manuscript list of *dramatis personae* and a cast list (‘Booth, Mills, Wilks, betterton, Verbungen, Keene’) have been added. Part of a programme note, or bill has been copied too: ‘for the Incorigment of the Comedians Act: in the haymarket & to enable them to keep up the Diversion of plays | under a separate Inter^{est} from Operas. att the Queens theatre in the haymarket on Tuesday the

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[275] *The most excellent historie of the merchant of Venice.* […] *As it hath beene divers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare* (London: printed by M. P. [Marmaduke Parsons] for Laurence Hayes, 1637). BL: C.34.k.24.

[276] See *Julius Cæsar. A tragedy. As it is now acted at the Theatre Royal. Written by William Shakespeare* (London: printed by H. H[ills]. Jun. for Hen. Heringman and R. Bentley, 1684), FSL: S2922 Copy 2.

[277] *The works of Mr. William Shakespear: in eight volumes* […] *by N. Rowe, Esq.* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson […], 1714), sig. A3r, FSL: PR2752 1714a Copy 3 Sh.Col.

4th of Jan 1705/6 | will be Revivd the Tragedy of Julius Ceaser [sic] by subscription' (sig. nn3v).

As these examples have shown, readers were far from ignorant of the stage. Conversely, audiences could not ignore playbooks, as they were sold inside theatres, or close to them.[278] They reminded the public (even those that could not read) that plays are tied to the world of books and they also served as a 'marketing ploy' for publishers.[279]

A Long Publishing Tradition Fostering Exchanges between the Theatre and the World of Annotators

The fact that Shakespeare can still be performed today is intimately tied to the printed book. Even the story of how Shakespeare's works were first collected in folio form partly involves print, as it is estimated that twelve of the thirty-six plays in the First Folio were set up from earlier printed quartos.[280] It is often thought erroneously that early modern theatre owed little to print as actors worked with manuscripts, as opposed to modern actors who generally use printed texts. The work of Julie Stone Peters (*Theatre of the Book*) has done much to change these views. Indeed, printing was never marginal to Renaissance theatre. From the beginning, professional troupes, theatres as well as touring players, often depended on printed editions for their repertoire. Moreover, as we shall see, publishers were well aware of this and were producing texts specifically designed for theatre people and amateur players. Thus, as Peters writes cogently, 'in printing and circulating vernacular play texts that could be performed in them [theatres], in identifying the textual drama as the paradigmatic performance art, print gave the theatre an image of itself'.[281]

It is not unusual in early Tudor printed drama to find information on how to perform a play. John Rastell's *The Four Elements* (c. 1520) gives instructions and various options to potential players: 'whiche interlude yf y^{e} hole matter be playde wyl conteyne the space of an hour and a halfe / but yf ye lyst ye may leue out muche of the sad mater […] Here folow the namys of the pleyers […] Also yf ye lyst ye may brynge in a dysgysynge'.[282] In fact, such performance-oriented instructions constituted a trend in early printed plays. Gabriel Egan has worked out that: 'in each decade from the 1520s to the 1570s somewhere between about a quarter to a half of all plays whose title-pages survive have a reference to potential future performance in the form of a list of parts or a statement of how easily a given number of actors may play it or a statement about the appropriate occasion for a performance'.[283] It is interesting to note that many of the instructions or options given in print are similar in nature to the concerns of later readers who annotated their printed editions of Shakespeare for the theatre and on whom we will concentrate later in this chapter. Length of performance, the number of actors needed and the adaptability of the play to the space or the occasion are elements of great concern to theatre people, particularly to touring companies, and these concerns are naturally addressed by publishers.[284]

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[278] See Tiffany Stern, 'Watching as Reading: The Audience and Written Text in Shakespeare's Playhouse', in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 136-59; esp. 141-2; 148 and 153.

[279] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 21.

[280] Eric Rasmussen, 'Folios', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 145.

[281] Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of The Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 7.

A famous and early example of how printed texts could serve the needs of companies is of course the performance over Christmas 1609 of a play called *Saint Christopher*, as well as Shakespeare's *Pericles* and what was no doubt his *King Lear* by a company led by Richard and Christopher Simpson under the patronage of Richard Cholmley. Accused of recusancy because they had performed for Catholic audiences in Yorkshire, the actors stated that they had 'played according to the printed booke or Bookes' and that 'they onelie acted the same according to the contents therein printed, and not otherwise'.[285] That these players had followed every printed line of the playbooks is obviously doubtful. Their point was that they had used printed books which had been previously licenced by the authorities. Beyond this specific case, what is noteworthy is the fact that printed plays were still being employed in the first half of the seventeenth century, particularly by professional and amateur touring companies. The use of these printed plays as promptbooks was notorious, as attested by a derogatory allusion to those who 'only take the name of Country-comedians / To abuse simple people with a printed play or two, / Which they bought at *Canterbury* for six pence' in Thomas Middleton's *Mayor of Quinborough* (printed 1661).[286]

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[282] Cited in: Charles J. Sisson, 'Shakespeare Quartos as Prompt-Copies: With Some Account of Cholmeley's Players and a New Shakespeare Allusion', *Review of English Studies* 18, no. 70 (1942), pp. 129-43, p. 131.

[283] Gabriel Egan, '"As it Was, Is, or Will be Played": Title-pages and the Theatre Industry to 1610', in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England,* ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (London: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 92-110, p. 94.

[284] For details, see Sisson, 'Shakespeare Quartos as Prompt-Copies', pp. 132-3.

[285] Cited in ibid. at 138.

The ways in which plays continued to be marketed particularly on their title or opening pages during the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is indicative of how print publishing sought to address the market of readers, playgoers and theatre people by both responding to and fashioning their practices. While there is no space here to give a detailed description of this type of marketing and its effects on theatre people, play buyers and playgoers, it is important to note that there were several specific modes by means of which publishers related to the world of performance. A play could be advertised in a backward-looking mode ('as it was acted')—the book could then be sold to readers as a souvenir of a past performance or as a suggestion that it could be reused as a performance text by theatre people.[287]

However, at the Restoration, an increasingly large number of playbooks created the impression that performance time and publication time were almost simultaneous: 'The force of the present tense, 'as it *is* acted', effectively increases towards 1700'.[288] The idea was to advertise future performances of the current production and to sell the play in the fashion of an opera libretto. Indeed, opera was to become a serious competitor for the theatre. In the course of the second half of the eighteenth century a trend also developed for publishing play texts which had been 'regulated from the prompt-book' by a given prompter.[289] Readers were thus guaranteed the *caché* of an 'authentic' theatrical text, which they could also take to the theatre.[290] Moreover, companies could buy these editions in order to use them for future productions. However, these books often complicate definitions of what a theatricalized text can be and blur distinctions between literary and dramatic texts.

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[286] Thomas Middleton, *The Mayor of Quinborough: A Tragedy* (London: printed for Henry Herringman, 1661), Act 5, scene 1, p. 69. Wing M1984A.

[287] For instance, Shakespeare's *The true tragedie of Richard Duke of York, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt* [*3 Henry VI*] bears the mention 'as it was sundrie times acted by the right honourable the earle of Pembrooke his seruants' (1595; STC 21006). The title of the 1597 edition of *Richard II* includes similar information ('As it hath beene publikely acted by the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Seruants'), as well as the quartos of *Richard III* (1597; STC 22314), *Romeo and Juliet* (1599; STC 22323), *King Henry IV, Part 2* (1600; 22288a), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600; STC 22302) and others, which all refer to past performances.

[288] Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 106. Numerous Shakespearean adaptations bear this mention: Shadwell's *The history of Timon of Athens, the man-hater* ('As it is acted at the Dukes Theatre', 1678; Wing S2846); Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida, or, truth found too late* ('as it is acted at the Dukes Theatre', 1679; Wing D2389); Cibber's *The tragical history of King Richard III* ('As it is acted at the Theatre Royal', 1700; Wing S2956) and others.

[289] See, for example, Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 275. Instances include: *The merchant of Venice, a comedy, by Shakespeare, as performed at the*

For instance, a 1762 adaptation by David Garrick of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* wavers between the dramatic and the literary.[291] Its 'Advertisement' (sig. A2r) apologizes to 'The Admirers of *Shakespear*', who 'must not take ill that there are some Scenes, and consequently many fine Passages, omitted in this Edition of CYMBELINE' and goes on to describe how the text was altered for performance: 'The chief Alterations are in the Division of the Acts, in the Shortening many parts of the Original, and transposing some Scenes'. Print is less constrained in the space it allows for the text. Hence, this additional note stating: 'N.B. The Scene printed in Italics in the fifth Act, was omitted in the Representation after the first Night, but it is thought proper to print it'. The end result is arguably a hybrid text, halfway between performance and the literary world.[292]

The irony is that a company of actors used this hybrid text again, as at least one copy of this edition, currently held by the Folger Library (PROMPT Cymb. 14), proves. In this copy, the text of the play is checked for Imogen (in ink) and Lucius (in pencil) and parts of their speeches are cut. A similar ambiguity can be witnessed in Francis Gentleman's introduction to John Bell's 1774 so-called theatrical edition of Shakespeare. On the one hand, Gentleman

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Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Regulated from the prompt-book, with permission of the managers, by Mr. Hopkins, prompter (1773; ESTC N15752); *King Henry VIII. By Shakespeare. As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden. Regulated by Mr. Younger, prompter* (1773; ESTC T62817); *Macbeth, a tragedy, by Shakespeare, as performed at the Theatres Royal. Regulated from the prompt-book, by permission of the managers* (1794; ESTC T170641); *Hamlet. A tragedy. By William Shakespere. Adapted for theatrical representation, as performed at the Theatres-Royal, Drury-Lane and Covent Garden. Regulated from the prompt-books* (1799; ESTC T164914).

[290] This was the idea behind John Bell's 1774 edition of Shakespeare, which appeared in an affordable and well-produced, pocket format and reprinted in its first volume Francis Gentleman's *Introduction to Shakespeare's plays* where the latter encouraged his readers to take Bell's edition to the theatre. See his *Introduction to Shakespeare's plays, containing an essay on oratory* [London: printed for John Bell, 1773], p. 7. ESTC T006435).

[291] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline. A tragedy ... With alterations, &c. by David Garrick, Esq. As it is performed at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane* (Dublin: Printed for R. Watts, and W. Whitestone, 1762).

[292] Another telling example is a so-called performance edition of *Pericles* that states in its title, '*The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre*' (London: printed for, and under the direction of, George Cawthorn, British Library, Strand). ESTC T43862.

claims that performance texts and practices should have priority over literary texts: ‘and as the theatres, especially of late, have been generally right in their omissions, of this author particularly, we have printed our *text* after their regulations’. But on the other, the literary Shakespeare is not totally discarded by him either: ‘some passages, of great merit for the closet, are never spoken, such, though omitted in the text, we have carefully preserved in the notes’.[293]

Bell’s editor, Francis Gentleman (1728–84) was an actor, playwright and essayist who had published a playgoer’s guide, *The Dramatic Censor* (2 vols., 1770), in which Gentleman touched on a great number of Shakespearean plays, praised Garrick’s performances, and more generally tried to shape literary taste. Yet the focus of Bell’s so-called ‘theatrical’ edition gradually shifted—from volume 6 onwards Bell began to publish plays that had never, or very rarely been in repertoire. He could no longer provide cast lists for those plays but continued to sell them with an engraving of a dramatic moment.[294] Bell’s edition proved very successful among the general public and there is evidence that it was used by theatre people to stage plays.

From a modern editorial standpoint, Bell’s editions were arguably some of the worst Shakespearean editions produced in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, they demonstrate a will to cater for the needs of playgoers as well as to establish a standard of literary taste for those who read the plays as literature. This of course could lead to what we may consider as absurd contradictions. For instance, the title page of Bell’s *All’s Well, that Ends Well* proclaimed that it was printed ‘as performed’ and ‘Regulated from the Prompt-Book’, but Gentleman’s preface indicated that ‘*as it is, this play can never live on the stage, and hardly in the closet yet we are of opinion, that by judicious alterations and additions, it might be made much more tolerable, both in public and in private*’.[295] This is what Gentleman went on to do, cutting (sometimes silently), adding and commenting often in a disparaging tone.

Remarkably, as in the case of the *Cymbeline* edition we studied previously, Gentleman’s somewhat muddled editions were used by theatrical annotators to stage plays. A copy of

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[293] Gentleman, *Introduction to Shakespeare’s plays*, pp. 6-7; 8.

[294] Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 117.

[295] William Shakespeare, *All’s Well, that Ends Well, A Comedy, by Shakespeare, As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Regulated from the Prompt-Book, with Permission of the Managers, By Mr. Hopkins, Prompter. An Introduction, and Notes Critical and Illustrative, are added by the Authors of the Dramatic Censor* (London: Printed for John Bell; and C. Etherington, at York. 1773), sig. Y2^r.

Gentleman's *All's Well that Ends Well* (FSL PROMPT All's Well 3) is an interesting case. Gentleman's text is interleaved and has thus no doubt been rebound—this was a practice which developed in the latter half of the eighteenth-century and which became very common for theatrical texts in the following century.[296] An eighteenth-century hand has also been at work introducing extensive changes. The result is a true palimpsest: a text allegedly coming from the stage, from the prompter's book, 'as it was played' and yet one where Gentleman—the editor—has made cuts, while also proposing additions. The manuscript annotations cross out the alleged performance text, making further cuts, but also introducing a considerable number of additions (which themselves contain cuts and interpolations, if one compares them to the text of the Third Folio (1664), for instance). Considering the number of changes made, one simply wonders why another printed edition was not used, as many imported passages come from another edition, possibly the Johnson-Steevens-Reed edition published in 1785. Gentleman's suggestions concerning passages to be cut or reintroduced are rarely followed. Clearly, the annotator did not share his views. In order to make the various pieces of this huge patchwork work together, the inscriber reassigned lines and invented link words or phrases, as well as stage directions.

This extreme example reminds us that stage and page were indeed closely knit, but also that the printed bound book could be disbound, filled with manuscript text and become a receptacle, a melting pot of views about the play, as layers of text were shifted in order to set the play in motion again and put it on a new artistic trajectory. Even when designed for the stage, the apparent fixity of printed texts could be an implicit invitation to break bounds and break up the physical book itself in order to reassemble it in creative ways for future productions.[297]

Reading and Annotating Early Modern Shakespearean Editions for the Theatre: A Study of Common Practices

It is now time to take a closer look at early modern printed editions annotated for the theatre and to focus on annotators' practices, in order to discern their common features and to highlight their differences. This should help us get a better picture of what is often classified by libraries as a 'promptbook', or of what scholars call more generally a 'theatricalized' text.

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[296] See Charles H. Shattuck, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 9.

[297] As Stephen Orgel writes, 'publication, in short, does nothing to fix the text of a play' ('The Book of the Play', in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (London: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 13-54; p. 40).

The first feature of many printed editions annotated for the theatre is the number of visual marks they contain. These marks seem to become more and more frequent and systematized, especially during the eighteenth century when they begin to form a sort of code.[298] Indeed, it was the early modern bookkeeper's responsibility to make sure that actors were prompted adequately with dialogue, or that stage events such as entrances, music or noise making should be efficiently cued. Thus, these editions frequently bear a number of eye-catching devices—they are often marked up with slashes, tildes, ticks, dashes, crosses, check marks, encircled dots, horizontal lines, so many indications which could help the bookkeeper cue actors, regulate performance and follow his text.[299] What is often disconcerting to the modern eye is that these marked-up texts can appear confusing, incomplete or, at times, inconsistent. This is no doubt because we expect a far more finished theatrical document. What Paul Werstine has recently observed about the twenty-one (non-Shakespearean) playhouse manuscripts he has studied closely also applies to early modern printed editions of Shakespeare annotated for the theatre: 'Orderliness and thoroughness are not the marks of theatrical MSS; they are not finished texts'.[300]

The incompleteness of printed editions used in the theatre comes from the fact that these are intermediate documents often depending on other supporting texts or elements.[301] Printed books deficiently or inconsistently annotated for the stage may not necessarily be the result of omissions or errors, as bookkeepers also relied on their memory and on their good readerly knowledge of the text to instruct actors.[302] Moreover, as Tiffany Stern has argued, the bookkeeper could rely on a *set* of documents to regulate performance (including backstage plots as well as call or warning sheets)—the play text being just one of them. This, then, is an important point to bear in mind for modern editors who purport to edit the play as it was allegedly performed. As a consequence, even lightly annotated play texts, or ones which have no annotations at all, may potentially have served in the theatre.[303]

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[298] For instance, 'PS' (Prompter side) and 'OP' (opposite prompter) become very common visual signals. For further details, see Edward A. Langhans, *Restoration Promptbooks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), p. xxvii and Charles H. Shattuck, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1965), pp. 14-23.

[299] Manuscript playhouse texts contain the same indications, as Paul Werstine has observed in his *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 239-41.

[300] Werstine, *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts*, p. 242. Thus, the theatrical texts that New Bibliographers such as W. W. Greg have called 'promptbooks' should 'no longer be defined in relation to "foul papers" as their tidy opposite' (Werstine, p. 112 et passim).

[301] On this point, see Gabriel Egan, 'Precision, Consistency and Completeness in Early-Modern Playbook Manuscripts: The Evidence from Thomas of Woodstock and John a Kent and John a Cumber', *The Library* 12.4 (2011), pp. 376-91; p. 391.

While one must remember that theatrical annotations could vary considerably in type and frequency from one annotated edition to another, it is still possible to identify a number of common practices. In the twenty-one non-Shakespearean manuscript play texts examined by Paul Werstine in his recent study, the most frequent theatrical annotations are, in descending order: passages cut, notation of sounds, addition of stage directions, correction, change, or addition of speech prefixes, corrections or change of dialogue, partial repetition of existing stage directions, censorship by the bookkeeper or some other agent.[304]

This list concurs for the most part, but to varying degrees of course, with the early modern *printed* editions of Shakespeare annotated for the stage which I have examined. In these texts notations of sounds, props, as well as prompt-warnings and advance character-calls are fairly frequent. But the most frequent and the most instructive practices for the purposes of this chapter are the numerous cuts and also the equally frequent manuscript corrections, alterations and in some cases rewritings that these annotated editions display. A complete survey of all annotations is impossible in the space of this chapter. Likewise, a detailed study of printed editions used for the stage in the eighteenth century would merit an entire book. Hence only a few examples can be given here.

I shall concentrate on the two dominant practices of cutting and correcting and shall try to demonstrate what ends these practices served by examining a few of the most revealing instances. A far from negligible proportion of the annotated play texts under consideration were part of large format Shakespearean editions (First Folios and a Third Folio). These bulky volumes might seem ill-adapted to the theatre and yet, with their text printed in double columns on large pages, they allowed the bookkeeper to visualize more of the play at a glance than was the case with smaller volumes.[305] In some cases, the plays were also extracted from previously disbound folios.

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[302] Gary Taylor speaks also of 'the unwritten paratext', cited in Mariko Ichikawa, *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 17.

[303] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 228; 230-1. In the latter case especially, only the potential provenance of a playbook could give us some indication of its use in the theatre.

[304] I am citing only the most frequent in Werstine's list. For further details, see his *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts*, pp. 243-4. These features are what led me to think that *1 Henry IV* in the recently discovered Saint-Omer First Folio may have been prepared for the stage (see my 'The Saint-Omer First Folio: Perspectives on a New Shakespearean Discovery', *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 87 (2015), pp. 7-20; p. 11).

The cutting of printed Shakespearean text is a frequent phenomenon, but it is not systematic. Some theatricalized texts are very lightly cut, if at all, and although passages could be crossed out or hashed in ink, they were sometimes simply encircled to allow the unwanted text to remain visible, in case the cut was reinserted at a later stage or used in another production. Thus, some annotators in fact created a more flexible text where options could be kept open.

The Cutting of Parts: Adjusting Characters

A first category of cuts affects parts and thus characters in the play. In a First Folio currently held by the University of Padua, and possibly annotated for the theatre in the pre-Restoration era,[306] a reviser has endeavoured to reduce the length of Macbeth's part in a number of ways, including the deletion of the first interview between Macbeth and the murderers (Act III, scene 1).[307] If lengthy parts are often trimmed, another way of cutting consists in reducing secondary characters' lines. Titania's part in Act 3, scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is cut so much in a First Folio connected with the Hatton Garden Nursery in London (*c*. 1672) that she almost entirely disappears from the play: the quarrel with Oberon over the little Indian boy is omitted, as is the consequent Bottom-enchantment episode.[308] Likewise, the actress playing Adriana, Antipholus of Ephesus's wife in *The Comedy of Errors*, has far fewer lines to speak in a Third Folio belonging to the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin (*c.* 1676-85).[309]

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[305] Peter Blayney also surmises that First Folios' decline in price at the Restoration made them more readily available to theatre companies (see *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington: Folger Library Publications, 1991), p. 34).

[306] For the dating of these annotations, see Emma Smith's arguments in *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 239-40.

[307] See G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean Prompt-books of the Seventeenth Century, vol. 1 Padua Macbeth* **(**Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1960). Online edition: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html.

[308] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean prompt-books of the seventeenth century, vol. 3* **(**Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964). Online edition: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html.

Another cutting technique consists in reassigning omitted characters' lines to other parts. In the same annotated edition of *The Comedy of Errors*, the character of Balthazar has disappeared, but Angelo speaks some of his lines. In the Smock Alley *Macbeth*, Macduff is substituted for Ross (as in the D'Avenant version of the play), while in the Padua *Macbeth* the reviser simply appears to have wanted to reduce the number of extras: in Act 3, scenes 1 and 4, 'Angus' replaces the Folio 'Lords' and in Act 5, scene 6 'Angus Rosse, Y Seyward' are substituted for 'their Army'.[310] A more ambiguous case is the complete omission of the Bawd's part in Act 3, scene 2 of the Padua *Measure for Measure*, which may have been done for moral reasons (D'Avenant also cuts this material).[311]

However, cuts could also be made to reinforce the stage presence of a character.[312] A typical example would be changes made by eighteenth-century annotators to the printed texts of *Henry IV, parts 1 and 2.* Thus, a 1700 edition of *1 Henry IV*, which already mentioned in its title 'the humours of Sir John Falstaff' and contained a number of silent cuts, is further excised—not to shorten the piece, but to foreground Falstaff, especially in Act 1, scene 3 and Act 2, scene 1.[313]

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[309] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean Prompt-books of the Seventeenth Century, vol. 8* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1996). Online edition: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html.

[310] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean Prompt-books of the Seventeenth Century, vol. 5, Smock Alley Macbeth* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970). Online edition: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html.

[311] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean Prompt-books of the Seventeenth century, vol. 2, Padua Measure for Measure* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1963). Online edition: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html.

[312] In some cases, this could lead to 'exaggerated characterization' as, especially during the first part of the eighteenth century, adapters could 'resolve complex characters into easily comprehensible types' (Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 24). On this point, see also Hazelton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved, The Restoration Versions in Quarto and on the Stage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 158.

[313] William Shakespeare, *K. Henry IV. with the humours of Sir John Falstaff. A tragi-comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre in Litttle [sic]-Lincolns-Inn-Fields by His Majesty's Servants. Revived, with Alterations. Written originally by Mr. Shakespear* (London, Printed for R. W. and sold by John Deeve, 1700), FSL: Prompt 1 Hen.IV 27. For another very similar example, see: William Shakespeare, *The second part of Henry IV. Containing his death: and the coronation of King Henry V* (London: Printed for J. Tonson: And sold by W. Feales, 1733), FSL: PROMPT 2 Hen.IV 2.

Less is More? Editing Shakespeare Down

This brings us to examine more closely some of the other reasons why passages of Shakespeare's texts were rejected by his early modern theatrical readers and revisers. Passages considered over-long, or digressive, are often cut by revisers who wish to tighten up the action of the play. Typically, short parenthetical comments also disappear under the pen of the reviser. In the Padua *Measure for Measure* several passages are clearly considered unessential in the First Folio text and are marked out to be omitted: the conversation between Lucio and the two Gentlemen (Act 1, scene 2), the dialogue between Escalus and Pompey (Act 2, scene 1), part of the Duke's speech on death (a passage in Act 3, scene 1 often commonplaced by non-theatrical readers), and so on.

Polonius—an often long-winded orator and another favourite of commonplacing readers—does not speak his protracted instructions to Ophelia (1, 3) in the Smock Alley *Hamlet.* In the same way, the ghost's lines are not left untouched—parts of the speech in which he describes his murder in Act 1, scene 4 were probably considered too 'wordy' and are cut. Portions of a digressive passage between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Hamlet, which includes Hamlet's now famous '*Denmark's* a prison', vanish. Rife with rumours and side-comments, Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* has also been cut to a considerable degree in the Smock Alley Third Folio.[314] Created in 1662 and situated in the pro-English area of Ireland known as the Pale, Dublin's Smock Alley theatre certainly would not go too far in its criticism of the (English) monarchy. Therefore, there is reason to believe that some cuts were made to steer clear of politically controversial subjects.[315]

The type of passage thought to impede performance varied from one reviser to another. Often, the cuts reveal the personal tastes of the revisers and their idea of what would work on stage at a specific time and for a particular audience. While some retained poetic or gnomic passages, others cut them out, thus going against the passion for collecting *bons mots* of a good many of their contemporaries. In the Padua *Measure for Measure* nearly all of the most poetic speeches in the play are affected by omissions, including Isabella's elevated speech in Act 2, scene 2, which begins with 'Could great mean thunder / As *Ioue* himselfe do's, *Ioue* would neuer be quiet'. Likewise, all six lines of Othello's impassioned speech in the Smock

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[314] See, in particular, Act 1, scenes 1 and 4; Act 2, sc. 1 and 3; Act 4, sc. 1; Act 5, sc. 1.

[315] Patrick Tuite points out, for instance, that the playhouse 'produced tragedies in order to remind Ireland's loyal subjects of their duty to the monarchy' (*Theatre of Crisis: The Performance of Power in the Kingdom of Ireland, 1662-1692* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), p. 128 et passim).

Alley annotated Third Folio, ‘Farewell the neighing Steed, and the shrill Trump […]’ (3, 3), are excised. These cuts might also be explained by the fact that, especially at the end of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare’s drama was deemed to be a reflection of nature.[316] In this way, Shakespeare’s diction, love of puns or metaphors and impressive displays of *copia* could appear ill adapted to the stage, because of their so-called ‘unnatural’ aspects.[317] Dryden’s conception of drama was, for instance, that it ‘admits not too curious election of words, too frequent allusions, or use of tropes, or, in fine, anything that shows remoteness of thought or labour in the writer’.[318]

Gnomic passages in the Padua *Measure for Measure* also tend to vanish. They were probably considered untheatrical by the reviser and their compact and self-contained nature made it all the easier to cut them. For instance, Escalus’s aphoristic side-comment, ‘*Some rise by sinne, and some by vertue fall:* / Some run from brakes of Ice, and answere none, / And some condemned for a fault alone’ (2, 1), is removed, together with the Duke’s series of gnomic and moral conclusions beginning with ‘Hence hath offence his quicke celeritie, / When it is borne in high Authority’ in Act 4, scene 2.

While modern editors would seek to resolve textual cruxes, or clarify difficult passages in footnotes or introductions, early modern revisers tended to dispose of them. No doubt considered too cryptic and thus unnecessary, Macbeth’s lines about ‘this Banke and Schoole of time’ in Act 1, scene 7 of the Padua First Folio are omitted. The same goes for Lady Macbeth’s lines, which begin ‘And to be more then what you were, you would / Be so much more the man. […]’ (1, 7). In the Padua *Measure for Measure*, the reviser took a dislike to Angelo’s admittedly arduous lines in Act 2, scene 4 of the First Folio, ‘As these blacke Masques / Proclaime an en-shield beauty ten times louder / Then beauty could displaied […]’. Somewhat cerebral passages, such as Laertes’s reply to Ophelia in Act 1, scene 3 of the Smock Alley *Hamlet*, ‘For nature cressant does not grow alone, / In thews and Bulk: but as his Temple waxes’, could literally be crossed out. The tendency to dispose of textual cruxes waned, however, in the second half of the eighteenth century when Shakespeare began to be revered as an ‘Author’ whose works came to be regarded as ‘immutable collections of words'.[319] As a result, cruxes had to be clarified for audiences, but changes were kept to a minimum.

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[316] See Chapter 6.

[317] See Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 36.

[318] John Dryden, *Annus Mirabilis*, cited in Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 63.

Revision and Censorship

At times, revisers acted as censors.[320] However, in the annotated play texts which I have examined, such instances are relatively rare and reveal that it was religious rather than sexual issues which were avoided most frequently. Malcolm's 'but God aboue Deale betweene thee and mee' in Act 4, scene 3 of the Padua *Macbeth* is crossed out and badly smeared, and Angelo's reply to the Duke in the Padua *Measure for Measure* (5, 1) is equally censored, no doubt for its attribution of divine powers to the Duke: 'When I perceiue your grace, like powre diuine, / Hath look'd vpon my passes'. In a 1773 John Bell edition of *Macbeth*, the annotator appears to dislike some of the supernatural elements. Perhaps as a response to Francis Gentleman's printed footnote on the same page ('This short scene consists so much of the marvellous, that it is not severity to deem it repugnant to common-sense'), the scene in Act 3 with Rosse and 'an old man', in which they discuss ill omens, is cut by the theatrical annotator.[321]

Later in the eighteenth century and no doubt in order to create the image of a more respectable and decent Shakespeare (at a moment when the playwright was becoming a national figure), sexual innuendo, or even plot elements involving sexual acts tend to be expurgated more frequently. A case in point is the 1773 John Bell edition of *All's Well That Ends Well* where Diana's lines near the end of Act 5, 'He knows himself, my bed he hath defil'd, / And from that time his wife grew big with child', are crossed out. Gentleman's printed comment is that 'we see no reason for such a very full explanation; among gossips it might do well, and be necessary; to a public audience it can be neither one nor the other'.[322] The lines are replaced by the annotator's own seemingly invented dialogue:

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[319] Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 102.

[320] See Chapter 6 for more on the subject of censorship.

[321] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: a tragedy, by Shakespeare, As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Regulated from the Prompt-book, with permission of the Managers, by Mr. Hopkins, Prompter. An introduction, and notes critical and illustrative are added by the authors of the Dramatic Censor* (London: Printed for John Bell; and C. Etherington, at York, 1773), p. 31. FSL: PROMPT Mac. 13.

[322] William Shakespeare, *All's Well, that Ends Well, A comedy, by Shakespeare, As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Regulated from the prompt-book, with permission of the managers, By Mr. Hopkins,*

He knows himself, my bed he hath defil'd
Yet he knows not that he my bed defil'd
So theres my riddle; & now behold the meaning!

The result is that the audience is left to guess that Helen is with child by Bertram. Possibly this was rendered visually, but the effects of the bed trick are greatly attenuated.

Recurrent Practices: Adding, Gap-Filling and Simplifying

As we have seen, there were numerous reasons for cutting Shakespeare's text and while, generally speaking, these cuts were designed to tighten the performance text or to refocus it, in some cases they were necessary in order to introduce *other material*, such as songs and dances. Annotators thus broke the barriers of the printed book in order to introduce circumstantial material. This is where the activities of cutting and rewriting overlap. In the Hatton Garden Nursery First Folio, two distinct revisers have divested *The Comedy of Errors* of many parts of its arguably overlong speeches and light comic passages so as to be able to insert a number of songs and dances.

This brings us now to consider another dominant annotation practice, that of making corrections and changes to the text. The purpose of these changes is often to summarize or gloss a passage that the reviser has previously cut. In the Smock Alley *Hamlet*, the passage following Claudius's instructions, which are aimed at ensuring that Hamlet sets off to England (4, 3), and in which the King addresses England in menacing terms, is cut and replaced by the manuscript line: 'And England if our present love thou holdst at ought let it be testify'd by Hamlets death'.[323] The first six lines of the murderers' dialogue in the Smock Alley *Macbeth* (3, 3) are crossed out and replaced by the more portentous 'It is about y^{e} howre'.

Nor were Shakespeare's sometimes wild flights of fancy and poetry to every reviser's taste. When considered too ornate and thus 'unnatural' (as we have seen previously when studying cuts), his text was often simplified. Adriana's six-line speech passage, which begins,

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prompter (London: Printed for John Bell; and C. Etherington, at York, 1773), p. 298. FSL: PROMPT All's Well 3.

[323] G. Blakemore Evans suggests that this line may have been lifted from either of two *Hamlet* promptbooks prepared by the actor John Ward probably around 1745, which would date this particular revision much later than the Restoration. See note 3 of Blakemore Evans's introduction. Again, in the Irish context of the 'English Pale', these lines might also have been cut for political reasons.

‘The time was once, when thou vn-vrg’d wouldst vow, / That neuer words were musicke to thine eare’ (2, 2), is reduced to the more laconic ‘The time was once, when you lov’d mee’ in the Hatton Garden Nursery version of *The Comedy of Errors*. In the Smock Alley *Hamlet*, the main character promises to remember his father’s injunctions within ‘the table of my memory’—a manuscript addition that simplifies the crossed out Third Folio text: ‘Within the book and Volume of my brain, / Unmixt with baser matter; yes, yes, by heaven’ (1, 4). In the same way, one of the theatrical annotators of the Smock Alley *Macbeth* changed Banquo’s famous lines about Macbeth ‘New honors come upon him / Like our strange Garments, cleave not to their mould, / But with the aid of use’ (1, 3) into ‘Like strange Garments which weare not easy but wth help of use’.

From Modernisation to Adaptation

The extent to which Shakespeare’s text should be modernized can be a contentious issue among scholars today and yet, of course, such processes were already at work in the four successive Shakespearean folio editions and in his early modern single-play editions.[324] There is ample evidence that seventeenth-century theatrical revisers were keen to modernize. Many theatrical practitioners deemed the books’ silent editorial modernizations insufficient. One of the annotators of the Smock Alley *Midsummer Night’s Dream* has a particular knack for spotting and changing outmoded words and difficult phrasing. In the Smock Alley *Hamlet*, the ghost’s parting words are no longer ‘Adieu, adieu, Hamlet:’ but ‘Farewell, Farewell’ (1, 4) and Claudius’s line about Hamlet, ‘Yet must not we put the strong Law on him’ (4, 3) is modernized and turned into ‘yet must we not lay our strict justice on him’.[325] The practice continued well into the eighteenth century. In a 1703 annotated edition of *Hamlet*, the main character’s speech beginning ‘O that this too too solid Flesh would melt’ (Act 1, scene 2) is made arguably more ‘natural’ and thus more exciting to audiences with the addition of a number of exclamatives: 'Oh God! Oh! God', 'Fie on't! oh fie!', 'Heaven & Earth! must I remember'.[326]

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[324] See, in particular, Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 180-95 et passim.

[325] Modernization can sometimes take the shape of a silent cut, as in the Smock Alley *Macbeth* where two of the revising hands delete all references to Macbeth’s armour (5, 3) and shield (5, 8). The intention was probably to dress the actor playing Macbeth in some more modern costume.

In some cases, the alterations consist in more extensive rewritings and the reviser can be seen to accomplish work similar to that of an adaptor. There are several modes of rewriting and in the case of perhaps one of the most talented of these revisers—an anonymous annotating hand in the Smock Alley *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—these modes range from condensing and paraphrasing to almost complete rewriting.[327] Even when they worked within the bounds of the so-called 'authentic' book theatrical annotators shifted the borders of the text, reinventing its performability by opening it up to new aesthetic possibilities. Eighteenth-century revisers worked in the same way. Publishers, as we have seen in the case of John Bell, sold printed adaptations of Shakespeare which actor-managers could purchase and choose to transform again. Thus, for example, Garrick's *Florizel and Perdita. A dramatic pastoral, in three acts. Alter'd from The Winter's Tale of Shakespear*, was published by J. and R. Tonson in 1758, but was readapted for the stage by an anonymous reviser probably in the 1790s.[328] In the new version, the end of the play is extensively cut, especially the dialogue between Florizel and Perdita (pp. 62-3), who no longer seem to be the focal point of the play– which might explain why the two names were crossed out on the opening page and the title restored in manuscript to *The Winter's Tale*. Moreover, the reviser gives Leontes an easy way out. Indeed, in the final scene of the play, Hermione speaks lines invented by the adaptor (they are added in manuscript in the bottom margins), in which she intercedes with the Gods to mend all ills, including the king's mistakes.[329] As Shakespeare's was becoming England's national poet, the changes turned the king into a more palatable character as well.[330]

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[326] See William Shakespeare, *The tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark: As it is now acted by Her Majesties Servants* (London: Printed for Rich. Wellington and E. Rumball, 1703), p. 8. FSL: PROMPT Ham. 1.

[327] Evans highlights these three passages in his introduction to the play in the facsimile edition of the folio. See Hermia in Act 1, sc. 1; a dialogue between Lysander and Helena in Act 2, sc. 2; lines spoken by Lysander in Act 3, sc. 2.

[328] See Kevin A. Ewert, 'Headnote for Winter's Tale. 1790s? Prompt Book. Anonymous. England', Gale Shakespeare Collection (online).

[329] See David Garrick, *Florizel and Perdita. A dramatic pastoral, in three acts. Alter'd from The Winter's Tale of Shakespear. By David Garrick. As it is performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lan*e (London: printed for J. and R. Tonson,1758), pp. 64-5. Harvard Theatre Collection 401. See also Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 193-4.

[330] On Shakespeare and nationalism, see Chapter 6.

Yet, it is also important to bear in mind that with the rise of editorial studies and the need to 'establish' Shakespeare's text, the wave of such adaptations was stemmed to a certain extent, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. While adaptations played a part in the canonisation of Shakespeare (as the playwright's so-called shortcomings were eliminated and his text was made more amenable to audiences' tastes), some nationalist critics increasingly called for a Shakespeare 'restored from the original'.[331] The number of adaptations declined during the final decades of the eighteenth century. Earlier revisers had not considered 'Shakespeare's language as an intrinsic element of his genius' and had altered it when it impeded the naturalness of performance and diction.[332] By the end of the eighteenth century, the mode of adaptation 'shifted from verbal change to dramatic reinterpretation'.[333]

Emending the Text for the Theatre: An Uncommon Practice

Among the various corrections and changes to the text which we have studied, there is one final category which we have not yet mentioned —textual emendations. Although arguably of paramount importance to modern editors, they did not appear to preoccupy theatrical annotators to any great extent until the end of the eighteenth century, when the editorial quest for an 'authentic' Shakespearean text began to influence theatre managers and revisers. With a few exceptions, early theatrical revisers would leave textual cruxes as they were. As we have seen, the solution for theatre people was to cut difficult passages or to rephrase them—hence efforts were made to reshape the text, rather than try to establish a 'correct' meaning. What was 'correct' was what worked on stage and spoke to the moment.[334]

This does not mean, however, that early printed play texts are totally devoid of textual emendations. A counter example may indeed be John Ward's attempts not only to adapt, but also to correct the text of the 1676 and 1683 quartos of *Hamlet* which he owned. Ward was an actor who worked at Lincoln's Inn in London from 1723 to 1742, then in Dublin, coming back to London later to play at Drury Lane. In 1746, he decided to leave London and tour the country with a company of strolling players. The manuscript notes which he took in both

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[331] On these issues, see Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, p. 223; pp. 198-9 and Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, p. 145.

[332] Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 17.

[333] Ibid., p. 101.

[334] See Stephen Orgel, 'The Authentic Shakespeare', *Representations* 21 (1988), pp. 1-25; p. 12.

Hamlet quartos appear to date from that period.[335] What is interesting about Ward's annotations is that not only do they readapt *Hamlet* for the stage, but they also constitute a rather uncommon example of a theatrical annotator with a taste for textual emendations. The 1676 quarto contains emendations that really affect the interpretation of the play. For instance, in Act 3, sc. 1, Hamlet's lines to his mother, 'You go not till I set you a Glass / Where you may see the utmost part of you' are emended to the far more existential 'You go not till I set you a Glass / Where you may see the *inmost* part of you'.[336] A few lines later in the same scene, Hamlet is still with his mother and, seeing the ghost of his father, he exclaims: 'Do you not come your tardy son to chide, / That lap'st in time, and person lets go by / Th'important acting of your dead command? O say!'. Ward alters two central words and the passage reads thus: 'Do you not come your tardy son to chide, / That lap'st in time and *passion* lets go by / Th'important acting of your *dread* command? O say!' (italics mine, p. 53). The second version expresses a rather menacing need for an urgent revenge. Ward continues his emendations in his 1683 quarto, but they do not seem to affect the meaning of the play so noticeably.[337]

Like many texts that have travelled through time, printed plays are communal texts. They often display several levels of annotation, but Ward's notes are relatively exceptional. It is not unusual to find editorial emendations in early printed plays, but these tend, on the whole, to be the work of non-theatrical eighteenth-century readers. Thus, a number of plays that we examined for their theatrical notes in the Smock Alley Third Folio have become hybrid texts in that they also contain editorial emendations. Indeed, an eighteenth-century hand was at work in the Restoration Smock Alley *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* as the Third Folio text is corrected 'by inserting emendations proposed by editors from Rowe (1709) through Hanmer (1743)' (Blakemore Evans, 1996). Other types of hybridity are possible—as early texts annotated for the theatre can also contain passages marked up by their commonplacing readers. This is the case of a First Folio currently held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK (R.S.T. First Folio SR37Acc.1), which contains numerous manicules pointing to passages of literary beauty, as well as indications of possible theatrical cuts ('stop' and 'go on') on several pages of *Richard III* (sig. q5ᵛ onwards). While printed books may appear bounded and locked into the deceptive fixity of print, the annotations they contain are often a reflection of the myriad professional, artistic, editorial and personal purposes they were made to serve across the generations.

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[335] Ann Thompson thinks they were made 'after 1752' ('"I'll have grounds / More relative than this": The Puzzle of John Ward's *Hamlet* Promptbooks', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 29 [1999], pp. 138-50; p. 149).

[336] Italics mine. William Shakespeare*, The tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark: as it is now acted at his Highness the Duke of York's Theatre* (London: Printed by Andr. Clark, for J. Martyn, and H. Herringman, 1676), p. 52. The Sheridan Libraries, Baltimore, MD. Shelfmark: PO2807.A2.1676.

[337] See, for example, William Shakespeare, *The tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark. As it is now acted at the Duke of York's Theatre* (London: Printed for H. Heringman and R. Bentley, 1683), pp. 13, 57 and 81. FSL PROMPT Ham. 54.

From Print to Script: Early Shakespearean Manuscript Play Texts

If sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed plays annotated for the theatre are uncommon, early Shakespearean manuscript play texts are extremely rare. Very few survive and only a handful can be directly related to some kind of theatrical use. The Folger Shakespeare Library has a manuscript copy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (MS. V.a.73), which was transcribed around 1648-60 probably from a copy of the Second Folio (1632). While theatrical use of this manuscript cannot be entirely ruled out, it contains none of the annotations which we have described previously. In fact, it appears to be an imitation of a printed literary text with its running titles, Hugh Holland commendatory verse, list of *dramatis personae* (the first one for this play) and its writing which mimics print fonts.[338]

More directly related to performance, and no doubt used to stage amateur performances, are six transcripts of (in the order of their binding) *Twelfth Night, As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth*, which are currently held at the Municipal Library of the town of Douai, in northern France (MS 787).[339] (Figure 10)

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[338] For details on this manuscript, see G. Blakemore Evans, '*The Merry Wives of Windsor:* The Folger Manuscript', in Bernhard Fabian and Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador, eds., *Shakespeare: Text, Language, Criticism: Essays in Honour of Martin Spevack* (Zurich and New York: Olms-Weidman, 1987), pp. 57-79 and, more recently, Arthur F. Marotti and Laura Estill, 'Shakespeare and the Manuscript Circulation of Texts', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 53-70; p. 63.

[339] Their binding is near-contemporary to their transcription and the manuscript also contains transcripts of Lee's *Mithridates* (1678), Dryden's *Indian Emperor* (1667), and D'Avenant's *Siege of Rhodes* (1663). *Ann-Mari Hedbäck* has argued convincingly that the FSL manuscript copy of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (MS V.a.85) is related to the Douai manuscripts and is in fact a copy of the Douai *Julius Caesar.* See *her* 'The Douai Manuscript Reexamined', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 73 (1979), 1-18; esp. pp. 12-3. Blakemore Evans did not make that connection in his first extensive description of the manuscript:

[INSERT: Six manuscript transcripts destined for performance, MS 787. By permission of the Bibliothèque Municipale de la Ville de Douai.]

All of these bear the date 1694, apart from *As You Like It* (dated '1694/5 9° Martij'). Scholars agree that all of these texts were probably used in amateur productions at the English College of Douai in the late seventeenth century and that their transcripts were at least partly based on a copy of Shakespeare's Second Folio (1632).[340] Strictly speaking these manuscripts are not annotated texts like the ones we have studied previously. Yet none of them are word-by-word transcripts of the Second Folio. All have been adapted to various extents for stage use and thus enable us to catch a glimpse of how late seventeenth-century readers and amateur performers escaped from the constraints of print by moving back to a manuscript medium, which allowed them to give free rein to their creativity and to shape Shakespeare's texts to their personal idea of how they should be performed.[341]

Overall, the technique used in cutting and in modernizing the plays is not far removed from the practices we have highlighted in annotated printed editions of Shakespeare.[342] The plays most affected by cuts are *Romeo and Juliet* (some 971 lines) and *As You Like It* (477). Those least affected are *The Comedy of Errors* (18) and *Julius Caesar* (25), which are both short plays. Many of the cuts in *Romeo and Juliet* are meant to tighten up the play by reducing what could be considered as chatter, quibbling, or elements less directly serving the action and plot of the play.

The cuts in *As You Like It* also strive to create a faster-moving narrative, and to achieve their ends the revisers had no qualms about omitting three entire scenes, among other more minor cuts: Act 2, scene 5, a scene between Amiens and Jaques, disappears completely, together with a scene between Touchstone, Audrey, and William (5, 1) and Act 5, scene 8, a scene between Touchstone, Audrey, and two Pages. Another feature of the revision is that potentially lewd jokes and allusions have vanished in the manuscript, especially those originally spoken by Rosalind and Celia. The fact that the play may have been performed in a

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'Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar": A Seventeenth-Century Manuscript', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 41.4 (1942), pp. 401-17.

[340] For evidence of theatrical activity at the Douai College, see William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), esp. pp. 380-2.

[341] What follows is partly based on Dusinberre's (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*) and Blakemore Evans's detailed examinations of the manuscripts (G. Blakemore Evans, 'The Douai Manuscript - Six Shakespearean Transcripts (1694-95)', *Philological Quarterly* 41.1 [1962], pp. 158-72).

[342] See ibid., p. 166.

Catholic religious institution, the English College in Douai, could explain the censorship. A noteworthy feature of this manuscript is that the texts of the songs in Act 2, scene 7 (Amiens's 'Blow, blow, thou winter wind') and Act 4, scene 2 ('What shall he have that killed the deer?' and 'Take thou no scorn to wear the horn') are replaced by a stage direction for 'Musicke and Song' (f. 45^{v} and 57^{r}). One may imagine that they were copied separately so that they could be rehearsed independently from the play, or that other songs were introduced, as was the case in other theatrical texts. At all events, this shows that songs were easily detachable items, which circulated and could be exported, imported, or completely rewritten. Like play prologues, they were expendable, replaceable items which could also be linked to the specific circumstances of a play's performance and revival.

Another early Shakespearean manuscript related to the stage merits our attention. Sir Edward Dering's (1598-1644) copy of *The history of King Henry the Fourth* (*ca*. 1623; FSL MS. V.b.34). Whereas the Douai manuscript offers examples of how plays could be prepared for the theatre in an institutional and probably educational setting, Dering's *Henry IV* is, as we shall see, the largely *personal* work of a wealthy early amateur adaptor of Shakespeare's works, who was a keen theatre-goer, amateur theatre director and playbook reader and collector in his spare time.

Dering was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1617 and appears to have frequented the theatre fairly assiduously in the ensuing years. His 'Booke of expenses' records that he made twenty-six payments for 'seeing a play' in London between 1619 and 1626.[343] He was also an avid book collector with a passion for playbooks, of which he owned over 200 (purchased between 1619 and 1624 (Lennam 149-51)). He sometimes bought multiple copies of the same play, perhaps to be able to use duplicate copies as scripts for his amateur productions. He probably owned two copies of Shakespeare's First Folio too, bought in December 1623.[344] Clearly, this was a man who had a passion for drama.

That Dering was interested in staging private amateur performances in his own home at Surrenden in Kent is made apparent by the presence in the manuscript of *Henry IV* of a scrap of paper which bears on one side a deleted cast list for Fletcher's *The Spanish Curate*

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[343] T.N. Lennam, 'Sir Edward Dering's Collection of Playbooks, 1619-1624', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16 (1995), pp. 145-53; pp. 146-7.

[344] The two pounds he paid suggests he purchased two copies. Nati H. Krivatsy and Laetitia Yeandle, 'Sir Edward Dering', in *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists*, ed. R.J. Fehrenbach and E.S. Leedham-Green, vol. 1 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), pp. 137-269; pp. 256-7, entry 4.547:1-2.

(licenced to be played in 1622). The list gives the names of Dering's family members and neighbours and includes his own name twice, which implies that Dering acted in at least some of his own productions.[345]

The manuscript is a small folio volume of fifty-five leaves in which two hands are apparent: Dering's and his scribe's—most certainly a 'Mr Carington', whom Sir Edward paid for copying the manuscript, as an entry in his 'Booke of expences' for 27 February 1623 testifies: 'P[ai]d mr Carington for writing oute ye play of K: Henry ye fourth'.[346]

Carington was responsible for copying out all but the first page of the manuscript, which is in Dering's hand. The play text itself is a conflation of the two parts of *Henry IV* based on a copy of Q5 of *1 Henry IV* (1613) and the second issue of the 1600 quarto of *2 Henry IV*. However, the play text, which Dering commissioned Carington to copy, had a specific design—it is a five-act play which abridges an estimated 11 per cent of Part 1 (347 lines out of 2,968), but eliminates about 75 per cent of Part 2 (2,374 out of 3,180).[347] Only Act 2, scene 1 and Act IV, scene 4 of Part 1 disappear completely, no doubt in order to reduce the number of minor characters (2, 1) and to eliminate a short unessential passage (4, 4). However, Part 2 is bereft of most of its text and is basically reduced to a few scenes staging the response of Northumberland to the death of Hotspur, the King's final illness, the rejection of Falstaff and just one comic scene with Falstaff and Mistress Quickly.

The play text, which Dering imagined, began to transcribe and then undoubtedly handed over to the scribe to write out, shows signs of having been edited and reworked by Dering. Indeed, Sir Edward's hand can be seen correcting the text, adding missing words, short phrases and stage directions (mainly marking exits and entrances), all in different inks. Like the professional revisers we examined previously, this playbook reader and collector, amateur actor-director and adaptor would also change his mind at times and decide to drop a passage transcribed by his scribe. On f. 14v (Act 2, scene 2 of Dering's conflated play) five lines of dialogue between the Vintner and the Prince are crossed out.

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[345] For this list and a complete facsimile of the manuscript, see William Shakespeare, *The History of King Henry IV, as revised by Sir Edward Dering, Bart.*, a facsimile edition prepared by George Walton Williams and Gwynne Blakemore Evans (Charlottesville: Published for the FSL by the University Press of Virginia, 1974), pp. viii and 2-3. A colour digital facsimile is also made available on the FSL's Luna website at http://luna.folger.edu.

[346] Cited in Laetitia Yeandle, 'The Dating of Sir Edward Dering's Copy of "The History of King Henry the Fourth"', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.2 (1986), pp. 224-6; p. 224.

[347] These figures are based on Shakespeare, *The History of King Henry IV, as revised by Sir Edward Dering*, p. ix.

Thus, the text which Dering and his scribe have left us is one where the comic and subversive world of Falstaff and his associates has almost totally disappeared, the emphasis being rather on the defeat of the rebels and on the death of the monarch. The overall tonality of the two plays is affected, as the new conflated play is more serious and at times more political or nationalistic—especially if we consider the contents of Dering's two major additions, revealingly situated at the beginning and at the end of the play and thus playing the same role as the prologues and epilogues often supplied by professional theatrical companies for the revival of a play.[348] These are often crucial moments when paratexts readapt plays to the circumstances of their performance.

The first of these additions is written on a scrap of paper attached to the first page of the manuscript (on the reverse of the scrap of paper is Dering's cast list for Fletcher's play). In Dering's hand, this addition makes King Henry sound more outspoken about his will to chase the infidels. A marginal cross and a horizontal line after the manuscript's 'To chase these Pagans from those holy feildes' indicate where the following should be inserted:

> And force proude Mahomett from Palestine.
> The high aspiring Cresant of the turke,
> Wee'll plucke into a lower orbe. and then
> Humbling her borrowed Pride to th' English lyon,
> With labour and with honour wee'le fetch there
> A sweating laurell from the glorius East
> And plant new jemms on Englands crowne.
> Wee'll pitch our honores att the sonnes uprise
> And sell our selves or winn a glorious prize. (f. 1^r)

Writing in a vein which was perhaps closer to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* than to Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, Dering rounds off the speech with a rhyming couplet to drive his point home. Whatever their literary quality, and well before Restoration theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare, these lines, and the conflated play as a whole, demonstrate how a reader-reviser like Dering would take great pains to adapt Shakespeare's text to his time and preoccupations, some seven years only after the playwright's death and at a time of European conflict. Not content to cut *Henry IV, Part 2* drastically, Dering was clearly determined to add his personal touch by changing the ending of the play. The final speech is spoken by

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[348] John Jowett, 'Private Iteration and Public Life: The Dering Manuscript of *Henry IV*', Unpublished seminar paper presented at the European Shakespeare Research Association congress, Montpellier, France, June 2013, pp. 1-10; p. 6.

Shakespeare's newly crowned King Henry V (who is reformed and rejects his low life companions), but the closing words of the play are mostly Dering's own invention and no doubt his parting thoughts and words to his private audience of family and friends and possibly his household servants. Their ring is nationalistic and somewhat threatening and the inspiration behind them stemmed arguably from the war-torn European world of the 1620s. Three lines in the speech also echo a passage in Shakespeare's *Henry V*,[349] thus demonstrating that Dering had read the so-called sequel and had a fair knowledge of what Shakespearean scholars now call the Henriad (*1 and 2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*):

> Now change our thoughtes for honour and renowne.
> And since the royalty and crowne of Fraunce,
> Is due to us wee'll bring itt to our awe,
> Or breake itt all to peeces. Vanities farewell
> Wee'll now act deedes for Chronicles to tell. (f. 55^{v})

That Dering altered two plays where royal power appears weak and incapable of chasing the infidel may reflect this resolutely anti-Catholic man's interventionist wishful thinking or his frustration about the way national and international politics were conducted. As John Jowett points out, these plays express 'an ambiguity of outlook towards public life that would have made the ambiguous act of privately staging a play about political history congenial to Dering'.[350] From a book history point of view, it is noteworthy that Dering's *Henry IV* escapes the constraints both of the print medium and of the public theatre (where plays had to be licenced) to 'recrystallize in manuscript in a new cultural milieu',[351] but also in a private setting where a different and perhaps more politically incisive performability could be sought for Shakespeare's two plays.

Conclusion

Dering's *Henry IV* reminds us of the extent to which theatrical texts are circumstantial documents. The words of Jerome McGann, 'that textuality cannot be understood except as a phenomenal event', apply particularly well to play texts (4-5). As we have seen, annotations made for the theatre can be dictated not only by theatrical convention and the aesthetic tastes of a specific era, but also by circumstances, necessity, the immediacy of stage concerns, or the will to engage with the text for personal or ideological reasons. The increasing circulation of playbooks, as well as the occasional return of Shakespeare's text to manuscript, were factors which could lead to remarkably creative and varied reinventions of his texts. While the increasing circulation of manuscript extracts of Shakespeare was to give the playwright and poet a central role in eighteenth-century commonplace culture, professional and amateur theatrical revisers and adaptors explored the limits of his text. In doing so, they constantly demonstrated theatre's incredible 'ability to comprehend the widest variety of versions of a dramatic text within the concept of a single play'[352]—and some, like Edward Dering, even challenged the unit of the single play.

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[349] 'France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe, / Or break it all to pieces …' (1.2.224-5).

[350] Jowett, 'Private Iteration and Public Life', p. 8.

[351] Ibid.

New Bibliography's 'promptbook'—a theatrical version of the play deemed to be much tidier than the author's so-called 'foul papers'[353]—is nowhere to be found in the early texts that we have surveyed. Well before the current questioning of this category in editorial studies, those who examined theatricalized texts closely had underlined their suggestive and sometimes bewildering protean nature. Thus, in his wide-ranging study, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* published in 1965, Charles H. Shattuck had warned that theatricalized texts 'are tricky, secretive, stubborn informants' and that 'the word "promptbook" in the title of this catalogue is to be interpreted rather loosely', as the term was mostly a convenient way of bringing together under one caption a wealth of different texts, whose common point was that they had been used for dramatic productions (3, 5). Likewise, Edward A. Langhans remarked that some theatrical texts could be especially 'chaotic' in his *Restoration Promptbooks* (xv). What is paramount in all the texts we have surveyed is the (partial) view they give us of the cultural processes at work when Shakespeare was revived for the stage. They remind us in particular that the reason why Shakespeare is still performed worldwide today is because, from the very beginning, there were reader-adaptors who changed the parameters of the printed text by rescripting his works, making them as flexible as was necessary to serve their aesthetic, personal, or ideological needs, as well as those of their audiences.[354]

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[352] Orgel, 'The Authentic Shakespeare', p. 14.

[353] Paul Werstine has been perhaps the most persistent opponent of this theory. Among his many studies on the subject, see his classic article, '"Foul Papers" and "Prompt-Books": Printer's Copy for Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*', *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988), pp. 232-46 and his recent book, *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts*, p. 112 esp. Grace Ioppolo agrees that 'not every playbook was neat and tidy', but points out that 'this does not mean that none was' (*Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority and the Playhouse* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 99). John Jowett argues that the work of New Bibliographers has been misconstrued. For Jowett, W.W. Greg, for instance, was well aware of 'the diversity of feature in the extant dramatic manuscripts, as well as the complexities of transmission to print' (*Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 101).

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[354] See Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 30.

Chapter 5

Commonplacing: The Myth and the Empirical Impulse

Commonplacing: A Word of Context

Shakespeare knew what a commonplace was, he was aware of the so-called commonplacing method and many in his audiences and among his early readers could easily spot commonplaces in his writings and in the works of his contemporaries. Commonplacing was deeply ingrained in the minds of those who had received a humanist-type education (either at grammar school or university level) which laid great emphasis on it. It is an important subject for any study interested in the history of reading, as the very practice of compiling a commonplace affected the way one read.[355] Yet, in fact, commonplacing had been practised for centuries and certainly throughout the Middle Ages. What is more, it survived Shakespeare by four centuries. During the Middle Ages, the 'florilegium', stemming etymologically from 'flowers' (*flores*) and from the verb to 'select' (*legere*, which, incidentally, also means 'to read' and to 'gather') had been a way of compiling the best passages from authoritative sources in contexts where books were scarce.

From a material point of view, writing implements were nothing new either: erasable wax tablets on which to take notes had been in use since antiquity. Inscribers in early modern England still employed them for 'on-the-go' annotation, so to speak, while pocket-size writing tablets with special paper 'on which markings made with the accompanying metal stylus could be erased with a little moisture' were an innovative option.[356] Readers could later transfer notes to manuscript commonplace books, if they were not taken directly inside them or on the printed books themselves. Taking notes in books was likewise current during the Middle Ages, as marginalia, pointing hands (or manicules), as well as an array of signs marking out special passages, can also be found in manuscript works. Manuals on note taking had been present since the mid-seventeenth century, as a 'subset of advice books on how to study'.[357]

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[355] See Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburg Press, 1996), pp. 36 and 43.

[356] Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 34-5; at 65. See also Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery, and Heather Wolfe, 'Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55.4 (2004), pp. 379-419; H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Writing-Tables and Table Books', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2004), pp. 1-11; esp. p. 4; Roger Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure: Literature and Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 22-5; Tiffany Stern, 'Sermons, Plays and Note-Takers: Hamlet Q1 as a "Noted" Text', *Shakespeare Survey* 66 (2013), pp. 1-23; p. 5 esp. For purchase records of writing instruments in the diary of civil servant Richard Stonley, see FSL MS. V.a.459, f. 3r; f. 73r (in 1581).;

So why devote a chapter to Shakespeare and commonplacing, and, more importantly, what makes commonplacing Shakespeare so special, or different, during the early modern period? Much of this chapter will focus on answering those key questions.

In general terms, one could say that the methods described above had originally been developed for and practised by a small elite (priests, aristocrats, parts of the gentry and the middle class, and by those whose business involved writing, such as literary authors).[358] Above all, commonplacing was concerned almost entirely with the study of classical authors. A major change occurred in England with the commonplacing of Shakespeare and other writers and the ever-growing interest in vernacular literature. As suggested, Shakespeare was not the only author to be commonplaced (the manuscript circulation of John Donne's work throughout society being a case in point),[359] but his texts and commonplaces did attract the attention of many early modern people throughout our period (and beyond). Many became collectors and admirers of his commonplaces and Shakespearean scholars themselves began to pay attention to his numerous commonplacing readers.[360] In a period extending well into the

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FSL MS. V.a.459-61 Book C, f. 4v (1594). FSL MS. M.a.176 (a late eighteenth-century 'Poetical Miscellany' compiled by William Dickinson) contains specific notes on shorthand techniques (pp. 216-7).

[357] Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 70. For a vast array of illustrated examples of commonplace books, see Earle Havens, ed., *Commonplace Books, A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001).

[358] The term 'author' could encapsulate many professions in the Middle Ages and did not commonly refer to a single literary author – whose copyright could be defended – until the end of the eighteenth century.

[359] See Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 147 and his *John Donne Coterie Poet* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

[360] See, for instance, the work of Walter J. Ong, 'Commonplace Rhapsody: Ravisius Textor, Zwinger and Shakespeare', in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 1500-1700*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 91-126; esp. pp. 93, 102; Marjorie Donker, *Shakespeare's Proverbial Themes, A Rhetorical Context for the Sententia as Res* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 84; Sasha Robert, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), esp. pp. 91-101; 129-42; Sasha Roberts, 'Engendering the Female Reader: Women's Recreational Reading of Shakespeare in Early Modern England', in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the*

eighteenth century when people still preferred to glean literary extracts from non-dramatic texts, Shakespeare was an exception. This chapter will therefore be concerned with explaining the reasons behind an unprecedented phenomenon – the ambivalent, complex and culturally-changing rise of a vernacular dramatist and poet's work as the source and fount of commonplace inspiration.

In other words, by the end of the eighteenth century Shakespeare's texts had circulated like those of no other literary author. As a cultural phenomenon, this deserves explanation. We shall look first at what form the commonplacing of Shakespeare took in practice. It was often, as we shall see, far removed from the recommendations of theorists of the so-called method. Anyone who has looked at even a small number of Shakespearean manuscript commonplace books will tell you that they were a generic mix. They were often cabinets of verbal curiosities and the gap could be wide between the growing market of books (offering ready-collected extracts of Shakespeare) and actual manuscript practice.

The commonplacing of Shakespeare is also the story of a myth claiming Shakespeare as a national god-like author capable of expressing the voice of nature directly, and of creating his own commonplaces without the help of the classics, or any other literary source. This nationalist and bardolatrous myth was a sham and, as we shall see, some readers of the period were not taken in by it. Adhering to the myth would be seriously overlooking the absolutely normal detachability of his texts. During the interregnum and the eighteenth century in particular, Shakespeare's characters – their sayings and sentiments – were in fact of great interest to verbal collectors, particularly those influenced by popular genres such as the novel. More crucially, an adequate knowledge of the commonplacing phenomenon helps us to understand that Shakespeare stirred interest and survived as an author (as is still clearly the case today), precisely because he was decontextualized, misread and transformed. Commonplacing reminds us at all times that because Shakespeare's text was detachable, it remained attractive, specifically as it was backed by a powerful and enduring nationalistic myth of literary composition.

The Allure of Commonplacing Practices for Shakespeare's Contemporaries

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Atlantic World, 1500-1800, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 36-54.

What is often unclear about commonplacing is that not only can it represent both short sentences in the style used in ancient rhetoric to build oral or written discourse (it might then be synonymous with *loci communes*, *sententiæ*, or topics - from the Aristotelian concept of *topoï*), but it can also, if taken as a whole, denote a method of dissecting, classifying and fundamentally understanding reality by getting to its heart.[361] As will appear later, and as is already implicit, the 'method', which from ancient times had been constantly reinterpreted by theorists, was at the same time very ambitious but ultimately flawed despite its ongoing popularity and extraordinary longevity.

Be that as it may, and even if the word 'commonplace' *per se* is hardly ever used in Shakespeare, the concept of *locus communis* was familiar to him as a writer.[362] Indeed, as T. W. Baldwin first pointed out, in *Julius Caesar* Brutus argues that ''tis a *common proof* / That lowliness is young ambition's ladder' (2.1.21-2), while Viola in *Twelfth Night* tells Olivia that ''tis a *vulgar proof* / That very oft we pity enemies' (3.1.109-10).[363] Likewise, Alison Shell pointed out astutely that when Hamlet cries out 'The Mousetrap. Marry, how? Tropically! This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna' (3.2.216-7), he is unambiguously asking his audience and readers 'to interpret the image as a moral commonplace – or, as he says, a trope'.[364]

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[361] Readers interested in the commonplacing method in general and in Shakespeare will find useful aids in the following, in particular: Joan Marie Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1962); Margreta de Grazia, 'Shakespeare in Quotation Marks', in *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*, ed. Jean I. Marsden (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 57-71; Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Francis Goyet, *Le sublime du 'lieu commun', L'invention rhétorique dans l'Antiquité et à la Renaissance* (Paris: Champion, 1996); Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburg, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), pp. 9-10; 37-8; 43-4; Robert Darnton, 'Extraordinary Commonplaces', *New York Review of Books* (21 December 2000), pp. 82-7; David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Blair, *Too Much to* Know; Adam G. Hooks, 'Commonplace Books', in *The Encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature*, eds. Alan Stewart and Garrett Sullivan et al., 3 vols. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 206-8; Laura Estill, 'Commonplacing Readers', in *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, eds. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 149-62.

[362] T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), pp. 328-9.

[363] Italics mine.

[364] Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), p. 151.

Like many of his fellow playwrights, Shakespeare wrote easily in the commonplace vein. For instance, part of the humour attached to the character of Polonius in *Hamlet* comes from Polonius's (over) use of standard wisdom, or commonplaces. It is no coincidence, for that matter, that an astute early seventeenth-century reader by the name of Edward Pudsey, who had undoubtedly been trained in his school years to recognise commonplaces and *sententiae*, should seemingly take Polonius's sayings at face value and wish to include them in his commonplace book.[365] Pudsey copied them almost word for word, often simply by transforming the verse into prose and deleting speech prefixes and oral structures.[366] Polonius continued to be a favourite of annotators and extractors across the period. William Dickinson's 'Poetical Miscellany', compiled *ca.* 1775-*ca.*1800 (FSL MS. M.a.176) commonplaces the now famous passage of Act 1, scene 3 (55-81) with the heading 'Shakespeare's Hamlet – | Polonius's advice to Laertes—' (pp. 17-8 in the M.S.), while the 'Poetical miscellany of H. Watkins' (*ca.* 1780) has the even more generic 'Advice of a Father to a Son, in the same play.' (pp. 24-25) for almost the same lines (FSL MS. M.a.110.).

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Sir Nathaniel (a curate) has a 'table-book', or portable notebook, which he brings out absurdly (5.1.13.1). Moth remarks that 'They [Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes the Pedant] have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps' (5.1.32-3) and Costard is also under the impression that 'they have lived long on the alms-basket of words' (34-5).

Shakespeare had seemingly the same ambivalent attitude to commonplacing as most of his contemporaries. In this regard, Hamlet is an emblematic example – he who kept a 'table book' and yet in the same speech (after hearing his dead father's injunction to remember him) decides first that 'from the table' of his 'memory' he will 'wipe away all trivial fond records, / All saws of books [that is, all sententious sayings]' (1.5.99-100),[367] only to jot down a commonplace in his notebook a few moments later: 'My tables – meet it is I set it down / That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain' (1.5.107-8). The ambivalence betrays an unease provoked by a method which in fact, as we shall see, never ceased to be controversial, while remaining indispensable and attractive.

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[365] The *Hamlet* extracts appear on both sides of one of four leaves now detached from a miscellany compiled by Edward Pudsey (1573-1613). They date from the 1600s and these leaves (together with extracts from *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and parts of *Romeo and Juliet*) were separated from the overall MS. (Bod.L. MS. Eng. Poet. d. 3) and are now preserved by the SBT, shelfmark ER 82 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Most of these extracts (apart from the *Othello* excerpts) were reproduced (not always accurately) in Richard Savage's *Shakespearean Extracts from 'Edward Pudsey's Booke'* (Stratford-upon-Avon: John Smith, 1888). For readers' ease of reference, the passages cited here can be found pp. 57-9 of Savage's edition. Further citations in this chapter will refer to this edition and the page numbers will be given in the text. However, Savage's omissions or errors will be silently corrected.

[366] Interestingly, Adam Hooks remarks that 'Both early quartos of Hamlet (1603; 1604/5) include printed commonplace markers, mostly around the deliberately sententious lines of Polonius' ('Commonplace Books', in *The Encyclopaedia of English Renaissance Literature*, gen. eds. Alan Stewart and Garrett Sullivan, 2 vols. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 206-9; at p. 208).

A similar ambivalence is found in Sonnet 122, in which the 'tables' (or note books) are accepted as a 'gift'. Nevertheless, the poet insists in the end on natural memory rather than artificial memory (the 'tables'): 'Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain / Full charactered with lasting memory' (1-2). In *Cymbeline*, Giacomo also uses a table book to prepare his plot against Posthumus, but then he too suddenly stops writing and finds the inspiration in himself: 'No more. To What end? / Why should I write this down that's riveted, / Screwed to memory?' (2.2.42-4).

Professional writers such as Nashe, Chapman, Webster and of course Jonson kept table-books, that is, portable notebooks. No such table-book is evident in the case of Shakespeare. This has not prevented wild speculations about its existence, as we shall see later in the chapter. It is interesting and paradoxical to observe that the very people who acquired extracts from plays or other works sometimes ridiculed the frequent practice of commonplacing. Jonson's Sir John Daw describes Aristotle as 'a mere common place-fellow' in *Epicoene.* In his university play, Thomas Tomkins has the character of Anamnestes cast aspersions on 'studious Paper-wormes and leane Schollers' who 'furnish vp common place-bookes with other mens faults'.[368]

Extracting was clearly a hobby for textual collectors, a source of inspiration, and a touchy subject, in the sense that it posed the question of the originality of creative writing with acuteness. Dramatists were well aware that readers (including other writers) could mine their works. Ben Jonson's Sir Politic Would-be, in *Volpone*, famously collected '*notes* / Drawne out of *Play-bookes*'.[369] Professional writers and amateur readers could well be seen as upstart crows, beautifying themselves with others' feathers, to gloss Robert Greene.[370] Writing some four decades later, Thomas Fuller voiced with a certain irony the unease caused by the widespread practice: 'I know some have a Common-place against Common-place books and yet perchance will privately make use of what publickly they declaim against'.[371]

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[367] Incidentally, this is a passage which caught the imagination of Abraham Wright, a seventeenth-century reader, who also makes a note of Hamlet's promise to 'wipe away all triuiall fond records' in his commonplace book, *Excerpta Quaedam Per A. W. Adolescentem* (BL Add. MS. 22608, printed in part in James G. McManaway, *Studies in Shakespeare, Bibliography, and the Theater* (New York: The Shakespeare Association of America, 1969), p. 288).

[368] Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The silent VVoman. A Comoedie*, in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (London, Printed by William Stansby, 1616), p. 543, Act 2, sc. 3. STC: 14751. Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue* (London: Printed by G. Eld, for Simon Waterson, 1607), sig. E4v, Act 3, scene 2. STC: 24104.

Commonplacing: A Popular but Defective Annotating 'Method'

During the early modern period commonplacing was a model which, on the one hand, belonged to Biblical studies and to the teaching of the Bible, but which, on the other hand, had strong ties to Renaissance humanist culture. It was a practice, as we have argued, and at the same time it was presented as a method of education that could lead to better speaking and writing skills – hence also its links with literature. It purported to be a theory of oral and written composition and of literary creation. Yet it went even beyond that. In their overflowing imagination some of its theorists believed that all things in existence could be classified linguistically. In short, commonplacing was nothing less than a system of knowledge of the world.

This explains early modern readers' lasting fascination with it, their often formidable efforts to build bespoke manuscript commonplace books (while a large number of such works were at their disposal in print), as well as the fact that they were all, in their own specific ways, to fall short of the commonplacing ideal. As Terence Cave, David Allan and Ann Blair have shown, readers and writers were equally drawn into using a method unsuited to the nature of literary texts. Shying away from the rational truth which it was supposed to produce, literature in fact, as Cave argues, 'continually reasserts its liberty by rewriting itself'.[372]

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[369] Ben Jonson, *Volpone, or The Fox* (London: Printed for Thomas Thorpe, 1607), sig. M2r, Act 5, scene 4. STC: 14783. See also Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 77 and Stern, 'Sermons, Plays and Note-Takers: Hamlet Q1 as a "Noted" Text', p. 8.

[370] Robert Greene, *Greenes, Groats-worth of Witte* (London: Imprinted [by J. Wolfe and J. Danter] for William Wright, 1592), sig. F1v. STC: 12245.

371 Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (1642), cited by Peter Beal, '"Notions in Garrison": The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book', in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts, Papers of the Renaissance English Society, 1985-1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton: Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), pp. 131-47; p. 139.

[372] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text, Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 333.

During the early modern period, and despite the allurements of its methodology, the commonplacing method misled its practitioners in several ways.

At its best the commonplace book worked throughout the period as ‘a medium of self-regulating autodidacticism’.[373] Indeed, since early modern times (and well before), a number of theorists had sought to encourage and furnish methods of note taking: Erasmus’s 1512 treatises *De ratione studii* and his *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, or Philipp Melanchthon’s *De locis communibus ratio* (1521) are renowned and prevalent examples. In 1557 John Foxe composed a huge volume that was blank apart from its headings and bore the title: *Pandectae: Locorum communium, praecipua rerum capita & titulos, iuxta ordinem elemetorum* [sic] *complectentes*. It incited readers to write their own entries. In his *Ludus Literarius: Or, The Grammar Schoole*, which went through no fewer than seven editions from 1612 to 1627, John Brinsley gave practical advice on how to mark books and commended the commonplacing method, especially if it was carefully employed. The modern scholar David Allan underlines the lasting influence on the eighteenth century and on ‘the enlightenment project itself’ of Francis Bacon’s *Philosophical Works* (reissued under that title in 1733), in which he had asked readers ‘to bestow Diligence and Labour in setting down *Common-places*; as it affords Matter to Invention, and collects and strengthens the Judgment’.[374] John Locke was another powerful advocate in his *A New Method of a Common-Place-Book* (1706). Designed to help readers go beyond traditional commonplace categories, Locke’s treatise disputed the ‘existence of innate categories’ and opened a can of cognitive worms (as readers were very much left to their own devices), creating the modern commonplace book at the same time.[375]

Already begun in Jonathan Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), and fully articulated in Swift’s other monograph of the same year, *The Battle of the Books*, the promotion of ‘proper’ note taking, took the form of a satirical encounter between two well-known allegorical figures: the spider, which had been designated as the worst sort of common placer as early as Francis

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[373] Susan Miller, *Assuming the Positions: Cultural Pedagogy and the Politics of Commonplace Writing* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), p. 26.

[374] Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*, p. 50. Francis Bacon, *Philosophical Works*, vol. 1, p. 135, cited in Allan, ibid.

[375] Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*, pp. 51-2. See also Stephen Colclough, ‘Recovering the Reader: Commonplace books and Diaries as Sources of Reading Experience’, *Publishing History* 44 (1998), pp. 5-37; esp. 7-8.

Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620),[376] and the bee, an insect which had appeared in Seneca's celebrated allegory of commonplacing, as well as in Erasmus's more recent *De Copia*.[377]

As the text unfolds, Swift's sympathies are clearly for the bee and the nectar which it can collect while spreading the pollen. The eighteenth century gave commonplacing a new life, stirring the continued interest of thousands of readers. David Allan underlines Locke's major impact in the field, as he propounded an outwardly easier and certainly more adaptable method for readers. Our close examination of annotated works and manuscript extracts will partly contradict this slightly idealistic vision. Nevertheless, Allan's major argument that the commonplace method continued to flourish during the eighteenth century is a crucial one and redefines the usual paradigm of a practice and method mostly attached to the humanist tradition and gradually disappearing at the arrival of the Age of Enlightenment. Allan's argument for a lasting influence throughout our period is supported by Ann Blair and amply backed by empirical evidence.[378]

The method did have its pitfalls or shortcomings. Needless to say, and despite theorists' wishful thinking and high hopes, many Shakespearean readers, especially when incited to collect their nectar from the flowers of a book which was over 800 pages long (in the case of the First Folio), – a vast *œuvre* – simply gave up at some point. As will be apparent, there is evidence that the intricacies of the method itself, or of any form of thorough note-taking protocol, were beyond many.

There were a number of obstacles to the 'method' even as it sought to reform itself. To begin with, many early humanists like Guarino da Verona (1370-1460), Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), and Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) had a knack for explaining principles, but left their readers in the dark when it came to 'detailed practical advice'.[379] Another difficulty was the nature and the efficient number of headings to use when commonplacing works. Contrary or confusing advice on something as crucial as topics meant that in some cases commonplace books were almost useless, because they had too few headings, or became unmanageable and meaningless if they contained a forest of titles (or *tituli*).[380] Moreover, the ordering of commonplaces, particularly the early modern alphabetical order, could create, and did create, near nonsensical notebooks, as topics were evidently more often than not unrelated. No real helpful consensus arose from the theorists, for each author tended to put forward his own ordering system.

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[376] Published in Latin in 1620, it was later translated into English: Francis Bacon, *The Novum Organum*, trans. and ed. Joseph Devey (New York: P. F. Collier, 1902), Book I, Aphorism 95, p. 76.

[377] Erasmus, *De Copia*, in *The Collected Works of Erasmus. Literary and Educational Writings 2* De Copia / De Ratione Studii, ed. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 639.

[378] Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 258-9.

[379] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[380] Ibid., p. 90.

Be that as it may, it is indisputable that John Locke's advice in the domain played a decisive role. He advocated the *indexing* of notes and helped spread the practice, although not every reader had the time to index their commonplace book fully and effectively or was capable of it. [381] Commonplacing remained after all a leisure activity. Commonplacing as a method claimed that it was able to 'pierce to the pith and heart of things', as Francis Bacon had put it in his *De augmentis scientiarum*. Many manuscript commonplace books show that they never lived up to these theoretical precepts. Yet it is interesting to note that in the passage just cited, Bacon was concerned that the commonplacing method, despite the claim that it could *read* the world by classifying and organizing it through headings (*tituli*) and places (topics) remained somewhat of an artifice in the sense that it often fell short of speaking the language of things *(res*): 'all of them [the commonplaces] carrying in their titles (*tituli*, headings) merely the face of the school and not of the world', as Bacon further added.[382] The critic Francis Goyet postulates that although its avowed purpose may always have been the understanding of all things human, it never could, or did, lead to absolute knowledge. How could it, as the nectar collected from nature by the bee was often not fully digestible – and with classification and collecting came a possible lack of reasoning.[383] In short, these were the defects of a method which some readers – considering the odds stacked against them – managed to minimize to produce fragmented but illuminating interpretations of Shakespeare's texts.

The Manuscript Commonplace Book: A Generic Mix

Library card-catalogues tend to classify miscellanies and manuscript notebooks under the name of 'Commonplace Book'. In recent times, curators have sought to distinguish 'commonplace books' (whose main feature was the use of headings for textual extracts) from other types of manuscripts. However, in practice Shakespearean passages appear in a vast variety of contexts. In printed books they materialise with or without commonplace headings and in miscellanies they compete with a vast amount of different material ranging from poetical excerpts, prose, drama, songs, extracts of novels and collections of press cuttings, to mention but the most obvious.

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[381] See G. G.Meynell, 'John Locke's Method of Common-placing, as seen in his Drafts and his Medical Notebooks, Bodleian MSS Locke d. 9, f. 21 and f. 23', *Seventeenth Century* 8 (1993), pp. 245-67. Blair, *Too Much To Know*, pp. 91-2.

[382] Francis Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, cited in Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p. 269.

[383] Goyet, *Le sublime du 'lieu commun'*, pp. 19-20; 68; 70; 563.

The generic mix is important to mention as it shows how Shakespeare's text was aesthetically blended throughout the period with other types of literature. It should be emphasised that a commonplace need not be classified under a heading to qualify strictly as such. This is probably because, as Ann Blair explains, there have always been at least two ways of gathering commonplaces. Blair argues that for Francis Bacon part of a text could be collected because it represented an 'epitome', or 'summary' of a work, or of a passage inside the work. Equally, a commonplace for Bacon could be the copying of a source under a chosen 'heading'.[384] Furthermore, a commonplace book could contain 'original thoughts' prompted by the work underway – and scholars have indeed noted 'a general trend toward an increased emphasis on personal reflections in note-taking starting especially in the eighteenth century'.[385]

The SBT RST First Folio (SR37Acc1) is repeatedly marked with ink manicules (or pointing hands), brackets and inverted commas, probably made in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, at no point does a commonplace heading appear, nor is there any attempt to index the passages. The marking is not influenced by a specific protocol. What seems to have mattered most to the reader was to highlight and collect exceptional passages, that is, those which stood out for their poetic value. For instance, there is considerable marking of passages in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the reader has focused on poetic and highly stylized moments, rather than dramatic passages (e.g. sigs. N3r; O1r; O3v). This is what some directors would consider 'static poetry' – magnificent, but naturally slowing down any type of dramatic action. At the same time, it is easy to spot that the common placer's method is hybrid. Poetry is high on the agenda, but in *2 Henry IV*, for example, more classical commonplacing themes are marked, such as sleep ('O gentle Sleepe', spoken by the King at sig. g6r), or kingship ('Vneasie lyes the Head, that weares a Crowne', sig. g6r), or indeed 'death' or 'sorrow' in *Titus Andronicus* (sigs. cc4v; dd2r). In *Julius Caesar* there are many ink brackets and there is also copious underlining of the word 'treason' (e.g. sig. ll1v) – a classic topic too. Remarkably, far more speeches and dialogues are highlighted in this play. Seemingly, Shakespeare's handling of the all too important dramatic dimension had to be taken into account, amid passing attention to classical commonplaces such as 'Revenge' (sig. ll1v too). Similarly, the early eighteenth-century annotator of BL MS. Lansdowne 1185 abandons headings at one point in the manuscript to focus on dramatic repartee in a dialogue between Falstaff, Pistol and Mistress Quickly, which he partly cuts (ff. 21v-23v).[386]

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[384] See Vernon F. Snow, 'Francis Bacon's Advice to Fulke Greville on Research Techniques', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23 (1960), pp. 369-79; p. 370 and Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 72.

[385] See Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 72 and Élisabeth Décultot, 'Introduction' in *Lire, copier, écrire*, ed. Élisabeth Décultot (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2003), p. 18-9. This tendency to provide personal comments is apparent in some of the glosses of James Boswell's 'Commonplace Book' (*ca.* 1755), esp. in his comments on Wolsey's speech in *Henry VIII* (unpaginated MS.; FSL MS. M.a.6).

The inscriber of Meisei's MR774 – the most thoroughly annotated First Folio in the world by an early reader – does pay attention to many traditional commonplaces, especially phrases about 'money' (e.g. sig. gg3v) in *Timon of Athens* (his most annotated play), but he never uses headings, nor does he even attempt to index his copious notes. Many of his inscriptions are commonplace 'epitomes', in the style mentioned by Bacon – a method to help one remember a specific work and memorize its arguments in future circumstances (see, for instance the annotator's partly controversial 'reasons why no thing but magicall charmes could | moue a faire wealthie maid to follow an deformed | moore', in *Othello*, sig. ss4v).[387]

On the contrary, Weston Yonge's late eighteenth-century commonplace book is still clearly influenced by the humanist method of finding headings to mark out passages. He is able to find similar topics in a wide variety of authors (including Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and *Cymbeline* (p. 61)) and points to their similarities or variations, thus following a traditional model and proving the point that some readers could still find the humanist method of commonplacing useful on the brink of the nineteenth century.[388] As we can see, readers employed whatever worked for them and tended, on the whole, not to follow a specific protocol throughout. They adapted annotating techniques to their capacities, their needs, and to whatever time they had on their hands.

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[386] Interest in dramatic dialogue in the midst of commonplace books pre-dates the eighteenth century, see in FSL MS. V.a.87 (*ca.* 1650), the examples of *Pericles* and *The Merchant of Venice* (ff. 5v-6r), where the annotator even adds 'Rs' for response, or 'An' for answer (f. 6r). In *The Merchant* of *Venice,* Edward Pudsey (writing during the first half of the seventeenth century) retains Portia's speech prefix, which illustrates the fact that he is not constantly in search of the universal and the transferable, but that he also takes an interest in Shakespeare's characters (Pudsey, cited in Savage, *Shakespearean Extracts*, p. 3). His notes on *Much Ado About Nothing* reveal that, far from discarding dialogue as being uninteresting or difficult to reconfigure, he extracts dialogue, (condensing it considerably (ibid., p. 42)), and shows a visible interest in repartee (p. 46).

[387] Likewise, the annotator of BL MS. Lansdowne 1185 switches techniques at times (particularly at ff. 16v-17r or ff. 33v-34r) and provides summaries (epitomes), rather than commonplace titles followed by extracts. The same goes for the titles summarizing the turning points in the plot of *Richard III* appearing suddenly at sigs. s1r-t1v in FSL Fo. 1 no. 70 (annotated in the mid-eighteenth century). Commonplace epitomes seem to be what the compiler of FSL MS. V.a.87 (*ca.* 1650) was after. The same goes for a single edition of *Pericles* that frequently offers plot summaries (FSL STC 26101 copy 10; e.g., sig. Y1v).

More pertinent to this section on generic mix, in the Free Library of Philadelphia Folio (probably predating the Restoration) little effort is spent on finding commonplace headings,[389] but vocal music is marked out throughout the volume and the second stanza of a song from *Measure for Measure*, in Act 4, sc. 1, which was not in the Folio version, is added by hand (sig. G2r). Another example of hybridity, Arthur Murphy's 'Commonplace Book on humor and comedy' (*ca.* 1760-80) is a comic miscellany with commonplace headings (FSL MS. M.b.22). Collecting jokes, along with commonplaces, was quite frequent throughout the period.[390] A 'Commonplace book of English Prose and verse' contains extracts from a wide variety of sources: selections from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *The Comedy of Errors*, but also a wealth of historical and biographical anecdotes (Lt 48, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, *ca.* 1700).[391] Joseph Hall's 'Miscellany' has brief extracts of *Richard II* and *The Merchant of Venice* and includes notes on medicine, household recipes, a guide to angling, figures of speech with index, sermons, extracts connected to Sir Walter Raleigh, speeches, etc. (FSL MS. V.a.339, *ca.* 1630-50).[392] As for FSL MS. M.a.176, a 'Poetical miscellany' compiled by William Dickinson, *ca.* 1775-*ca.* 1800, with its numerous commonplaced Shakespearean passages, mixes media by including printed extracts pasted onto pages 205 to 209 and totally unrelated to Shakespeare.[393]

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[388] Weston Yonge, 'Commonplace Books and Extracts', Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, Stafford, D(W)1082/J/9/1.

[389] Apart from a passage in *Timon of Athens* where 'Gold' is written in the margin and the main character denounces it in a speech as a 'King-Killer' (sig. hh3r).

[390] See Adam Smyth, '"Divines into dry Vines": forms of jesting in Renaissance England', in *Formal Matters: Reading the Matters of English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Allison K. Deutermann and András Kiséry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 55-76.

[391] Numerous manuscripts in the Brotherton collection are very hybrid documents. See, for instance, Lt 80 or Lt. 83.

[392] For another similar example of a hybrid commonplace book, see FSL MS. M.a.178.

[393] FSL M.a.110, the 'Poetical Miscellany' of John Watkins (*ca.* 1780), is replete with Shakespearean extracts and also contains passages taken from periodicals of the time (esp. *The Spectator*, see p. 108).

So Shakespeare circulated in manuscript in a wide variety of ways. His dissemination was not necessarily methodical but reflected readers' intentions to fuse his works and extracts with other texts that might reveal different concerns. There were undoubtedly resemblances between commonplaced passages across the ages (some topics became true classics). However, the methods used remained broadly speaking highly idiosyncratic and composite.

The Collecting Impulse: Anthologies as Verbal Cabinets of Curiosities

Very close to the commonplace book, there was another literary genre, which purported to classify and collect words at the same time. Anthologies served such purposes and could help collectors build their verbal cabinets of curiosities as quickly as commonplace books, to which they were closely related.[394] Their function was to compile 'flowers of rhetoric'. As Neil Rhodes explains, the term anthology 'derives from the Greek *anthos*, a flower, and many of these collections are figured as gardens, because, like the bee, you go there to make honey from the flowers'.[395]

By far the best – and possibly most graphic – example of the manuscript anthologizing of Shakespeare can be found in FSL Fo. 1. no 70. where marginal flowers mostly drawn in pencil appear next to a considerable number of passages. At the foot of some of these flowers there appears to be grass (and a number are followed by inverted commas marking the anthologized passage). (Figure 11)

[INSERT: Marginal flowers in Folger 1 no. 70, sig. i3r. By permission of the Folger Library.]

In *The Comedy of Errors,* it is indisputable that the annotator was familiar with commonplacing and anthologizing methods, as a manuscript note prompted by the word 'copy' (in the line 'It was the copie of our Conference') reads: 'the copy here is to be understood abundance, fulness as Copia signifies in Latin; and in this sense Ben: Johnson and other authors of that time frequently used it' (sig. I1r).

The pencil flowers in the folio not only indicate many traditional commonplace topics, but also tend to highlight poetic passages, worthy to be anthologized, that is, to be part of a linguistic collection.

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[394] See esp. Barbara M. Benedict's chapter 'Collecting Culture before the Restoration', in her *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 34-69, esp. p. 65.

[395] Neil Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 155-6.

Among the passages anthologized are a number of classical topics such as ‘death’, or, for instance, ‘Ceremony’. A pencil flower was added opposite the Folio’s ‘The sense of death is most in apprehension’ (*Measure for Measure*, f. 6r). Henry V’s speech on ceremony gets two flowers (in ink this time) next to the book’s ‘O hard condition ... That priuate men enioy?’ and ‘O ceremonie, shew me but thy worth ... Creating awe and feare in other men?’ (*Henry V*, sig. i3r). Flowers abound in the history plays (albeit not in the First Tetralogy). Many speeches seemed crucial enough to be set aside for this annotator (in *Richard II*; *1 Henry IV*; *2 Henry IV*; *Henry V*; *Richard III*; *Henry VIII* in particular) and in some tragedies such as *Julius Caesar.* Among the tragedies, Hamlet is far less marked out than *Macbeth* where specifically striking and poetic passages, worthy of being included in a linguistic collection are highlighted with flowers, like the one where Macbeth’s title is said to ‘Hang loose about him, like a Giants Robe / Vpon a dwarfish Theefe’ (sig. nn3r).[396]

The ‘poetical miscellany’ of H. Watkins (*ca.* 1780) is a 155-leaf feat of manuscript commonplacing and anthologizing that must have been composed over several years. Unlike the preceding work, the vast majority of marked out passages bear a heading, or title. Despite the late composition of the manuscript, many of these passages still evoke classical commonplaces, such as, for example, ‘Sleep’ (*2 Henry IV*, pp. 4-5);[397] ‘Death’ (*Measure for Measure*, p. 10; *Julius Caesar*, p. 23; *Hamlet*, pp. 27-8), ‘Patience’ (*Twelfth Night*, p. 10), ‘Mercy’ (*Merchant of Venice*, pp. 11-2), ‘On the vicissitudes of Life’ and ‘On Friends’ (*Henry VIII*, pp. 31-2 and p. 32); ‘On Reputation’ (*Othello*, p. 32). Watkins’ miscellany is a verbal anthology which required considerable effort and perseverance. It is remarkable because, as well as collecting extracts on classical commonplace topics, the compiler had a genuine curiosity for poetic, aesthetically pleasing flowers of poetry that he habitually decontextualized. A passage with the heading ‘On Musick’ in *The Merchant of Venice* (p. 13) and another entitled ‘On Friendship’ in *A Midsummer’ Night’s Dream* (p. 14) fall entirely under that category. The humanist method had insisted on the need to collect phrases for rhetorical ornament, but in cases such as those, Watkins arguably straddled two traditions: the

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[396] Some readers seemed more conventional than others. One of the rare Shakespearean quartos to be commonplaced, a 1599 edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, which may have been inscribed during the seventeenth century, seems to focus primarily on short couplets spoken by Romeo, which are either easy to reuse in other (romantic) situations or of aesthetic interest, see, for example, sigs. B2r, B4r, C1v, C3v, C4r, D2r-v, D3r-v, D4r, F2r, G4r (BL C.12.g.18; the book is accessible online at http://special-1.bl.uk/treasures/SiqDiscovery/ui/record.aspx?Copy=80).

[397] Note: the Shakespearean extracts are paginated in the manuscript. FSL MS. M.a.110.

Renaissance commonplace tradition and the eighteenth-century passion for a Shakespeare turned into a national leader of aesthetic taste (see chapter 6 for more on the subject).

There is one final element in the manuscript which is significant. As the Folger Library's cataloguer indicates, 'leaves 1-19 of his miscellany were reserved for an index and provided with thumb tabs, but matter proving too abundant these were eliminated and the preliminary leaves used for the last-copied pieces'.[398] Thus, his enterprise fell short of producing a completely usable tool that could be navigated. Like many before him, Watkins was most likely overwhelmed by the material he so painstakingly collected, but what bespoke beauties there were in his collection: enough to fill an entire cabinet of curiosities! Despite its shortcomings, the anthologizing drive did succeed in spreading and keeping Shakespeare's text in movement, even when the aim of collecting literature changed.[399]

The Print and Manuscript Commonplacing of Shakespeare: Understanding the Empirical Impulse

The commonplacing of Shakespeare was also a print phenomenon. Even before Alexander Pope's 1725 multi-volume edition of Shakespeare, in which the most 'shining passages' in Shakespeare were demarcated,[400] we know that a number of Shakespeare's early editions had been marked up for commonplacing: *The Rape of Lucrece* (in its 1594, 1598 and 1600 editions), the first quarto of *Hamlet* (1603) and the First Folio.[401] As Peter Stallybrass and

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[398] http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=220296.

[399] Leah Price's astute remark that 'anthologists quarantine Shakespeare from other playwrights as systematically as they unmoor selected passages from their dramatic context' is definitely true for *print* anthologies. However, it is difficult to be as categorical for manuscript anthologies, which, as we have seen, were far more unstable documents, seldom, or never, achieving the goals of their print counterparts (Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 (repr. 2004)), p. 81).

[400] Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 41-2.

[401] For details, see G. K. Hunter, '*The Marking of Sententiae* in Elizabethan Printed Plays, Poems, and Romances', *The Library*, 5th series, 6 (Dec. 1951), pp. 171-88; Margreta de Grazia, 'Shakespeare in Quotation Marks', in *The Appropriation of Shakespeare. Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*, ed. Jean I. Marsden (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 57-91. Peter Stallybrass and Roger Chartier, 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare, 1590–1619', in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 35-56; esp. pp. 46-7; Peter Stallybrass and Zachary Lesser, 'The First Literary Hamlet and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.4 (2008), pp. 371-420, esp. p. 384. The latter remark that the 1609 quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* has font changes

Roger Chartier have shown, the early marking up of these editions had a direct influence on the first print commonplace books in which Shakespeare extracts appeared. Marked up passages of *The Rape of Lucrece* were included in a collection of commonplaces taken from vernacular authors, which was published in 1600 and had been edited by Anthony Munday from John Bodenham's notes. *Bel-vedére, or, The Garden of the Muses* 'took 88 quotations from Shakespeare's plays' and '91 from Lucrece alone'.[402] That same year Nicholas Ling also published Robert Allott's *Englands Parnassus: or the Choysest Flowers of our Moderne Poets.* Shakespeare is cited again (he is one of a whole group of English authors – but not the most prominent). His two narrative poems, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, outweigh extracts from only five of his plays,[403] particularly because the passages taken from the narrative poems are longer and thus closer to commonplace 'epitomes'. In 1655, when John Cotgrave published *The English Treasury of Wit and Language*, the situation was reversed as the Shakespearean extracts were taken solely from dramatic works.[404]

From the beginning, therefore, the commonplace tradition was intimately connected to the editorial tradition.[405] Readers could not escape that fact and to some extent Pope's 1725 edition of Shakespeare perpetuated the link. Pope, who boasted that 'the Play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends' clearly tried to create 'a reader's text'.[406] His central objective was 'to demarcate, as efficiently as possible, what he regards as the heart of the matter, Shakespeare's most beautiful writing'.[407] In fact, print Shakespeare was altering the meaning of commonplacing. Broadly speaking, the focus moved away from use and veered more towards showcasing the aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's writings.

In some regards, Pope's project was realised in the first anthology entirely devoted to Shakespeare: William Dodd's *The Beauties of Shakespear: Regularly selected from each play. With a general index, digesting them under proper heads* (1752). Dodd's commonplace book was followed by an anonymous collection with a similar aesthetic focus, *The Beauties of Shakespeare; selected from his plays and poems* (1783). Nevertheless, the idea of a

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and quotation marks. The same goes for the 1623 editions of *Measure for Measure* and *Cymbeline*, while the 1623 edition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has only font changes (ibid., p. 404).

[402] Stallybrass and Chartier, 'Reading and Authorship', p. 47.

[403] Ibid., pp. 48-9.

[404] Ibid., p. 54.

[405] Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*, p. 178.

[406] Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 124-5. Pope cited in ibid.

[407] Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century*, p. 42.

Shakespeare as a teacher of ethical truths was gaining ground with the publication of Elizabeth Griffith's *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated* (1775), an anthology of moral passages from his works. Near the end of the century, other qualities were attributed to Shakespeare, as in Andrew Becket's *A Concordance to Shakespeare: Suited to all the Editions* (1787), in which philosophical commonplaces were brought to the fore in order to provide readers with 'practical axioms and domestic wisdom' and a 'system of civil and economical prudence'.[408]

Needless to say, print commonplace books were designed for an educated elite of readers, the aim being to shape their tastes. For those who could afford these ready-made print commonplace books, much time and effort were no doubt saved. Eighteenth-century readers in particular could purchase fully indexed Shakespearean commonplaces neatly set into categories. Yet this does beg one important question: why did so many readers take the trouble to assemble their own collections (sometimes at great pains) and annotate their own books? Marked-up editions of Shakespeare with inverted commas marks or special fonts no doubt exerted some influence, but the impression left by the several hundred books which I examined in the course of my research tends to be that many readers enjoyed extracting exactly what *they* wanted.

The issue is naturally of consequence, because it is closely related to the main subject of this book—the role of empirical ('real') readers in the textual dispersal of Shakespeare's works across society in the space of two centuries. In *Shakespeare's Early Readers*, and more explicitly in this chapter, my aim is to explain what may have motivated these independent readers. As elsewhere in the book, the objective is to read between the printed lines, so to speak, to try to get to grips with the empirical impulse.

In order to do so, it may be useful to introduce a particularly helpful and representative case study. An avowed friend and admirer of Pope, writer and classicist Walter Harte (1708/9-74),[409] very assiduously assembled one of the most extensive eighteenth-century dramatic commonplace books. Entitled 'Miscellanea tragica: Theatrical index of Sentiments &

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[408] Cited in Roger Chartier, 'Binding and Unbinding: The Seven Publishing Lives of William Shakespeare', *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 93.1 (2017), pp. 90-106; at 102. The current paragraph is indebted to Chartier's article. On Dodd, see Kate Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Cultures of Quotation from Samuel Richardson to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 27 and 31.

[409] See James Sambrook, 'Harte, Walter (1708/9-74)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12492.

descriptions' and composed *ca.* 1730, the manuscript is 231 leaves long and contains a wealth of extracts by Shakespeare (a comparatively very long section of extracts on *Hamlet* and *King Lear* (pp. 99-100)), but also excerpts by other dramatists arranged under topics which are indexed.[410] Harte employed Pope's 1728 duodecimo edition, referring here and there to Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works.

In the eighth volume of his edition Pope had provided his readers with 'a full set of anthological equipment':[411]

> Sect. I. Characters of Historical Persons.
> Sect. II. Index of Manners, Passions and their external Effects.
> Sect. III. Index of fictitious Persons, with the Characters ascrib'd to them.
> SECT. IV. Index of Thoughts, or Sentiments
> SECT. V. Speeches. A Table of the most considerable in Shakespeare.
> SECT. VI. Index of Descriptions, or Images, I. Descriptions of Places. II. Descriptions of Persons. III. Descriptions of Things. IV. Descriptions of Times and Seasons.
> SECT. VII. Index of some Similes and Allusions[412]

Harte uses Pope's edition and refers to it several times and there is a noticeable parallel between part of the title of his manuscript ('Theatrical Index') and Pope's own index. The manuscript is indisputably inspired by the commonplacing and anthologizing tradition. Harte's index is placed at the end of the document. It is a useful alphabetical search tool for someone like him who, as we shall see, was chiefly interested in Shakespeare's sentiments. Harte's index consists of seven pages on double columns, written in tidy legible handwriting. Considerable work has gone into the confection of what is in fact a fully functional commonplace book.

Harte's headings inside the book are not in alphabetical order. The extracts tend to be from the same play, but not systematically. They cover numerous works, even the Apocrypha. Some of the headings are repetitive, or redundant. The plays are broken up and reappear throughout the notebook – a feature of many manuscript commonplace books which required many sittings and whose compilers read the plays discontinuously.

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[410] FSL MS M.a.47, pp. 1-59.

[411] Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*, p. 178. On Pope's index and his elitist and aesthetic stances, see Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing*, p. 128.

[412] *The works of Mr. William Shakespear. In ten volumes. Publish'd by Mr. Pope and Dr. Sewell* (London: printed for J. and J. Knapton, 1728), vol. 8. ESTC: T138590.

As implied, and despite Pope's aesthetic and poetic concerns, Harte was much attracted by 'sentiments', and sometimes by the more traditional commonplace topics of 'wit', 'Dying', 'Love', or 'Life'. Again, as opposed to Pope, one finds very little interest in characters. Harte basically sees Shakespeare as a writer who is good at expressing (strong) sentiments. He himself hand-picked the extracts, with the help of his mentor's headings of course, but with a large measure of personal taste. Harte is not a commonplacer overly absorbed in aesthetic features either. There is a great deal of cross-referencing, often of an individual nature (that is, he does not copy Pope). We can see Harte tying passages together and comparing them, which for him is a way of classifying information.

One could conclude that of Pope's 'Characters, Sentiments, Speeches and Descriptions', Harte chose to concentrate overwhelmingly on 'Sentiments', followed by some 'descriptions' and very few speeches. His coverage of the plays is quite impressive. Moreover, he makes no attempt to classify speeches rhetorically or to collect 'Descriptions', as Pope does in his index.

There is certainly more of a moral than an aesthetic vein in Harte's notes. Nor does he have a passion for characters as 'types' (which is the case with Pope's index). To some extent, he is a man attracted by life-like 'Descriptions of things', as Pope would call them.[413] With hindsight, it is easy to see how Harte is both a forward looking and an independent reader. He is not overly drawn to the classical rhetorical approach of commonplacing ('Similes and Allusions'), but seems unquestionably influenced by John Dryden's thoughts on Shakespeare's 'natural style' (pp. 119-33 'Dryden') – a subject which helped Shakespeare rise to fame during the eighteenth century through the commonplacing tradition.

Commonplacing and the Shakespearean Myth

The empirical impulse to commonplace Shakespeare was neither fully prompted, nor was it deterred by printed anthologies or collections of extracts. The impulse (which in some cases became a passion) was sparked by a quest for the holy grail, that is, personally collecting Shakespeare's commonplace gems, since they represented nothing less than nature itself speaking through the nation's most representative writer. Yet such personal drives were also partly dependent on the wondrous promises of the commonplacing method (highlighted at the beginning of this chapter).

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[413] See infra: Section VI of Pope's index, in his *The works of Mr. William Shakespear* (1728).

With the rise in prestige of vernacular literature, some early commentators began to regard Shakespeare as the exemplar of English writers and as a font of wisdom and *sententiae*. In his famous and influential 1668 essay *Of dramatick poesie*, John Dryden reported that John Hales, a very distinguished Greek scholar, had declared, ‘That there was no subject of which any Poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treated of in *Shakespeare*’.[414] Of course, the word ‘subject’ recalls the Aristotelian ‘topic’ or the ‘loci communes’ of ancient rhetoric. Such arguments on the nature of Shakespeare’s genius would help to establish him as a national author, one who could shake off the yoke of classical tradition, while fending off French cultural influence (especially during the Georgian era).

In the preface to his tragedy *The Loyal General* (published in 1680), Nahum Tate wrote to Edward Tayler, ‘I cannot forget the strong desire I have heard you express to see the Common Places of our Shakespear, compar’d with the most famous of the Ancients’. Tate also mentioned John Hales, the Greek scholar, who, according to him, had asserted, ‘That since the time of Orpheus and the Oldest Poets, no Common Place has been touch’d upon, where our Author [Shakespeare] has not perform’d as well’.[415] The idea that Shakespeare’s writing is built around a unique network of commonplaces, that it relies upon a personal cluster of *topoï*, lives on today even in academia. Not so long ago, the distinguished critic Emrys Jones observed that ‘It is often as if, at some deep level of his mind, Shakespeare thought and felt in quotations’.[416] The recent discovery of a dictionary, John Baret’s 1580 *Alvearie*, with notes supposedly written in Shakespeare’s hand, has reawakened the dream that there may have been a commonplace book composed by Shakespeare.[417]

On the opening leaf of an early eighteenth-century commonplace book, one reader of Shakespeare’s works – whose ensuing notes reveal that he or she used the 1632 folio – wrote the following aesthetic comment: ‘Shakespeers Descriptions are stronger and more natural than any of ye other Poets, who generally described with too stiff and learned a manner and often not to be understood by those that are acquainted with ye fiction of Poetry'.[418] After reading Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and being evidently quite taken by Shakespeare's staging of Falstaff in Act 2, scene 2 of that play, the same reader would later jot down in short hand a further appreciative comment on Shakespeare's writing: 'The drunkenness… false English… Breaks and Repetitions… gloriously natural' (f. 23^{v}).[419]

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[414] This was also an attack on Ben Jonson’s art. John Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie* (London, 1668), p. 48. Wing D2327.

[415] Nahum Tate, *The loyal general a tragedy: acted at the Duke’s* (London: Printed for Henry Bonwicke, 1680), sig. A4r. Wing T193. See also Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*, pp. 172-3.

[416] Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 21.

[417] That these notes are actually by Shakespeare remains highly questionable. John Baret, *An aluearie or quadruple dictionarie,…* (Londini: Henricus Denhamus, 1580). STC: 1411. See also http://shakespearesbeehive.com/. The same goes for a small seventeenth-century notebook containing Shakespearean dramatic extracts, which left the presenter of the television programme the Antiques Roadshow ‘trembling’: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/02/notebook-written-unknown-17th-century-william-shakespeare-scholar/. The existence of the notebook came to light in 2017 through the programme.

These comments, at the beginning of a very large early eighteenth-century commonplace book focussing in part on Shakespeare's works, are partly indicative, I argue, of why this manuscript compilation was so assiduously assembled. Revealingly, by calling Shakespeare's writing 'gloriously natural', the reader was echoing Dryden's *Of dramatick poesie*, in which he wrote that Shakespeare 'was naturally learn'd; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he look'd inwards, and found her there'.[420] Shakespeare was reputably able to speak the language of nature, the language of things and this was obviously part of the attraction for our early eighteenth-century reader and compiler.[421]

Many other annotators shared the same views. The eighteenth-century reader of a Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works (1709) was fascinated by the playwright's ability to describe natural phenomena: 'Night | Dark night, *tha*t from &c. 471. | Pucks description of *th*e night p. 520'.[422] Shakespeare's so-called talent for similes impressed the same reader. He noted about *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* in the same edition 'Lysanders simile to express his falshood very | fine. p. 487. | For as a surfeit &c. | The simile of lightning last mentiond is a perfect | Hypotiposis' (vol. 2). Similes had always been sought by commonplacing readers as sources of rhetorical inspiration, but with the growing belief in Shakespeare's direct artistic link to nature, they became traces of the author's talent for true-to-life imitation. Similes showed that the playwright was not only able to mimic nature, but also to have a deep sense of the links between human affairs and the realm of nature. A First Folio, which belonged to Dr Williams's Library in London and was annotated in the seventeenth century, has countless headings in its margins demarcating the works' similes.[423]

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[418] This is BL MS. Lansdowne 1185, f. 2r. The manuscript (f. 2r-41r) could not have been written earlier than 1688, because of an allusion to La Bruyère's *Caractères* (published in French that same year and translated into English in 1689). Further references to this MS. will be given in the text.

[419] Logically, the compiler is keen to extract Shakespeare's descriptions of natural phenomena: 'Of *th*e morning' (f. 2r; *1 Henry IV*) and again 'Of *th*e morning' (f. 33r; *Antony and Cleopatra*).

[420] Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie*, p. 47. Sasha Roberts points out that Margaret Cavendish even predated Dryden in her defence of Shakespeare's naturalism in her *Sociable Letters* (1664). See Robert's *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 55-6.

[421] Some went as far as dismissing Dryden and praising Shakespeare's unique link with nature, as in the Bodleian Library's First Folio, where Emma Smith underlines these seemingly improvised lines: 'So Nature once in her Essays of Wit, | In Shakespeare took the shepherd's leap | But over-straining in the great Effort | In Dryden and the rest, has since fell Short' (near to Ben Jonson's lines 'To the Reader'); Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 77.

[422] In vol. 2 of FSL PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh.Col.

The already mentioned 'Poetical miscellany' of H. Watkins (FSL MS. M.a.110; *ca*. 1780) extracted natural images, as well as passages expressing traditional vernacular wisdom. Examples of Shakespeare's acumen were duly collected and his advice in almost every field of human existence was sought: 'On Friendship, by Shakespear in Midsummers night dream' (p. 14); 'On Hounds, by Shakespear, in the same Play' (p. 15); 'On the different Stages of Life, by Shakespear, in As you like it' (pp. 15-16) and 'A Description of the Bees, in Henry 5th, by Shakespear' (pp. 19-20). The latter passage was of course stripped of its dramatic context to produce a naturalistic (and rather rigid) image of social order.

Compiled by one John Evans and reaching almost 900 pages, *Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden* (FSL MS. V.b.93) was entered into the Stationers' Register on 16 August 1655, but remained a manuscript commonplace book which never saw print.[424] Filled with extracts from various Shakespearean works, one entry entitled 'some Knowledge of g*oo*d' cited lines from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* spoken by the Soothsayer in Act 1, scene 1 of the play: '* In Natures infinit booke of secrecy, a little I | can reade. A C' (p. 442). It is not surprising that Shakespeare's lines appeared under the heading of knowledge in Evans' manuscript. The author's unique (alleged) relation to nature was reputedly a source of knowledge. In the eighteenth century such ideas had become manifest for men like Arthur Murphy, who quoted Richard Hurd's thoughts on Shakespeare and poetry under the heading 'Comedy' in his Commonplace Book (*ca.* 1760-80).[425] Hurd insisted on the mythical link between Shakespeare and nature:

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[423] E.g. in *Much Ado About Nothing*, sigs. I3v, I4r, I4r, I5v. Catalogued as West 27. Now in private ownership in the US.

[424] *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers; from 1640-1708 A.D.,* ed. by G. E. B. Eyre, 3 vols. (London: Priv. print, 1913-14), vol. 2, p. 8. On this manuscript, see See Tianhu Hao, 'Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden and its Manuscript History', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 10.4 (2009), pp. 372-404 and Tianhu Hao, '*Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden*: Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England', Ph.D., Columbia University, 2006.

[425] FSL MS. M.b.22, p. 416.

This Excellence
of Shakespeares Comedy
was the Effect of his copying faithfully after Nature, & from
his attention to what the progress of the Scene required.

Hurd 1 Vol. 267.[426] (Figure 12)

[INSERT: Arthur Murphy, Commonplace Book, Folger MS M.b.22, p. 416, citing Richard Hurd's *Dissertation on the Idea of Universal Poetry* (1766). By permission of the Folger Library.]

The commonplacing of Shakespeare was strongly instrumental in creating the Shakespearean myth. It gave birth indirectly to another myth – that of the autonomous artist, or god-like genius, inspired directly by nature, a myth which continues to haunt all creators with what Harold Bloom has called an 'anxiety of influence'.[427] Alternatively, the commonplacing of Shakespeare would never have been such a popular practice had it not been tied to the nationalist myth of Shakespeare as the supreme British – or rather English – artist, writing from nature. One myth fed the other, hence the empirical frenzy of his dedicated reader-annotators. Commonplacing and commonplaced Shakespeare participated in the edifying of a myth of nationhood, validating its vernacular literature and poetry, and then promoting English literature over all other literatures, especially French classical theatre.[428]

The Myth Debunked: Shakespearean Overkill and 'Banal Shakespeare'

From our perspective, the admiration for Shakespeare's so-called 'natural' style originates in an evident idealization of the creative process. Fascinated by what they considered to be the playwright's exclusive ability to display the world in language, many readers were oblivious to the fact that 'all writing is rewriting', as Terence Cave reminds us, that originality and imitation work hand in hand, as, ironically, the commonplace 'method' – in its Renaissance version in particular – never ceased reminding its would-be practitioners.[429]

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[426] Richard Hurd, *A Dissertation on the Idea of Universal Poetry* (London: printed for A. Millar, 1766). ESTC: N58848.

[427] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*: *A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[428] For more on this subject, see chapter 6.

[429] Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, p. 325.

But beyond the nationalist garb, in which Shakespeare's works came to be wrapped, was there something in his style that made him expressly prone to be commonplaced? First, one could argue with Tiffany Stern that Shakespeare was unmistakably a gifted 'play-patcher', someone who had a real knack for assembling and disassembling scraps of text. As Stern explains, this was how the composition of plays was thought of at the time: 'As well as being called 'play-makers' and 'poets', playwrights of the early modern period were frequently known as 'play-patchers' because of the common perception that a play was pieced together out of a collection of odds and ends: it was not a single whole entity'.[430]

Shakespeare had a talent not only for plotting but also for offering the linguistic nectar sought after by readers, like the bees in Seneca's and Erasmus's well-known parables on reading.[431] After all, did not his contemporary Francis Meres call him a 'mellifluous & hony-tongued' writer producing 'sugared' lines, in a book which appeared during his lifetime?[432] The 'upstart crow', who, like other writers, naturally beautified himself with others' feathers, knew how to give something back too.[433] If, as Lukas Erne has claimed, Shakespeare 'anticipated a readership' for his plays,[434] he may have realized that his success was also tied to the potential ease with which readers, playgoers and authors like Meres would be able to detach, alter and circulate his words in a commonplace book culture (that would continue, unbeknown to him, until the end of the eighteenth century). Thus, Shakespeare's originality and ability to be absorbed and appropriated, lies at least partially in *the potential for replication of his words*, a replication which, as we have seen, was an obvious source of pleasure for many.[435]

Despite the aura surrounding Shakespeare's language, the commonplacing of Shakespeare was neither consistently sustained by the nationalist myth, nor by theorists and philosophers themselves. As we know, the assumed method had attracted as much interest, as it had suffered from elitist disdain. This did not improve with the dissemination of Shakespeare's text throughout society in the eighteenth century.

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[430] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

[431] See infra.

[432] Francis Meres, *Palladis tamia. Wits Treasury Being the Second Part of Wits Common wealth* (Printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, 1598) f. 281v. STC: 17834.

[433] Robert Greene, *Greenes, groats-vvorth of witte* (London: Imprinted [by J. Wolfe and J. Danter] for William Wright, 1592), sig. f. 1v. STC: 12245.

[434] Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, pp. 10 and 123.

[435] See Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading*, p. 136.

A regular traveller to England (where he even met King George III), German philosopher Georg Christoph Lichtenberg wrote in 1777 that ‘in this island Shakespeare is not only famous, but holy; his moral maxims are heard everywhere’.[436] The correspondence of eighteenth-century patron of the arts Elizabeth Montagu is filled with casual references to Shakespeare. Narrating the events of her existence, she regularly looks at everyday life around her through the prism of Shakespearean reference. Her mentions of the playwright are often in a moral context: ‘Much better might Shakespear have said of the Method of gathering Laurels on the dangerous steps and rocks of Ambition, dreadfull trade!’; or, while she is writing about Lord Monfort’s estate and his loss of revenue, ‘To retrench or to dye was the question, he reasoned like Hamlet, but left out the great argument of a future state’.[437] Shakespeare’s lines could also be glossed for more humorous purposes, as Montagu adapted lines taken from *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, just in passing in another letter: ‘The prosperity of a jest Shakespear says his [sic] half in the ear of him that hears it, & it is certainly as true of a petition’.[438]

Yet the dispersal of Shakespeare’s words meant that they could become overly common and hackneyed. The old argument against commonplacing resurfaced. Commonplacing was a way of reading which could be accused of leading to fragmented, incomplete and ultimately trite knowledge. This is something which was already touched on at the outset of the chapter. The idea of the digest – or indeed that the Bard could be ‘ill-digested’, was potentially repugnant to part of the intellectual elite (as is still the case nowadays, for that matter).

Even the indefatigable Walter Harte was reluctant to collect excerpts which appeared to him to be too ‘commonplace’. In his ‘Miscellanea Tragica’ (*ca*. 1726,)[439] there are signs that he was aware of the ‘overexposure’ affecting a number of Shakespearean passages. Harte cross-references a passage under the heading ‘Fairies’ in *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream* with another in the play, but makes it clear that he will not copy the cross-reference: ‘Act3. Sc. I

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[436] Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Lichtenberg’s Visits to England, as Described in his Letters and Diaries*, trans. Margaret L. Mare and W. H. Quarrell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 16. See also Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 106.

[437] Elizabeth Montagu (Robinson) to Gilbert West, 27 July 1755, HL, MS. MO 6726; Elizabeth Montagu (Robinson) to Sarah (Robinson) Scott, 16 January 1755, HL, MS. MO 5742.

[438] Elizabeth Montagu (Robinson) to Morris Robinson, 7 July 1765, HL, MS. MO 4791. This is a gloss of Rosaline’s ‘A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear / Of him that hears it, never in the tongue / Of him that makes it’ (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*; 5.2.829-31).

[439] FSL MS. M.a.47. Page references will be given in the text.

Ib*id* [sic] | (x Hounds. too well known.)' (pp. 72-3). He is even more explicit when it comes to Macbeth's notorious soliloquy:

> Life.
> Too morrow, & too morrow, & too morrow &c.
> Vide pag. i09 these passages are too well known to be transcribed (p. 99)

Similar opinions were sometimes voiced publicly in periodicals of the time. In 1777, an 'Impartial Reader' of the *Public Advertiser* wrote in no uncertain terms: 'It has been so long the Fashion, in this Country, to '*gulp down every Drop of this immortal Man*' … that even Shakespeare, with all his Merit, is become a public Nuisance in every Company'.[440] During the Renaissance period, Montaigne had already warned of the consequences of too much undigested meat taken from books: 'What good does it do us to have our belly full of meat if it is not digested, if it is not transformed into us, if it does not make us bigger and stronger?'.[441]

Likewise, eighteenth-century satirists would underline the overkill that Shakespeare had fallen victim to and which some among the intellectual elite deplored. In *Wild Oats* (published 1791), John O'Keeffe (1747-1833) staged one Rover, a Gentleman able to express himself in an absurd mix of Shakespearean quotations.[442] As Kate Rumbold has argued, the eighteenth-century novel with its wealth of characters expressing their emotions and feelings through Shakespearean situations and texts had created a 'banal' Shakespeare, to use Rumbold's term, but one which it also frequently condemned as being unworthy of the 'real' Shakespeare whose true appreciation was marred by too much light quotation.[443] Shakespeare's rise to fame through the commonplace dissemination and appropriation of his works had a flip-side, especially for those who believed that knowledge about Shakespeare's texts should be the domain of a happy few – those intellectually able enough to understand his works and form their own opinions, as well as cultivate their own personal tastes. In fact, the fear of a 'banal' Shakespeare may have been a little overstated, or over-exploited for satirical reasons, and for motives stemming from concerns about new social classes gaining access to knowledge and altering the political make-up of British society.[444]

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[440] Impartial Reader, 'To the Printer of the *Public Advertiser*', *Public Advertiser*, Friday, 31 January, 1777, cited in Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 106.

[441] Michel de Montaigne, 'Of Pedantry', in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 97-106, at 101.

[442] See John O'Keefe, *Wild oats: or, the strolling gentlemen. A comedy, in five acts, as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden* (Dublin: printed for the booksellers, 1791). ESTC Number: T053513. See also Gary Taylor, who writes that the play was a 'theatrical hit of 1791-93' (*Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, From the Restoration to the Present* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 108).

[443] Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, pp. 106-7.

Empirical observation seems to point us in a slightly different direction. Many commonplaced printed books or manuscripts retained classical features (topics in particular), even in the Georgian era. They were a mix of old and new subjects and in many cases still commonplaced a fair number of ancient authors well into the eighteenth century (sometimes in larger numbers than Shakespeare). For example, BL MS Lansdowne 1185 contained a wealth of Shakespearean extracts, but also had a section (ff. 42-59) entirely dedicated to classical passages taken from ancient authors. Leeds' Brotherton Library Lt 80, a collection of original poems, translations and other material, including 'Poems and translations by Hugh Wormington' (*ca.*1715-23) has a transcription of Hamlet's soliloquy 'To be or not to be' headed 'Futurity', as well as a series of moral maxims in Latin and English (ff. 8v-9r). William Dickinson's 'Poetical miscellany' (*ca.* 1775-*ca.*1800) assembles Shakespearean passages with epigrams and Latin verses.[445] H. Watkins 'Poetical miscellany' (*ca.* 1780), which was mentioned earlier for its Shakespearean extracts (occupying leaves 20-40) begins with numerous passages in Latin including Psalms, extracts of classical works by Horace ('On the different Ages of Man by Horace in his art of Poetry', pp. 3-4) and later collects long passages also in Latin taken from Juvenal's *Satires* (pp. 129-64), together with a variety of texts by Virgil including his *Georgics*.[446] The list could go on.

Characters, Sentiments and the Influence of the Novel – the Novelization of Commonplacing

Shakespeare's rise to fame through the commonplacing tradition, the dispersal and appropriation of snippets of his texts by a wealth of readers is indisputable, although of course the myth which stimulated the practice was really an expression of other phenomena (the way texts travel through time and the techniques Shakespeare himself used to compose his works). Furthermore, and as suggested, we suspect that 'banal Shakespeare' and 'commonplace Shakespeare' could have been, at least in part, contemporary overstatements concealing social and cultural issues. What is certain is that the excitement, but also the tensions attached to the commonplacing of Shakespeare, which we detected as early as the end of the sixteenth century, were still rife in the latter half of the Georgian era. But apart from the wonders and shortcomings of commonplacing, an additional feature should be mentioned – its capacity for self-renewal, while continuing to perpetuate older methods of collecting texts and classical works.

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[444] On this subject, see chapter 6.

[445] FSL MS. M.a.176.

[446] FSL MS. M.a.110.

The fact that the commonplacing of Shakespeare endured for so long can be explained by the very adaptability of the practice. In the course of the eighteenth century it was almost naturally influenced by one of the dominant literary genres – the novel. However, traditional forms of commonplacing could live alongside moral epitomes about characters' feelings and sentiments. Many examples could be given, but perhaps the most evocative can be found in some of the marked up passages of the RST First Folio SR37 Acc.1 (which is held at the SBT in Stratford-upon-Avon) and which in fact displays various forms of annotation, including relatively long moral epitomes focused on the sentiments, thought processes and mental agonies of a series of characters.

Indeed, the influence of the novel can arguably be perceived when one of the annotators – no doubt an eighteenth-century reader – demarcates large passages (often monologues) where characters reveal themselves, as well as their moral pangs and hesitations. This 'novelization' of commonplacing is especially apparent in three plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Timon of Athens* and *Othello.* Young tragic love, the moral ills of money and the tortures caused by jealousy are novelistic ingredients. We first witness the annotator's interest in a long prose dialogue spoken by the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. She delivers a pithy and in-depth description of one of the main characters, Juliet ('Even or odde … wilt thou not Iulet quoth he? and pretty foole it stinted, and said I' (sig. ee4v; 1.3.17-49) [447]. Similarly, the inscriber is fascinated by the character of Timon of Athens, his complexity and the image of humankind projected by him and by the play as a whole. On sig. hh1v the reader has highlighted a long monologue beginning with 'Plucke the graue wrinkled Senate from the Bench' and ending – tellingly – on the couplet: '*Timon* will to the Woods, where he shall finde / Th' vnkindest Beast, more kinder then Mankinde' (4.1.35-36.) Further passages on the same page are marked up: they also offer a study of the main character and of humankind. Another long speech by Timon on sig. hh2r ('That by killing of Villaines … to 'Confounded be thy selfe. Speake not, be gone'; 4.3.108-30), could be related to the reader's fondness for a social critique expressed through Timon's moral pangs.

In *Othello* the commonplacing often oscillates between an attraction for highly dramatic moments (also the stuff of good novels) and character criticism. For the former, see, for instance, the ink manicules and quotation marks, next to many passages spoken by Othello and Iago (sig. tt5v, 3.3.362): 'Or by the worth of mine eternall Soule' to 'Ile not indure it. Would I were satisfied' (3.3.391), where the sufferings and hesitations of the Moor are striking. The annotator underlines another device characteristic of novels – Iago's reported speech in the following scene, which, as we know, is nothing more than a lie: 'In sleepe I heard him say, sweet *Desdemona*, / Let vs be wary, let vs hide our Loues' (sig. tt5v, 3.3.420-1). Long passages are again delineated on sig. vv5v (5.2.241-355), as we reach the conclusion of the tragedy. Through Othello's highlighted monologues the reader contemplates and can potentially access the main character's moral dilemma at its peak – over and over again: 'Oh *Desdemon*! dead *Desdemon*: dead. Oh, oh!' (sig. vv5v; 5.2.279). Fittingly, as in novels, the moral disclosure of the character is of great interest to the annotator, who has marked up the entire monologue containing the moral revelation of the character and the 'ethical' outcome of the tale itself: 'Speake of me, as I am. Nothing extenuate, […] / Of one, not easily Iealious, but being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreame (sig. vv5v; 5.2.338-42).

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[447] References to the NCS will be given in the text in the ensuing paragraphs.

Once more, what is remarkable in RST First Folio SR37 Acc.1 is that all the aforementioned delineated passages do not exclude other forms of commonplacing. Some – no doubt by the same reader – appear more 'conservative' in their focus on traditional subjects, or *topoï*.

Before closing this chapter, we need to investigate in a final subpart, what can be referred to as the deep structural functioning of commonplacing in order to comprehend what facilitated its fundamental adaptability, and, in passing, ensured the textual survival and circulation of Shakespeare's texts.

Disarticulation, Distillation, Fusion, Misreading and Reinjection: How Shakespeare's Text Survived through Engagement and Process

If commonplacing presents itself as an art of remembrance, fundamentally it is what I would call *an art of creative forgetfulness*. At times, it is even a partly unconscious process on the part of readers. In fact any disarticulation in any play or poem produces a new coalescence.[448] In other words, it was impossible for commonplacing readers remembering Shakespeare each in their own way to avoid a highly selective process of elision of his works.

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[448] See Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*, p. 168.

When closely analysing the practice, it is logical to notice a number of crucial processes at work, as well as some characteristic features: a sense of detachability, disarticulation, decontextualisation/generalisation, or, alternatively a tendency to merge textual elements. The more analytical annotators were well aware of these processes. In volume 5 of Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's *Works*, someone has inscribed a comment inspired by Charles Gildon's *Laws of Poetry*, which is a statement on Hamlet's famous soliloquy. That some readers would find the soliloquy 'detached' meant that it could of course be 'detachable' and travel easily out of its original context. The gloss is the following:

> The Famous soliloquy so much cry'd up
> in Hamlet To be or not to be &c. is a
> perfectly detached piece & has nothing
> to do in *th*e play. for as it was produced
> by nothing before so has has it no manner
> of Influence on w[ha]t fortunes after
> vid. Gildons Lawes
> of poetry p. 206[449] (Figure 13)

[INSERT: Folger PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh. Col., vol. 5, recto of second back flyleaf, gloss from Charles Gildon's *The Laws of Poetry* (1721). By permission of the Folger Library.]

For zealous Renaissance readers, detachability went hand in hand with the humanist hunt for rhetorical figures in all kinds of texts. A seventeenth-century annotator like Edward Pudsey had been trained to recognize commonplaces, or whatever could easily be turned into *sententiae*. At the beginning of the early modern period, similes were not so much proof of Shakespeare's so-called mythical links with nature, as a constitution of convenient detachable units of language which could be reused in other situations. Pudsey had a sharp eye for rhetorical figures, as for instance his use of the word 'Simile' to classify a passage from *The Merchant of Venice* testifies (p. 6).[450] He easily spots Shakespeare's own recourse to commonplaces, which he lifts almost word for word, often by simply transforming the verse into prose and eliminating speech prefixes and oral structures. Thus, Portia's lines in Act 5, scene 1 (ll. 107-8) of *Merchant* are commonplaced under the title 'Season' and read simply as

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[449] FSL PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh.Col., vol. 5, recto of second back flyleaf. Glossed from Charles Gildon, *The Laws of Poetry, As laid down by the Duke of Buckinghamshire in his Essay on Poetry, by the Earl of Roscommon in his Essay on Translated Verse* (London: printed for W. Hinchliffe, 1721), p. 206. ESTC: N10409.

[450] The Pudsey extracts are taken from Savage's *Shakespearean Extracts from 'Edward Pudsey's Booke'*. Savage's transcription errors are corrected silently and the references to his book are given directly in the text.

'many things by season seasond are to their right prais and true perfection' (p. 5). Pudsey proceeds in similar fashion with some of the material he lifts from *Titus Andronicus*: to lend a universal, commonplace value to Shakespeare's lines he turns questions into direct style, cuts the verse line and adds 'If' at the beginning of some of the passages (p. 8).

Such techniques continued into the eighteenth century, as the Shakespearean section of BL MS. Lansdowne 1185 fully testifies. In this part of the manuscript, the extractor occasionally abandons traditional headings altogether in order to gather collections of *bons mots* – another form of commonplacing. Previously separate lines of dialogue are assembled in the same scene. The extracts are then fused to form collections which discard the rest of the text or dialogue in the copy of Shakespeare's Second Folio used by the annotator. This is particularly true on f. 21v (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*; 1.3.29-45)[451] when he writes down a custom-made compilation of lines spoken only by Falstaff. He does the same, and for the same reasons, on f. 22r of the manuscript with a merged collection of lines by Falstaff and Pistol (1.3.45-72). Similarly, under the general heading 'Of Love in a Souldier', the reader forms a potentially useful assemblage on this topic out of a series of lines spoken by Philo and Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.1.1-15). The lines are stripped of their speech prefixes (see f. 26v) and the text is lightly adapted (personal pronouns essentially). The same goes for the heading 'Of Love' uniting scraps of lines spoken by Antony on the traditional commonplace topic without speech prefixes (f. 26v; 1.1.38-49). A further example, under the heading 'Of Love of Luxury', which this time bears strong moral overtones, is provided when parts of two speeches spoken by Pompey are merged (f. 29r; 2.1.20-39)

When one examines other commonplace practices, many may not appear as tidy or well thought-out. Examining commonplacing readers' excerpts can be frustrating for critics who would like to associate these extracts with a general interpretation of a play. Extracting and commonplacing remain semi-conscious processes which can only be explained in retrospect when a value or meaning is attributed (by a heading, or topic, for instance).[452] Some readers are able to track down commonplaces and shape them immediately, others create them as best they can, or as afterthoughts.

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[451] All precise references given in the text of this section are to the Cambridge edition of Shakespeare's works.

[452] On this subject, see Antoine Compagnon's illuminating pages, *La seconde main ou Le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), p. 25. This may also be tied to the way language operates. Jonathan Culler goes so far as to write that 'fortuitous motivation may be a general mechanism of language' (*Framing the Sign*: *Criticism and its Institutions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 226).

Extracting, or framing passages implies, in some cases, a partly cognisant process that is akin to a chance meeting with the text. This appears to be particularly the case when readers select one word or a very short extract from a long scene, the excerpt resembling a distillation. For instance, in his mid seventeenth-century commonplace book, William How extracts one word of Portia's line in *The Merchant of Venice* in which she promises 'I will do any thing, Nerrissa, ere I will be married to a sponge' (1.3.80-1). William How extracts a single word, which obviously struck him and which he immediately reconfigures—'Thou spunge' [sic], he notes.[453] In *Henry V*, he savours one of Pistol's invectives 'thou prick-eard cur of Iceland' (2.1.35), which is totally decontextualized. Later in the same scene, he lifts the name of 'Doll Tear-sheete' (61) – a character who only appears in *2 Henry IV*, but whose peculiar name may have suddenly jogged his memory (f. 7r).

Similarly, by some unconscious slip, Edward Pudsey in his own commonplace book creates an incomprehensible mix of two passages (which are near each other in the 1604 quarto of *Hamlet* he has been reading). He writes absurdly 'The sunne breedes mag Beautifyed Ladye 'gotes in a dead dog beeing a good kissing carrion' (p. 62). Pudsey coalesces Polonius's reading of Hamlet's letter calling his daughter 'the most beautified Ophelia' (2.2.109) and Hamlet's rather grim line on maggots on the next page of the 1604 quarto, ending, interestingly, on a question to Polonius, 'have you a daughter?' (2.2.180). 'Writing is the tongue of the hand', was one of Nicholas Ling's commonplaces in *Politeuphuia* – the hand too can slip and leave traces of the mind's workings, which we can only hope to glimpse.[454]

Among the notes serving as reading aids and the commonplaces extracted in the margins of a copy of Shakespeare's first folio now kept at Meisei University in Japan, one also finds some curious associations. Of all Shakespeare's plays, *Timon of Athens* is, as we know, the one on which a mid-seventeenth-century owner of the folio has produced the most notes. This may explain in part why, in the margin of *3 Henry VI*, next to a passage in which Richard of Gloucester states 'Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so, / Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it' (5.6.78-9), the reader writes 'richard professedlie resolues like a Timon to doe all'.[455] Has the hand of the annotator slipped (did he mean 'tyrant'?) or was this association sparked by Richard's 'I am myself alone' later on in the same passage (5.6.84), which reminded the reader of Timon's misanthropy?

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[453] Commonplace Book, FSL MS. V.a.87, f. 7. In this chapter, I refer to the MS. commonplace book as the work of William How, which is probable, but not altogether certain, as there may have been several hands involved in the compiling of this MS. Further references to this commonplace book will be given in the text.

[454] Ling, *Politeuphuia*, sig. G3^{v}.

Such thematic criss-crossings or displacements are difficult to ascertain and yet they are at the very heart of the activity of commonplacing, which dislocates, reallocates and replaces, moving language around in ways which can sometimes be deeply creative, provocative, or baffling, or which may go against the grain of the source text and become quite simply reading mistakes, as we shall now see.

Chapter 6 will examine some confessional, bardolatrous or nationalist (mis)readings of Shakespeare. In this final section, we shall remain focused on how commonplacing and the constitution of quotations or citations in general can be sources of misreading. We shall argue that commonplacing played an active role in the misreading of Shakespeare, but that misinterpretation paradoxically – and of course somewhat perversely from the point of view of the scholar or teacher – was also one of the many ways in which Shakespeare's text came to circulate. As Marielle Macé explains, any 'poorly' quoted Shakespeare – a Shakespearean text that is transformed through commonplacing or note taking in particular – is, whether we like it or not, 'a given of that borrowed language spoken by our most intimate self and thus becomes another element of the impersonal text which informs us all'.[456]

On rare but enlightening occasions, commonplacing readers reflect on the technique they are using as they perform the practice. This is the case of an early seventeenth-century compiler, who, having just copied in his notebook Juliet's speech to Romeo in Act 2, scene 1 of the play (''Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone – / And yet no farther than a wanton's bird / That lets it hop a little from his hand…' (221-6)), makes a personal note to himself that this same speech has also been fruitfully decontextualized and transformed differently by someone else – clergyman Nicholas Richardson: 'This Mr Richard/^{son} Coll. Magd: inserted hence into his Sermon, preached it twice at St Maries 1620. 1621. applying it ~~the~~ to gods loue to his Saints either hurt with sinne, or aduersity neuer forsaking the*m*'.[457]

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[455] Akihiro Yamada, ed., *The First Folio of Shakespeare, A Transcript of Contemporary Marginalia in a Copy of the Kodama Memorial Library of Meisei University* (Tokyo: Yushodo Press, 1998), p. 151.

[456] Marielle Macé, *Façons de lire, Manière d'être* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), p. 218. My translation of 'sont les données de cette langue d'emprunt que parle notre intériorité, les éléments du texte impersonnel qui nous forme'.

[457] Bod.L. MS Eng. Misc. D. 28, cited in Guillaume Coatalen, 'Shakespeare and other 'Tragicall Discourses' in an Early Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book from Oriel College, Oxford', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700* 13 (2007), pp. 120-64; p. 146.

Well informed, thanks to centuries of literary criticism, modern scholars can easily track down texts misread by readers when commonplacing (especially by studying some of their headings or epitomes). Nevertheless, misreading is still a form of reading and of engaging (sometimes very actively) with Shakespeare's text. Emma Smith notes rightfully that the reader of the MR774 (the Meisei First Folio) is not always aware of how the plot will unfold and that it can result in a number of extracted sayings going literally against the grain of the text. Moreover, the same annotator appears to have a sense of the plays which is 'strongly teleological'.[458] Therefore, from our perspective, his annotations can result in forced readings and misinterpretations. Alan B. Farmer finds the industrious inscriber of MR774 rather misogynistic.[459] Not only does his misogyny make him lose the point and humour of plays such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where he fails to see that the women are actually totally innocent, but he also fails to see that his biases lead him to produce a whole set of annotations which result in a deviation from the text. Indeed, he is 'keen to transform plot details into commonplaces on the deceit, unfaithfulness, and wickedness of women, wives, and whores'.[460]

Thus, commonplacing poses first the question of appropriation (how individuals relate personally to Shakespeare) and then what kind of Shakespearean text a society circulates either consciously or not. It seems that many ways of reading Shakespeare have been and will be reinvested into the community as proofs of a text's potency. 'Writing is precisely something individual which is about to be shared and reappropriated; writing makes us experience the singularity of a style open to ideas and powers which enable each individual to feel empowered again'.[461]

Some readers reconfigure the printed text of the plays in ways which inject new life into Shakespeare's language. In his notes on *the Merchant of Venice* William How transforms one of Gobbo's lines ('He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve – ' (2.2.103)) into 'He has an infection to serue you' (f. 7), thus lending more impact and ultimately more vivacity to the line.[462] Such transformations are examples of the ways in which literature, and Shakespeare in particular, was recirculated into more common everyday vernacular language. Even when Shakespeare is seemingly at his best in his use of a so-called ‘natural style’, William How sometimes succeeds in producing a snappier, more dynamic version. Thus, Nim’s lines in *Henry V* (‘I dare not fight, but I will wink and hold out mine iron. It is a simple one, but what though? It will toast cheese’ (2.1.5-7)) are rephrased and reduced to a single and more dynamic expression: ‘Heres a sword will serue to tost cheese on’ (f. 7). Similarly, in his notes on *Much Ado About Nothing*, Edward Pudsey turns Claudio’s indirect comment on Benedick (‘And never could maintain his part, but in the force of his will’ (1.1.175)) into a *direct* address to someone: ‘Yo^{w} cannot maintayne y^{r} argum^{t} but in y^{e} force of yo^{r} will’ (p. 35), a phrase which again carries more pith and can be re-injected into real-life situations.

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[458] Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book*, pp. 134; 135.

[459] Alan B. Farmer, '"Whoores subtile shifts": Commonplacing Women in the Meisei Copy of the Shakespeare First Folio', Unpublished article presented at the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) Meeting, Vancouver, 2015. 13 pages.

[460] Farmer, 'Whoores subtile shifts', p. 9.

[461] Macé, *Façons de lire, Manière d'être*, p. 263. My translation. 'Un style est précisément une individuation en voie de partage et de réappropriation, qui nous fait vivre les singularités comme des idées et des puissances, qui trouve en chaque individu la possibilité de réexercer sa force'.

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As we have established in this chapter, the obsession with Shakespeare’s natural style was and is a delusion, but it is one which shows that what commonplacing readers were in search of was *life* itself, or rather its mimetic representation. After all, this is not surprising as the utopian dream of the commonplacing method originally consisted in finding the universal key, which would enable human beings to understand themselves in their manifold aspects. The ancient topics were devised with that goal in mind.[463] Commonplacing reminds us of course of the fundamental instability of texts, especially when they come for the most part from the theatre (as is made clear in Chapter 5). Literature and Shakespeare’s source texts continue to be fundamentally unfinished and open spaces. The *common wealth* (in both senses of the word), with which they provide readers, is one whose constant purpose is to challenge individuals by making them reflect, through a *practical engagement* with books and literature, on what commonness, being together and reading about ourselves and others in books might mean.[464]

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[462] FSL MS. V.a.87.

[463] Goyet, *Le sublime du ‘lieu commun’*, pp. 19-20.

[464] See Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990 [1986]), p. 162. As Kevin Sharpe writes, ‘Far from a retreat into a private space, the commonplace book is the site of successive conversations between text and reader, between readers and society’ (*Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000], p. 281). See also ibid, p. 339.

Chapter 6

Passing Judgement on Shakespeare

What did early modern readers really think of Shakespeare's works? This is no doubt one of the most important and difficult questions that this book has to answer. The short answer is that we shall never know with absolute certainty. The long answer, based not on theoretical or pedagogical guidebooks of the time, but on the empirical evidence gleaned from the study of several hundred manuscripts and annotated books, requires us to remember that each reader's receptivity is unique and that aesthetic response in particular is multifaceted and may sometimes appear bewildering (if not meaningless) from our perspective.

First, readers' tastes were constructed over time and the notion of taste itself has always been unstable and dependent on personal as well as external factors. For the periods under study, these factors could be the availability of print criticism and the development of a sphere for scholarly discussion in particular. There is a basic question of scale too. Compared to their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors, eighteenth-century readers had an infinitely larger number of books at their disposal – not only Shakespearean editions, but also works of criticism and literary periodicals. With a few remarkable exceptions, which we have highlighted, the business of reading Shakespeare remained the domain of a social and cultural elite (lay or religious scholars, the upper middle class and the aristocracy). In the eighteenth century, the situation changed as the readership widened thanks to a range of new and gradually more accessible editions. The appreciation of Shakespeare in print became more communal, sometimes more public, and undoubtedly more self-conscious. This is partly why I have decided to divide the question of literary appreciation into two parts, even if, as will be manifest, such an issue is part of a continuum.

Another reason is simply in order to have more scope to dispute two lingering prejudices on the subject of judgement and taste over the first and second eras. As I write, asking what sixteenth and seventeenth century readers thought about Shakespeare still sounds like an anachronism. This is largely due to the fact that, as scholars, we have probably not looked closely enough in the right places and with the adequate methodology.

In Part I, I argue that as early as the first part of the seventeenth century, readers were sensitive to well-constructed plots, that they were interested in characters, in the expression of emotions, and that they formulated critical and aesthetic comments on Shakespeare's works. Well before the classification and appreciation of plays according to neo-classical standards at the Restoration and during part of the Augustan age, and prior to the elevation of good literary taste as one of the foremost public virtues in Georgian Britain, readers were making crucial critical statements during Shakespeare's lifetime, or in the decades immediately following his death. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the time factor began to affect the reception of Shakespeare. Yet he was still considered important enough to be censored by some of his readers. The Restoration brought new interest in Shakespeare, but mostly as dramatic material to pilfer or reinterpret. It is at this moment that readers can be seen transitioning between the Old and the New. As the century came to a close, Shakespeare and his print works could not yet claim to be directly appealing to their contemporaries.

Part II will nuance the scenario of Shakespeare's rise to fame, at least as far as his reading public was concerned. In fact, I shall demonstrate that a number of readers fought against or tried to distinguish themselves from the then increasingly available critical printed 'mantra'. For some, the playwright and poet was aesthetically appealing because they saw that parts of his texts could serve specific political agendas, those of English nationalism in particular, but not exclusively. Others used Shakespeare obsessively to showcase their literary tastes. Some remained resolutely independent, partly cut off from the influence of mainstream criticism, and produced remarkably idiosyncratic aesthetic responses. Then, there were those who had a true passion for Shakespeare's textual universe and strove – often against considerable odds (especially when they were women) – to become shapers of literary taste thanks to Shakespeare. Before the school system turned him into a set author in the nineteenth century, early Shakespeare remained a site of excitement, but also of self-interest, of shrewd criticism and of intensely personal feeling.[465]

Here is just a glimpse of the captivating journey we are about to embark upon in answer to our initial question: what did early modern readers really think of Shakespeare's works?

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[465] See this book's conclusion.

PART I: Shakespeare and the Early Formation of Aesthetic Taste

The Early Reception of Shakespeare: Profit, Pleasure, and the Formation of Taste

The early modern appreciation of Shakespeare is still primarily associated with the tradition of studying works 'for action', that is, for the sake of collecting reusable extracts, which could be especially valuable to readers who were courtiers, scholars, politicians, or lawyers and who needed to master various types of rhetoric.[466] Yet I contend that the cult and practice of rhetoric was not incompatible with an interest in the stylistic and aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's texts.

One of the earliest and lesser-known literary critical responses to Shakespeare's style can be found in William Scott's treatise, *The Model of Poesy*, which Gavin Alexander, in his recent edition of the treatise, has dated to the summer of 1599.[467] Born *c*. 1571 and deceased in or around 1617, Scott had read Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and his *Richard II* (1595). Scott was a law student at the Inner Temple when he wrote this treatise, a manuscript now in the British Library (Add. MS. 81083). Scott's *Model of Poesy* was dedicated to Sir Henry Lee and was also no doubt partly an attempt to demonstrate his talents and seek future employment or patronage.

The title of the treatise recalls Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (1595), but while Sidney viewed popular theatre generally as too low for his standards, Scott judged that both of Shakespeare's works were 'well-penned' (pp. 45 and 53). Much of the treatise has to do with appropriateness of style and rhetoric, but it is not devoid of literary judgement for all that. Thus, it is not surprising to find *The Rape of Lucrece* commended for its fitting *imitatio*: 'it is as well showed in drawing the true picture of Lucretia, if it be truly drawn, as in imitating the conceit of her virtue and passion' (p. 12). *Lucrece* is mentioned again as a graceful instance of the heroic together with the *Mirror for Magistrates, Rosamond,* and *Peter's Denial* (p. 20). Further on in the treatise, in a passage dealing with the superabundance and excess of conceits and of *copia* in general, one passage of Shakespeare's narrative poem does not fare so well. Scott quotes the line 'The endless date of never-ending woe', describing it as 'a very idle, stuffed verse in that very well-penned poem of Lucrece her rape' (p. 53).

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[466] See, especially, Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, '"Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *Past and Present* 129 (1990), pp. 30-78; William B. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 5; Stephen Orgel, *The Reader in the Book: A Study of Spaces and Traces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 16-7.

[467] William Scott, *The Model of Poesy*, ed. Gavin Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. xxviii. All references will be to this modern spelling edition and will be given in the text.

Scott, as we have pointed out, is mostly focused on poetry and rhetoric, but voices his opinions on what he finds aesthetically appropriate. He is also concerned by reception. One finds him quoting Shakespeare's *Richard II* to illustrate a point about the power of amplification. He cites John of Gaunt's speech in 1.3.227-32,

> Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow,
> And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow;
> Thou canst help time to furrow me with age,
> But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage;
> Thy word is current with him for my death,
> But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my breath. (p. 66)

For Scott, amplification is a means of impression on 'the mind of the reader': 'Sometime our amplification is by heaping our words and, as it were, piling one phrase upon another of the same sense to double and redouble our blows that, by varying and reiterating, may work into the mind of the reader' (ibid.). For this early modern reader, what is memorable and valuable in Shakespeare (and other authors) is what is composed in a style that is easy to memorize and that mesmerises. The rest can or should be discarded and forgotten. It is obvious also that Scott sees Shakespeare's *Richard II* with the eyes of *a reader* and not those of a playgoer. In passing, one realises that he turns Shakespeare into a *literary* author—one who, for him, wrote for 'the mind of the reader'.

Nevertheless, even the most literary-minded readers could be concerned by the quality of the plots of Shakespeare's plays. Such concerns emerged in fact decades before neo-classical critical discourses on dramatic unities and so-called adequate plotting. The annotations contained in a First Folio currently held by the University of Meisei in Japan (MR774) and dating back to 1620-1630 are a case in point. The inscriber—possibly a Scot by the name of William Johnstoune—is pleased at the way the plot is unfolding in two of Shakespeare's comedies: he records in the margin 'Conceiued feares and losses happilie remoued Intricassies cleered and Ioyfullie ended' for *The Merchant of Venice*, or 'good epilogue' for *As You Like It* (TLN 2760-2796, and Finis).[468] Conversely, the plot of Shakespeare's sometimes grotesquely bloody tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* is, after a while, too much to bear and loses its credibility or dramatic truthfulness for the annotator: 'More tragicall deuices and executions nor is credible' is Johnstoune's response (TLN 1238-1364).

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[468] All transcriptions of MR774 are taken from Akihiro Yamada, ed., *The First Folio of Shakespeare: A Transcript of Contemporary Marginalia in a Copy of the Kodama Memorial Library of Meisei University*

A good story, one that could speak to an audience, as well as to readers, was what performance-oriented readers of Shakespeare commended. Church of England clergyman Abraham Wright (1611–90) is famed for the notes he took on several plays around 1640-50 and for his attention to plots.[469] In a manuscript now preserved by the British Library, he commends *Othello* for meeting both literary and dramatic high standards in the following terms: 'A very good play, both for lines and plot, but especially ye plot'.[470] Wright himself had done some acting while at Oxford in the 1630s and he was the author of a play, *The Reformation*, which is now lost. He was a man who, in the words of Tiffany Stern, was 'also interested in how plays worked as performance texts for he is analysing them with an eye to the audience'.[471]

Likewise, there is a small step between comments on an actor's part in a play and literary interest in a character. Attachment to and focus on some of Shakespeare's characters is not necessarily synonymous with a later age—the eighteenth century and some of its character-oriented criticism. Thus, Wright remarks disparagingly 'Hamlet is an indifferent part for a madman'.[472] Far from offering a dry rhetorical interpretation of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Scott is also attentive to how characters deal with their emotions and how this is conveyed to the reader: 'Sometime the person shall be so plunged into the passion of sorrow', writes Scott, 'that he will even forget his sorrow and seem to entertain his hardest fortune with dalliance and sport, as in the very well-penned tragedy of *Richard the Second* is expressed in the King and Queen whilst | They play the wantons with their woes' (p. 45). Like other annotators, Scott has collapsed two different passages. In the play, Richard is talking to his cousin

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(Tokyo: Yushodo Press Co., 1998), who follows Charlton Hinman's 'Through Line Numbers' system (TLN). References will be given in the text. For the dating of the inscriptions, see Yamada, p. xix.

[469] For the dating of this manuscript, see Laura Estill, *Dramatic Extracts in Seventeenth-Century English Manuscripts, Watching, Reading, Changing Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015), pp. 84-5.

[470] BL MS. Add 22608, cited in Arthur C. Kirsch, 'A Caroline Commentary on the Drama', *Modern Philology* 66 (1969), pp. 256–61, p. 257. On the importance of plots, see Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-35. Some readers also kept manuscript plot lists. See, for proof that this was a lasting practice, Folger Library MS. S.a.9, Plots of plays and romances summarized by John Howe Chedworth, 4th baron, *ca.* 1775.

[471] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 8.

[472] Kirsch, 'A Caroline Commentary on the Drama', p. 258.

Aumerle. It is only in the next scene that the queen comes on stage to speak words that echo Richard's: 'What sport shall we devise here in this garden / To drive away the heavy thought of care?' (3.4.1-2). Coalescence and criss-crossing are frequent phenomena among annotators.

As for the annotator of the Meisei Folio (MR774) his marginalia reveal how closely engaged he was with Shakespeare's characters. There are some he obviously dislikes. If we take his notes on *Macbeth*, it is clear for him that Macbeth's wife is directly answerable for the crimes committed by her husband. His notes insist on Lady Macbeth's responsibility: 'but his hellish wife driues him to do it' (mm2, [TLN 457-518]). Some characters stir strong emotions in Johnstoune.[473] In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* he sides with Caesar's assassin, Brutus, rather than with one of the men who denounces the assassination, Antony: 'Anthonie sends a fawning message to brutus' (*Julius Caesar*, kk6 [TLN 1323-88]) and 'Antonies subtle and seditious harangue to stirre the people to mutinie' (*Julius Caesar*, ll1v [TLN 1649-1780]). Perhaps this is because he considers that Brutus is really the character who is at the heart of *Julius Caesar*, despite the play's title.

He is particularly attracted to one of Shakespeare's strong, even violent, characters, Coriolanus, the Roman military leader. Johnstoune's notes on the play show that he is following and interpreting almost every emotional turn (bitterness, anger, etc.) in the character, who obviously fascinated him, as, for instance, this remark makes evident: 'Coriolanus Inflexible and Incapable of flattering' (*Coriolanus*, bb3v [TLN 2230-93]). Often his marginalia show him trying to interpret the feelings and emotions of the characters, for instance in *Timon of Athens*, when he writes 'Timon moued with the honestie of his steward' (hh3v [TLN 2094-2157]).

While Johnstoune did make strong judgements on some of Shakespeare's characters, his inscriptions demonstrate that he could be aware of their complexity. The following two examples are illuminating for that matter, with their use of 'perplexitie' and 'perplexed': 'Confused perplexitie of othello Intending to | murther his wife vpon suspition'(*Othello*, vv4 [TLN 3220-3278]) and 'perplexed separation of louers vpon necessitie' (*Antony and Cleopatra*, x2 [TLN 417-80]). Johnstoune projects feelings onto the folio's lines. He breathes life into Shakespeare's characters by lending them qualities. In some cases, nevertheless, he goes the opposite way. Indeed, he appears to separate the characters from the play, as is indicated by the repeated use of the indefinite article and pronoun (‘a’ and ‘one’) in a number of extracts of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*.[474]

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[473] In some ways, Johnstoune anticipates the comment by Margaret Cavendish on the emotional powers of Shakespeare who 'Peirces the Souls of his Readers with such a True Sense and Feeling thereof, that it Forces Tears through their Eyes' (Letter 123, in *CCXI Sociable Letters* (London: Printed by William Wilson 1664), p. 246. Wing N872).

So what happens here? Johnstoune seemingly transforms Shakespeare’s characters into collective figures. This shows how—already at the beginning of the seventeenth century—Shakespeare could become ‘extractable’. Because they had become indefinite, his characters could be transferred into another space and also travel through time because they had been turned into universal figures with the potential of speaking to many people. A similar tendency to focus on Shakespeare’s characters can be perceived in Charles I’s copy of the Second Folio of Shakespeare now in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. In the table of contents, the King has added characters’ names against the titles of some of Shakespeare’s plays: ‘Benedick and Beatrice’ against *Much Ado About Nothing*; ‘Rosalind’ against *As You Like It*; ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ against *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; ‘Malvolio’ against *Twelfth Night*.[475] In fact, a few years later, during the Commonwealth—more than a century before Garrick’s planned parade of characters for the Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769—[476]some Shakespearean characters came to lead independent lives in the drolls (short dramatic pieces) directly inspired by the dramatist’s characters: *The Bouncing Knight* (Falstaff), *The Grave-Makers* (Hamlet and the grave-diggers); *The Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver* (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*).[477]

So, if early readers differed in their appreciation of Shakespeare’s style, plot and characters, it is still fascinating to observe how much importance they gave to these elements. Many were appreciative, but no consensus on the value of his plays emerged among them during this period. Readers’ efforts to classify, distinguish, or rank the dramatist’s works confirm this too. Their labours represent early and mostly independent attempts to express preference and taste without the guidance of substantial printed literary criticism on Shakespeare. In this era, annotators wish to record their tastes for their personal use, or for the sake of other readers with whom they possibly shared their books, but not to concur with, emulate, or oppose some critical norm.

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[474] See, for instance, TLN 3237-97, TLN 3298-3363, TLN 3430-95, TLN 3496-3561, or TLN 3628-93.

[475] See T. A. Birrell, *English Monarchs and their Books: from Henry VII to Charles II* (London: British Library, 1986), pp. 44-5.

[476] Tiffany Stern, ‘Shakespeare in drama’, in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 141-57; esp. p. 147.

[477] On drolls, see, especially, Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit, English Drama 1642-1660* (The Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 154-5 and Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics during the English Civil* War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6 et passim.

Famously, scholar and writer Gabriel Harvey (1552/3-1631) noted in his copy of Thomas Speght's folio edition of Chaucer published in 1598 that 'The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeares Venus, & Adonis: but his Lucrece, & his tragedie of Hamlet, prince of Denmarke, have it in them, to please the wiser sort'.[478] The lines, written *c.* 1600, are part of notes in which he cites the literary tastes of several famous figures. Harvey's comments seem to be his own (and perhaps a reflection of what he observed) and represent an early attempt at looking at Shakespeare's reception generically and sociologically (the young as opposed to older and no doubt scholarly readers like himself). *Hamlet* was probably one of his personal favourites, as it also appears ('the Tragedie of Hamlet'), together with 'Richard 3' in marginalia listing his preferred fifteenth- and sixteenth-century works.[479]

We cannot take Harvey's tastes as completely representative of the period. One reader—possibly an early seventeenth-century clergyman—deemed some plays, including Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *King John*, as well as a few others, totally unfit for note taking in his commonplace book: 'The tragedy of King John. & Richard the 3rd: Tamburlaine, vertumnus, ye 4 Prentises haue nought worthy excerping'.[480] *Richard III* was found ostensibly too sombre by another annotator of the same period. In a copy of the 1605 quarto of the play, someone has written along the page in its outside margin, 'I pray you send me an ounce of Ioye' (sig. H4v).[481] The inscription is opposite a passage where we get the depressing news of Richard wanting to kill his nephews and indications about his further plots.

Other types of readers built personal hierarchies of taste for their own use, or for the benefit of future readers. In a First Folio currently held by the Library of Congress, an early hand has left this note on the 'Finis' page of *Othello* (sig. vv6r): 'This is *th*e best, if ere [ever] good play were writ | so maist thou profitt much by readinge it'.[482] (Figure 14)

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[478] Cited in Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey, His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 127.

[479] These lines are in Harvey's copy of Guicciardini's *Detti, et Fatti* (1571), see Stern, *Gabriel Harvey*, p. 128.

[480] Bod.L. MS. Eng. Misc. D. 28, cited in Guillaume Coatalen, 'Shakespeare and other "Tragicall Discourses" in an Early Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book from Oriel College, Oxford', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700* 13 (2007), pp. 120-64; p. 137.

[481] FSL, STC 22317 Copy 1.

[482] PR2751 .A1 1623 Batchelder Coll: fol.

[INSERT: Inscription in First Folio, PR2751 .A1 1623 Batchelder Coll: fol., sig. vv6r. By permission of the Library of Congress.]

The address to an (imaginary?) reader emphasises the didactic or moral virtues of the play in a fashion that is close to Harvey's humanist type of reading. Yet reading for profit rather than leisure was not what everyone was after, even in an age that outwardly valued poetry over theatre and tragedy over comedy.[483] What is interesting is a growing tendency on the readers' part to rate and compare Shakespeare's works. The trend would develop later with the help of editors and *literati*, as Shakespeare's corpus became increasingly remote and thus more difficult to penetrate and appreciate. In a First Folio that once belonged to the Cary family in the first half of the seventeenth century, three comedies are rated: 'Pretty well' (sig. B4r) for *The Tempest*; 'very good, light' (sig. E6v) for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but 'starke naught' (sig. D1v) for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.[484] Clearly, those who were looking for light reading in Shakespeare's comedies could be disappointed. But so could those who focused on the more serious and allegedly more edifying tragedies. Abraham Wright compared two of them—*Othello* and *Hamlet*—concluding, largely against the judgement of centuries to come, that *Hamlet* was 'But an indifferent play, the lines but meane: and in nothing like Othello'. Wright did enjoy the gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet* ('a good scene'), but found it 'betterd' in Thomas Randolph's *The Jealous Lovers* (1632).[485] New work was overshadowing that of Shakespeare in the decades after his death. Indeed, around the time when Wright was taking his notes, William Cartwright talked of Shakespeare's 'Old fashion'd wit'.[486]

Significantly, Wright had highlighted an entire scene, not so much because he was intending to commonplace it, but rather to mark a moment of particular interest or beauty. As we can see, the critical dissecting of the dramatist's works began before the Restoration and the Augustan age, as soon as readers wished to get 'the best' out of Shakespeare's famed, but largely miscellaneous collections of works. Therefore, it is not surprising to find scenes in Shakespeare's popular play of *1 Henry IV* marked out as best: with a capital 'B' (sig. d6r) for a scene in Act 1, scene 1 with Hal, Falstaff and Poins and with 'Best' (sig. f3r) for the short scene 2 in Act 4 with Falstaff, Bardolph, Hal and Westmorland in a Second Folio (FSL Fo.2 No.38). Contrarily, Act 2, scene 1, which begins with an arguably dispensable dialogue between two Carriers, is one that is rated as 'Worst' (sig. e2r) in the same volume.

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[483] David Scott Kastan, '"A rarity most beloved": Shakespeare and the Idea of Tragedy', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Vol I: The Tragedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 4-22; p. 4.

[484] Glasgow University Library, shelfmark: Sp Coll BD8-b.1. For a possible dating of the annotations to the 1630s, see Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 128-9.

[485] Cited in Kirsch, 'A Caroline Commentary on the Drama', pp. 257-8.

[486] William Cartwright, 'Upon the report of the printing of the Dramaticall Poems of Master *John Fletcher*, collected before, and now set forth in one Volume', in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies, Never Printed Before* (London: Humphrey Robinson and Humphrey Moseley, 1647), sig. d2v. Wing B1581.

In a period when criticism was not, as it is now, associated with *literary* criticism and when the term 'literature' did not refer to works of imagination only,[487] the quest for expressions of literary taste, or for traces of aesthetic and critical comments might, on the face of it, appear vain. Nonetheless, as we hope to have shown, readers did air their views about Shakespeare and some did so extensively. No further and better proof can be furnished than that given by what is no doubt the most thoroughly annotated First Folio in the world, inscribed by a reader in the first few decades of the seventeenth century, Meisei University's MR774. Frequently dismissed as merely repetitive of Shakespeare's text, the notes reveal that this early modern reader did try to come to terms with the aesthetics of some of Shakespeare's plays.

For Johnstoune, the gist of Jaques's famous speech (2.7.139-43) is that 'The world is the stage of mens changeable fortunes' and that 'many parts [are] played by one man' (R1v, TLN 1097-1159). In *The Winter's Tale*, in the scene where the statue of Hermione comes to life, the annotator is well aware that Shakespeare is theatrically playing with fire. According to him, what the characters are witnessing are 'Things so Incredible as may make the beholders to beleeue they are done by witchcraft' (Cc1v, TLN 3254-3319). Nonetheless, it is probably the marginalia in *Henry V* that show him working hard to understand what artistic deal Shakespeare is trying to strike with his audience. Just before the Prologue, he writes this perceptive note in short hand: 'The auditours Imagination must supplie the strangenesse of Incredible representations of the stage' (h1, TLN 19-36 and 61-85). Confronted with the Chorus in Act 3 (which begins with 'Thus with imagined wing our swift scene flies / In motion of less celerity / Than that of thought…'), he appears less sure of himself. Still earnestly groping for meaning, he writes tentatively, 'Imagination must conceiue the suddane changes and actions of the stage' (h5, TLN 1007-66).

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[487] Simon Jarvis, 'Criticism, taste, aesthetics', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). pp. 24-42; p. 24.

Of the thirty-six plays in the First Folio those he annotated most were Shakespeare's twelve tragedies.[488] Thus, one might wonder if the inscriber had any idea of tragedy as a literary genre. It seems that it was the case. His reading of Hamlet's famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is that it is really a 'question whether we ought~~h~~ to ouercome our | selues and our passions by extreame patience | or die seeking desperat | reuenge' (Oo5 [TLN 1651-1716]). In the text of Hamlet, the question is whether we ought to live or escape in death. But the inscriber introduces 'revenge' here, which is a misreading of the passage, but actually shows what he, as a reader, was expecting, as Stephen Orgel has pointed out.[489] He held the view that a tragedy was supposed to be about vengeance.

His most annotated play was *Timon of Athens*. Although it may not appear to us as one of Shakespeare's darker tragedies, his marginalia reveal that he was sensitive to the pessimistic and tragic vision of mankind projected by it. He repeatedly focuses on the subject in his notes: 'vniuersall corruption of man' (hh2 [TLN 1636-99]); 'No man content The miserable s[h]ould wish to die' (hh2v [TLN 1832-97]); 'Men vndoe men as beasts destroy beasts' (hh3 [TLN 1898-1963]). In the sombre and tormented tragedy of *King Lear*, the annotator reacts to Kent's comments on miracles. Providence certainly does not seem to be at work in the play and the inscriber is quick to pick up on that: 'No thing almost sies miracles bot miserie' (rr1 [TLN 1234-95]). Why did the annotator of MR774 concentrate so much on the tragedies? Perhaps because he was personally touched, intrigued and stimulated by them, as the aesthetic comments he makes on the plays ostensibly indicate. Revealingly, a term commonly found in his marginalia is the adjective 'strange'. Shakespeare's tragedies are strange, puzzling, disconcerting worlds, posing unsolvable questions since they are about the great issues of human life. So what the annotator might have got out of his reading of these twelve plays is a deep sense of the infinite complexity of the human condition. Or, to put it in Johnstoune's own words, 'Infinit questions of the circumstance of strange chances' (*Cymbeline*, bbb5v [TLN 3694-3759]).

The Early Censorship of Shakespeare: A Question of Taste

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[488] For details, see Yamada, ed., *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, p. xxviii.

[489] Stephen Orgel, *The Reader in the Book*, *A Study of Spaces and Traces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 55.

In the preceding section, we have been concerned with the very early formation of taste among Shakespearean readers. The conclusions we have reached are that, despite the influence of humanist practices with their attention to style, to rhetoric and to classical literature and studies, the early reception of Shakespeare was surprisingly varied and in some cases it foreshadowed later trends (the focus on plot, characters and passions, for instance).

The mid-to-late-seventeenth century was a period when Shakespeare's fortunes as a literary writer were not firmly established. His reputation waned in the decades following his death and his works could be considered by some as old-fashioned compared to the new plays produced before, during and after the English Civil War. Nevertheless, he was still considered important enough to be censured and adapted by a number of readers of the period.

The history of Shakespearean censorship does not fall directly within our purview, but a word still needs to be said about it. Indeed, historians have remarked that even when censorship was enforced 'reception, far more than regulation, determined whether or not a particular text was transgressive'.[490] Thus, censorship remained a context-bound and partly subjective act and, to some extent, it can be considered as an expression of taste, as we shall see.[491]

One of the best-known cases of censorship of Shakespeare is no doubt a copy of a Second Folio which remained in the library of the English College of St Alban's in Valladolid, Spain, from the early 1640s to June 1928, when it was bought by the American book collector Henry Folger. It is now preserved by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC and bears the shelfmark Fo.2, no.07. The book is not entirely unknown and several scholars have recorded the censored passages.[492] Therefore, we shall not offer a detailed account of the censorship, but shall highlight the broader conclusions that can be drawn from the traces left by the censor.

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[490] Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 221 et passim. For more on this point and more generally on censorship in this period, see Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation, The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 45 et passim; Janet Clare, *'Art made tongue-tied by authority', Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 17; Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels, The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 47; 86; 96 et passim and his *Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

[491] It certainly became the case in the following century, when, as Jarvis has observed, literary criticism in the period often came to be synonymous with 'fault-finding, the detection of slips' (Jarvis, 'Criticism, taste, aesthetics', p. 25).

[492] See Sidney Lee, 'Shakespeare and the Inquisition: A Spanish Second Folio', in his *Elizabethan and Other Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 184-95; Roland Frye, 'Appendix-The Roman Catholic Censorship

The title page of the Valladolid Folio bears the certificate of a Jesuit censor and there are marks of censorship inside the book. The censor has been successfully identified as the English Jesuit father William Sankey. Arriving from Flanders in 1641, he reportedly served at different times as a procurator, confessor, consultor, and as temporary rector of the College for two months in 1649. In 1651 he left Valladolid to become Rector of St George's English College.[493] Therefore, in all likelihood, Sankey's expurgation of the folio must have been carried out between those dates.

Turning the pages of the Valladolid Second Folio, one is clearly aware of Sankey's work as a censor. Words, lines, sometimes whole passages, have been blacked out with an ink pen and only the stubs of the leaves of *Measure for Measure* remain, as the entire play was cut out seemingly with a sharp instrument. (Figure 15)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no 7, former Valladolid Folio, *Measure for Measure* excised. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Yet, on closer scrutiny, and even if the censorship is *real*, it is far from systematic or indeed totalitarian. Seventeen out of the thirty-six plays in the Second Folio receive marks of censorship, leaving nineteen plays that Sankey may not have read, that is, more than half the book. Remarkably, the majority of obliterations concern sexual allusions and not passages which may be considered unorthodox from a Catholic standpoint.

Sankey even restricted his focus as far as unorthodox or disrespectful religious allusions were concerned. Apart from a few sporadic deletions in the comedies, he is most active in plays such as *1 and 2 Henry VI*, and, more predictably, in *King John* and *Henry VIII*. Passages are again blacked out in a spectacular fashion, but when one counts the lines affected by his censorship, one is left with the impression that he kept his deletions to a minimum, that he ignored whole passages, or that his notion of religious orthodoxy was fluctuating. The

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of Shakespeare: 1641-1651', in his *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 275-93. Edward M. Wilson, 'Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine: Some Qualifications', *Shakespeare Survey* 23 (1970), pp. 79-89; Ángel-Luis Pujante, 'Spanish and European Shakespeares: Some Considerations', in *Actas del XXI Congreso Internacional de A.E.D.E.A.N. (Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos* (Universidad de Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1999), pp. 17-33; at pp. 20-2; Brian Cummings, 'Shakespeare and Inquisition', *Shakespeare Survey* 65 (2012), pp. 306-22.

[493] Michael E. Williams, *St Alban's College Valladolid, Four Centuries of English Catholic Presence in Spain* (London: Hurst & Company, 1986), pp. 37 and 262; Cummings, 'Shakespeare and Inquisition', p. 310.

expurgation is as follows: two lines for *1 Henry VI*, twenty-eight lines for *2 Henry VI*, twenty-four for *King John*, forty lines for *Henry VIII*. Some modern directors would cut far more when adapting plays. The cutting out of *Measure for Measure* is certainly the most violent act of expurgation in this Second Folio, if we accept that it was the censor's work. It is true that this is a play about a duke who disguises himself as a friar, in other words, as a Catholic priest, and that it could simply have been unacceptable for Sankey and made *Measure* impossible for him to expurgate in part. More than a century later, another reader-censor was faced with a similar dilemma. Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825) wondered whether he could include the play in his *Family Shakspeare* as 'the indecent expressions with which many of the scenes abound, are so interwoven with the story, that it is extremely difficult to separate the one from the other'.[494] In the end, he did publish an expurgated version of the play. It is certain that *Measure for Measure* confronted reader-censors with a difficult choice and its presence in an edition was for some a matter of personal opinion.

If we turn now to how some of Shakespeare's poems were censored in the seventeenth century, we are left with the same impression of subjectivity. John Benson's 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems* is frequently branded for its rearrangement of Shakespeare's sonnets and for its alleged censorship of traces of homoeroticism in the lyrics.[495] The edition could be interpreted as an effort to appeal to and accommodate the tastes of mid-seventeenth-century readers, and yet not every reader was satisfied with what Benson had produced. This is very obviously the case of one of the early readers of the little-known annotated edition of Benson's *Poems* now held by Meisei University, in Tokyo (MR 1447). There are some emendations in this edition, but what is most striking are the efforts to make it conform to this late seventeenth-century reader's sense of personal decency. Again, the inscriber may have been a priest, or someone who disliked profanities, as well as sexual or erotic allusions.

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[494] Thomas Bowdler, *The Family Shakspeare, in Ten Volumes* (London: Printed for Longman et al., 1818), sig. *B2v. My thanks to Ángel-Luis Pujante for pointing me to this reference.

[495] Shakespeare William, *Poems vvritten by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent*, Printed at London: By Tho. Cotes, and are to be sold by Iohn Benson, 1640). STC: 22344. For Benson's censorship of homoerotism, see William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. by J. Kerrigan (London: Penguin Books, (1995 (1986)), pp. 44-5; Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex Between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 101-4. However, other scholars do not agree that Benson was as bigoted: Margreta de Grazia, 'The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1994): 35-6. Cathy Shrank, 'Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets: John Benson and the 1640 Poems', *Shakespeare* 5.3 (2009): 272.

Appended to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems*, some parts of 'A Lover's Complaint' are not to the annotator's taste. On sig. H1r, the following is crossed out with the word 'nonsense' inscribed opposite:

What me your minister? for you obayes,
Works under you, and to your audit comes,
Their distract parcells, incombined summes. (Figure 16)

[INSERT: W. Shakespeare*, Poems* (J. Benson ed., 1640), Meisei University, Tokyo, MR 1447, sig. H1r. By permission of Meisei University Library.]

What Katherine Duncan-Jones calls a 'contorted passage'[496] may also have irritated the reader for religious reasons—as the word 'minister' is possibly too closely related to gifts of an amorous nature. A few lines later, another passage is obliterated in the same way with the word 'nonsense' next to it (sig. H1v): 'Play the Place which did no forme receive, / Play patient sports in unconstrain'd gives'

The cryptic nature of the passage may have displeased the annotator, or the possibility that one might 'play patient sports' with 'a nun, / Or sister sanctified' could very well have been considered profanity. No doubt as to the nature of the censorship is left in the poem entitled 'Helen to Paris', which is in fact from Thomas Heywood's *Troia Britannica* (1609). This is by far the poem which suffers most under the pen of the annotator, especially on sigs. I7v-I8r when Helen's confession of potential infidelity is visibly unacceptable and is crossed out repeatedly:

These would provoke me to lascivious play.
Besides, I must confesse, you have a face,
So admirable rare, so full of grace,
That it hath power to wooe, and to make ceasure,
Of the most bright chaste beauties to your pleasure: (sig. I8r)

The confession is situated near the beginning of the poem, at a point where Helen dwells on Paris's pleasing physical features. A following passage, which is crossed out three times (sig. K1v), is likewise about possible unfaithfulness: 'The greater, but not the greatest liberty: / Is limited to our Lascivious play, / That *Menalaus* is farre hence away'.

Consequently, religious profanities and sexual licentiousness seem to have been the primary targets of this reader-censor. Surprisingly, given the apparent tendency towards religious and sexual orthodoxy in the changes introduced by the annotator, the poems addressed to the 'young man' do not appear to have raised the reader's eyebrows to any great extent. This is a reminder that early modern readers reacted differently to expressions of sexual behaviour and again that the censorship of Shakespeare could be subjective, a matter of personal taste, and sometimes just unpredictable. Indeed, a counter-example to the annotations in the Meisei volume is found in FSL MS. V.a.148 where the compiler of the miscellany has feminized pronouns in lines taken from Benson's 'The glory of beautie' (sig. A2v), which was sonnet 68 in the 1609 edition. Yet the compiler does not pursue this in the rest of the extracts, showing how even an individual could be divided in his tastes and choices when reading Shakespeare's works.

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[496] William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by K. Duncan-Jones (London: Thomas Nelson, 1997), p. 225.

Restoration Readers' Tastes: Transitioning between the Old and the New

From a dramatic point of view, the Restoration is seen as a time of considerable change when the stage flourished. There is, of course, much truth in this, even if, from the point of view of those who read plays, these aesthetic changes may not have been as spectacular.

To begin with, late-seventeenth-century readers still had no works of literary criticism *entirely* devoted to Shakespeare to offer guidance. They had to wait for Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare, or John Dennis's *Essay upon the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare* (1711) in the following century. What they did have were accounts of the English stage, which included comments on Shakespeare and other dramatists, as well as Restoration playwrights. Among those accounts, the ones which readers seemed to use and copy most in their editions of Shakespeare were John Dryden's 1668 *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* and his 'Defence of the Epilogue, Or, An Essay on the Dramatique Poetry of the Last Age' in the second part of his play *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), and also Gerard Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691).

Langbaine offered plot summaries of Shakespeare's plays and continuously mentioned how much playwrights (including those of the Restoration) borrowed from Shakespeare and stole from him, often with no acknowledgement. His esteem for Shakespeare was high, whereas Dryden's was more nuanced and in some regards contradictory, as will appear later. In what follows we shall focus on the particularly rich commonplace book of a Restoration reader who had read Dryden and on a number of manuscript comments made by annotators of the same period.

The idea will be to stress the transition emerging between the then 'Old' Shakespeare and the 'New' that readers reassessed in the light of their cultural present. A noteworthy feature is that some of the interests of pre-Interregnum readers continued to be relevant for their Restoration counterparts. This can be partly explained by the fact that reading habits were no doubt handed down through education and communities. They were not fundamentally altered by the English Civil War, which had important effects in other artistic domains, however. Plot, Wit (the attention to the powers of dramatic language), as well as characters were aspects that remained crucial when it came to the appreciation of a play. Yet these categories evolved and what they signified for readers in the second half of the seventeenth century naturally changed.

One of the most explicit Restoration manuscript documents as far as the literary reception of Shakespeare is concerned, is certainly a commonplace book compiled by a certain 'P.D.' around 1688.[497] This is a manuscript of 129 folio pages in total, assembled by someone who was an avid reader and annotator. It is made up of a vast collection of notes covering diverse subjects: history both ancient and modern (including interregnum history, history at large, and news), law, philosophy, Greek and Latin classical authors, politics, religion, accounting rules, and plot summaries of Restoration plays (ff. 21v to 28r for instance). There is also evidence that he not only read plays, but also attended some. The commonplace book is partly indexed at the end and P.D.'s index begins with a list of twenty-six plays (f. 121r). Most of them are Restoration works except for Richard Brome's *The Northern Lass* and six Shakespearean plays: *Much Ado About Nothing, Measure for Measure, The Merry Wives, The London Prodigal* (an 'apocryphal' play)*, Othello,* and *As You Like It* (ff. 59v-60v).[498] Not listed in the index are very short extracts of Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*[499] and more ample notes on John Suckling's tragedy *Aglaura* and his comedy *The Goblins* (f. 101v). While he does not find the latter to his taste, he takes notes on two of Suckling's poems where Shakespeare is mentioned:

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[497] The exact identity of the compiler of Bod.L. MS. Eng. Misc. c. 34 remains a mystery, however. On this question and on the dating of the notes, see: G. Blakemore Evans, 'A Seventeenth-Century Reader of Shakespeare', *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 21, no. 84 (1945), p. 272. Evans transcribed P.D.'s notes on Shakespeare in his article. The extracts cited in this section are from my own transcriptions and will be cited in the text henceforward.

[498] *The London Prodigal* is of course attributed to Shakespeare in the Fourth Folio (1685) that P.D. most likely used, as the page references in the manuscript correspond to the Fourth Folio.

[499] 'Taw lips wagging & never a wise word. B. Johnson' (f. 121r, same extract crossed out on f. 119r).

> The Sweat of learned Johnsons brain
> And gentle Shakespear's easier strain p. 41 flowing and easy.
> His copy of verses, compareing love to siege, are incom
> parably well done. p. 37. (f. 101v)

The main focus of P.D.'s diary was far from being Shakespeare's plays, but his repeated notes on the dramatist show that he had an interest in him, as well as in theatre. The separate index entirely devoted to plays is a case in point. Typically, the compiler gives plot summaries of the plays he has read. They can be followed or preceded by choice extracts. His comments on the plays (which he entitles alternatively 'Reflections', 'The Censure', or 'My opinion of the play') are almost systematic and showcase the tastes of a sophisticated and informed reader. He praises dramatists who can offer dialogues worthy of 'the conversation of a gentleman' (f. 25r), or those who write 'like a gentleman of much conversation' (f. 133v). In these expressions of taste, one can perhaps see here a reflection of his assumed social and intellectual status, or a concern for Shakespeare's potential 'reusability'. Furthermore, P.D. examines Restoration plays and pre-Restoration dramatists like Shakespeare with equal rigour. He has disparaging comments for contemporary playwrights too.[500] In other words, he does not systematically praise the Moderns over the Ancients.

P.D. is a critically informed reader who cites extracts taken from Dryden's 'Defence of the Epilogue, Or, An Essay on the Dramatique Poetry of the Last Age' in the second part of his play *The Conquest of Granada*, but also parts of the play's dedicatory epistle. The extracts from Dryden remain general[501] and are not related to Shakespeare or his contemporaries, apart from one taken from the 'Defence', which is a summary of several lines in Dryden's argumentation. Under the heading 'Of Playes' (f. 120r), P.D. notes:

> Ben Johnson in his character of Asper personates
> himself… True-wise in *th*e silent woman is his
> Master-peice—Shakespear shewd the best of his
> wit in Mercutio & Fletcher in Don John. Dryden
> Epist. to 2^{d}. part of Granada

The compiler turned Dryden's 'the best of his skill' into 'the best of his wit', thus displaying his attentiveness to a term that was particularly important for him, as we shall see shortly.[502] In his ‘Defence’ Dryden had also cast aspersions on Shakespeare in a passage that P.D. had no doubt come across: ‘Never did any Author precipitate himself from such heights of thought to so low expressions, as he often does. He is the very *Janus* of Poets; he wears, almost every where two faces; and you have scarce begun to admire the one, e’re you despise the other’.[503] Dryden probably informed P.D.’s judgement, but in no way is P.D. as mitigated in his comments as Dryden.

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[500] He finds Thomas Shadwell's *On Bury Fair* (1689) 'very dull & insipid' and notes, 'it will scarse bare reading' (f. 116v). He is not impressed by Nathaniel Lee's *Princess of Cleve* (1681) either: 'tis incoherent & may be seen 'twas writt by a mad man, that had yet some remaines of sense & fancy' (f. 118v).

[501] For details, see Estill, *Dramatic Extracts in Seventeenth-Century English Manuscripts*, p. 139.

Under the title ‘Shakespear’s Plays’ (f. 59v) begins a section in which six of the dramatist’s plays are seen through the prism of story-telling—on a macro-structural level and for their theatrical qualities. Yet P.D.’s approach also produces a fragmented outlook on the playwright’s works: Shakespeare is regarded as a source of wit and sense (the two terms being intimately linked in P.D.’s mind) and in a significant number of instances the characters appear to matter more than the plays themselves.

As we know, the plot had long been recognised among dramatists and readers alike as a fundamental element in the making of a play. At the Restoration it began to be an area of debate and controversy, mainly among critics. The notion could be used to distinguish pre-Restoration from post-Restoration playwrights, as well as French from English theatre. Another example of the fluidity and instability of critical taste is Dryden’s own changing opinion on the matter. The influential writer and dramatist had first defended English plays (and particularly Shakespeare’s and Fletcher’s) against French theatre through the character of Neander in the dialogue of his essay *Of dramatick poesie* (1668): ‘our Plots are weav’d in English Loomes: we endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters which are deriv’d to us from *Shakespeare* and *Fletcher*’.[504] Four years later, he had changed his mind for the sake of an argument aimed at defending Restoration theatre. In his ‘Defence of the Epilogue’, he claimed that the times in which Shakespeare and Fletcher wrote were ‘ignorant’, condemned ‘the lameness of their Plots’ that were often ‘made up of some ridiculous, incoherent story, which, in one Play many times took up the business of an Age’.[505]

P.D. had read Dryden’s ‘Defence’ and was well aware of the influence of French neoclassical standards, as this passing comment on John Lacy’s *Sir Hercules Buffoon* (1684) indicates: ‘The scenes are for *th*e most part single w*hi*ch is against *th*e Rules of *th*e French

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[502] John Dryden, ‘Defence of the Epilogue’, in *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards in two parts* ([London]: Printed by T.N. for Henry Herringman, 1672), p. 172. Wing D2256.

[503] Dryden, ‘Defence of the Epilogue’, p. 170.

[504] John Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1668), p. 46. Wing D2327.

[505] Dryden, ‘Defence of the Epilogue’, p. 163.

Stage but frequently used in all our English plays' (f. 73v). Yet one finds that this educated and well-read compiler was in fact more even-handed than Dryden in his appreciation of Shakespeare's plots.

Indeed, according to P.D., the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* 'is very well managed, and carrys nothing in it either improbable or unnatural' (f. 59v). Moreover, he produces a detailed and balanced analysis of how Shakespeare handled his plot. Shakespeare did not observe neoclassical rules but P.D. is remarkably perceptive and understands that there can be no hard and fast rule in these matters. He recognises that a 'willing suspension of disbelief' is necessary on the part of the audience and that this is crucial to Shakespeare's art. P.D.'s sophisticated literary commentary is worth citing in full:

> He hath not observed *th*e unity of time so nicely as to bring *th*e representation of *th*e play within one-days space, w*hi*ch our modern criticks so much enjoyn, but what is all one he contrives *tha*t *th*e intermediate spaces shall be between *th*e Acts. which if well observed, I see no reason why an action of 5 days may not be represented in 2 hours as well as an action of one in *th*e same time. or why wee may not as well conceive every act to take up a day as 2 hours since neither can be done without *th*e Help of an imagination willing & consenting to be cheated & deceived. (f. 59v) (Figure 17) [INSERT: Commonplace Book complied by one 'P.D.' *c.* 1688, MS Eng. Misc. c. 34, f. 59v. By permission of the Bodleian Library.]

Overall the compiler's remarks on Shakespeare's plots remain even-handed and less contradictory than Dryden's. Unsurprisingly, he finds that the plot of *Measure for Measure* 'is well layd but wants something to make it pleasant' (f. 59v). For him, *As You Like It* is clearly not dramatic enough: 'The plot is story contrived into acts & scenes' (f. 60v). 'Contrived' is a word he also uses for Aphra Behn's and Thomas Betterton's *The Counterfeit Bridegroom or the Defeated Widow* (1677), an adaptation of a Middleton play. Perhaps P.D.'s worst remark on the plot of an early play is for Richard Brome's *Northern Lass* (1632): 'The plott is tedious, and not pleasant when disclosed' (f. 28r).

More than plot, the compiler is frequently concerned with evaluating authors' and plays' wit. It has to be said that on the question of wit, P.D. sides more with the Moderns than the Ancients and goes against the grain of a tradition associating Shakespeare and wit. Among a number of other writers, Leonard Digges (1588–1635) had called Shakespeare 'the patterne of all wit' in a dedicatory epistle in John Benson's edition of the dramatist's *Poems* (1640).[506] Margaret Cavendish had underlined his 'Quick Wit' and 'Eloquent Elocution' in her *Sociable Letters* (1664).[507] Even Dryden's Neander famously declared '*Shakespeare* the greater wit' when compared to Jonson in *Of dramatick poesie*.[508] However, while far less extreme in his notes, P.D. appears to share the same views as the prologue of Shirley's *Love's Tricks*, written to justify its Restoration publication in 1667: '*That which the World call'd Wit in* Shakespears *Age, / Is laught at, as improper for our Stage*'.[509]

Only two out of six plays by or attributed to Shakespeare meet with the P.D.'s approval. Yet what is noticeable is that his praise is limited to certain characters or certain specific parts of the plays. In *Much Ado About Nothing* he finds that 'Seignior Benedict & Madam Beatrice are very diverting characters, witty, well-humoured, … given to raillery quick at Rerpartee' (f. 59v). His overall impression of the play is less favourable: '*th*e witt too much inclining to clenches' (ibid.), that is, too prone to quibbling. Similarly, only two scenes meet his criteria in terms of wit in *Measure for Measure*: 'The 2 & 4 Scenes of *th*e 2d. Act contain *th*e prayer of Isabel, & frailty of Angelo, and are very full of sense & reasoning' (f. 60r). The same goes for *As You Like It* where only a few parts of the play are pinpointed: 'Act. 3. sc. 2. Act 4. sc. 1. Act. 5. sc. 1 2 & 4. In these there is some witt & repartee, and sometimes scattered in other scenes: but to speak in a word, the play is but indifferent' (f. 60v). *Othello* is not where one would expect to find wit anyway, but P.D. does make this castigating comment: 'but where he would aim at witt, as when he brings in Iago & Rhoderigo but they rally so flatt & insipidly that they don't rise to *th*e pitch of Coblers: A greasy Cook would be more brisk & frolicksome' (f. 60v). The worst is yet to come with this severe comment on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: 'The plott is good, but *th*e characters & persons of *th*e play so mean & *thei*r witt & language & conversation so plain, that 'tis scarse worth reading' (f. 60r).

So what was P.D. expecting in terms of wit? Several clues can be found in the notes themselves of this accomplished and demanding Restoration reader. For instance, he remarks that *The London Prodigal* 'wants *th*e quicknes of good repertee, & pleasantnes of witt & sense' (f. 60r), but that Dryden's *Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen* 'is very well writt' and contains ‘a great deal of wit & sense’ (f. 117v). Other readers might have read Shakespeare’s plays for their entertainment value only. There are plenty of examples of this type of reading throughout the early modern period. As a knowledgeable reader P.D. wanted more: he wanted wit *and* sense, in other words, thoughtful *and* well-crafted entertainment. In one way, he is an especially thorough reader, not just a collector of *bons mots* like so many, and may not be representative of other readers of Shakespeare. If his tastes remain personal, he is clearly swayed by some Restoration definitions of wit, like the one given by Dryden in the Preface to his opera *The State of Innocence* (1677): ‘the definition of Wit (which has been so often attempted, and ever unsuccessfully by many Poets,) is only this: That it is a propriety of Thoughts and Words; or in other terms, Thought and Words, elegantly adapted to the Subject’.[510]

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[506] Leonard Digges, 'Upon Master William Shakespeare, the Deceased Authour, and his Poems', in *Poems vvritten by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent*, ed. Benson, sig. *3r.

[507] Cavendish, Letter 123, in *CCXI Sociable Letters*, p. 246.

[508] Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie*, p. 50.

[509] James Shirley, *Love tricks, or, The school of complements as it is now acted by His Royal Highnesse the Duke of York's servants* (London: Printed by R.T., 1667), sig. ∏1r. Wing S3477.

Thus, there are some traces of a dialogue between the compiler and contemporary literary criticism like that of Dryden. Yet P.D.’s tastes are never a direct reflection of what he has found in Dryden. P.D. is too well read to adhere to the views of one author. Taken as a whole, his commonplace book in fact displays a recurring *personal* interest in ‘characters’. The heading is frequent throughout his notebook. The Shakespeare extracts are situated after a long section of notes on historical figures and their ‘character’ and are followed by a Latin list of ‘Romani Imperatores’ and extracts of works of contemporary history (ff. 60v-61r). P.D. had a fascination for the lives of famous historical figures; so much so, that he assembled a separate index entitled ‘Characters of’ (f. 125v) at the end of his notebook. He carries his passion for characters into the dramatic field and his notes on Dryden’s and Lee’s tragedy *The Duke de Guise* (1683) show that he is able to make subtle distinctions between ‘characters’ and ‘persons’ in historical drama: ‘The other characters are suitable to *th*e Persons’, he remarks (f. 26v).

His attention to characterisation is not only a distinguishing feature, but it also suggests that, overall, P.D. was both an ‘Ancient’ and a ‘Modern’ in his tastes. We have seen how early readers could become engaged emotionally with Shakespeare’s characters—it is also P.D.’s case. His notes on *Othello* describe how the characters’ passions are successfully developed on stage by Shakespeare and how these rich characters are subsequently able to move readers: ‘Iago a villain works up *th*e passion with much art & great success, Othello takes fire & is consumed in *th*e heat of passion. *th*e whole is done in such lively characters that it must needs affect *th*e reader' (f. 60r). Margaret Cavendish had already been struck by Shakespeare's ability 'to Express to the Life all Sorts of Persons'.[511] With hindsight, one can likewise observe how P.D.'s reflections are forward looking. Indeed, Shakespeare's naturalism was to become an important theme in the eighteenth century and character criticism would develop into a critical field. Later critics underlined the moral and ethical dimension of Shakespeare's characters and the Bard would be redeemed of his flaws because he had become the great moral philosopher who enabled readers and spectators to study human nature.[512] There is a hint of these preoccupations in P.D's attachment to wit *and* sense, his moral 'snapshots' of historical characters and his taste for Shakespeare's so-called natural style. Nonetheless, there is no wish to turn Shakespeare into a moral or ethical painter of passions. P.D. enjoys the fact that 'Seignior Benedict & Madam Beatrice are very diverting characters' (f. 59v) in *Much Ado About Nothing* and always regrets the lack of outstanding theatrical figures, as in Betterton's *The Counterfeit Bridegroom or the Defeated Widow* where 'There is no extraordinary character or humour to be described' (f. 27v). But that is as far as he will go.

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[510] John Dryden, *The state of innocence, and fall of man: an opera* (London: Printed by T.N. for Henry Herringman, 1677), sig. c2v. Wing D2372.

Broadly speaking, P.D. is an intelligent and generally consistent reader in his tastes, particularly as far as Shakespeare is concerned. Where critics like Dryden would sometimes contradict themselves, or others like Gerard Langbaine would begin to put Shakespeare on a pedestal, P.D. took a middle road and followed his tastes, never ceasing to be outspoken and to justify his choices. Other Restoration readers went much further in their praises for Shakespeare, yet they often focused on specific plays, or even scenes. One Samuel Danvers wrote in the margins of Act 4 of *Titus Andronicus*: 'Will Shakespear that more then Excellent Drammatiq*ue* poet by this Dolefull tragedy has merited immortal fame immortal fame [sic]: so says Sam: Danvers:' (FSL Fo. 2 no.47, sig. gg1v). In a 1684 edition of *Julius Caesar* an anonymous seventeenth-century reader left this note: 'Scene betwixt Brutus & Cassius in *th*e 4th. Act A masterpiece'.[513] These examples, as well as P.D.'s notes show how the Restoration appreciation of Shakespeare was still fluctuating, but that readers continued to engage with his works. They also inaugurate a period during which Shakespeare's readers began creating personal hierarchies of taste, airing their views and justifying them far more explicitly than before.

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[511] Cavendish, Letter 123, in *CCXI Sociable Letters*, p. 245.

[512] Michèle Willems, 'From Janus to Prometheus: The paradoxical construction of the Shakespeare myth from the Restoration onwards', *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 90.1 (2016), p. 60.

[513] William Shakespeare, *Julius Cæsar. A tragedy. As it is now acted at the Theatre Royal* (London: printed by H. H[ills]. Jun. for Hen. Heringman and R. Bentley, 1684), title page. FSL S2922 Copy 2.

Passing Judgement on Shakespeare

PART II: Shakespeare and Communal Cultural Dialogue

Fostered by revivals of Shakespeare's plays, by an increasing number of new editions and by the development of literary criticism in book form and periodicals, the epistemological drive to interpret Shakespeare's works became more intense. As we have seen, there had always been such an impulse and again we shall find some elements of continuity in the decidedly more self-conscious culture of reading that emerged during the eighteenth century. The dramatist was still largely adapted but as his editors promised to offer a more 'genuine' Shakespeare, his readers became aware of the differences between the source texts at their disposal and contemporary adaptations. Eighteenth-century readers were potentially far better informed than their predecessors, but while print criticism had an indisputable influence on their reading, the traces they left in their books prove that they took many different roads. Some entered into a dialogue with contemporary critics, others used Shakespeare to vent their nationalistic views, or to create personal hierarchies of taste which would identify them as sophisticated amateur critics. As in the preceding periods, there were also those idiosyncratic or isolated readers who were primarily guided by themselves. Some sought to be leaders of opinion and confronted their ideas with those of established critics. Finally, Shakespearean editions became inscribed receptacles of opinion, scribal forums for readers of different generations to vent their views. As Shakespeare began to occupy a central position in literary debates in the course of the eighteenth century, his works became essential to British society's communal dialogue on literary form and taste.

Readers and Literary Critics in Dialogue: Creating the Shakespearean Literary Sphere

To begin our exploration of eighteenth-century readers' tastes we shall concentrate on books and manuscripts which show the influence of printed criticism and which nevertheless demonstrate readers' ability to construct their own interpretation. Their will to annotate Shakespeare - often profusely - is proof that, despite the influence of critical peritexts, they wished to shape their own interpretative journey through many of Shakespeare's plays. The task of accounting for these readers is immense, especially in a century when Shakespeare was becoming more accessible. Therefore, in what follows, we shall only offer examples taken from important annotated editions and manuscripts, and focus on the most pertinent expressions of taste.

Our main case study in this section will be an abundantly annotated critical edition of Shakespeare—a copy of Nicholas Rowe's six-volume edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works (1709).[514] The volumes were probably inscribed during the first half of the eighteenth century and are filled with references to Charles Gildon's *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays on Several Subjects in Prose and Verse* (1694) and to John Dennis's *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear* (1712), with a few allusions to Dryden. Other examples will be taken from a Third Folio (FSL Fo.3 no.22), which bears references to almost every eighteenth-century Shakespeare edition up until that of Edward Capell (1768); an anonymous commonplace book (BL Lansdowne 1185), which contains passages extracted from Shakespeare's Second Folio, critical remarks and allusions to Jean de La Bruyère's *Les Caractères* (*The Characters*, English translation 1699) and which was more indirectly inspired by Dryden; and finally a Second Folio bound with a Fourth Folio's 'apocryphal' pages (Bodl.L. Arch. G c.9) annotated by one John Prater and displaying multiple allusions to Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works.

Plot elements remained a concern for a majority of readers. Naturally, especially for annotators using eighteenth-century editions, or for those who were inspired by them, the direct repetition of neoclassical commonplaces is noticeable. On the title page of *Othello*, the reader of Rowe's edition has inscribed: 'This play comes *th*e nearest to a perfect piece. *th*e Fable founded upon one Acion only' (vol. 5). Similarly, John Prater, an early eighteenth-century reader, jotted down the following reminder on the opening page of *Romeo and Juliet*: 'one Single Action in *thi*s & hamlet & othello' (Bod.L. Arch. G c.9, sig. gg5v). The latter cites his source directly on the opening folio of *Romeo and Juliet*: 'this Row says is one of *th*e most finisht of all his [sic] he says it was he beleeves designd a Tragedy' (sig. O4r).

Yet, despite this enduring attention to so-called Aristotelian rules (unity of action in this case), many readers were capable of voicing their personal enjoyment of the striking twists in the plots of Shakespeare's plays. In *Measure for Measure*, after the Provost's revelation that 'one in the prison / That should by private order else have died, / I have reserved alive' (5.1.458-60), the reader of FSL Fo.3 no.22 notes admiringly 'how finely this brings on *th*e

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[514] FSL, PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh.Col. All references will be given in the text.

Discovery of Claudio's being yet living!' (sig. G6r). *Hamlet* is seemingly an endless source of pleasure for the reader of Rowe's edition, because of the play's surprising 'Incidents':

> In Hamlet there are innumerable
> Incidences w[hi]ch strongly strike *th*e
> mind of *th*e spectator with presages of
> Horrour, reuenge upon unjust actions
> undertaken from Ambition with many
> other laudable circumstances
> Ophelias Melancholy. *th*e Introduction
> of the Grave digger, *th*e conversations
> of *th*e schollars with *th*e fiend, *th*e duell,
> *th*e explanation between *th*e Son &
> mother. (vol. 5, second back-flyleaf recto)

If some of Shakespeare's plots did not meet neoclassical standards, the naturalism of his style and depictions was an element that critics who defended Shakespeare against French taste insisted upon. This gradually became a central argument in the cultural warfare that would oppose England and France throughout the eighteenth century. In *Of Dramaticke Poesie*, Dryden's Neander had defined the specific (and implicitly superior) qualities of English theatre. Perfection is commendable – but it is not life, nor a natural representation of it.[515]

Many of the annotator's emotional and personal responses in Rowe's edition are informed by the same theme. Prospero's celebrated speech in *The Tempest* (… We are such stuff / As dreams are made on …' (4.1.156-7) prompts this enthusiastic comment: 'p. 48. [where the speech is situated] *th*e reflections & naturalism on *th*e frail and transitory state of nature is wonderfully fine' (vol. 1, verso of the volume's title page). The description of Falstaff's demise in *Henry V* is found entertaining for similar reasons: 'Account of Falstaff death [p.]1314 extremely natural & diverting' (vol. 3, verso of *1 Henry VI* illustration). For the annotator, Hamlet's words are an apt reflection of his feelings: 'Hamlet speeches are full of *th*e nature of his passion' (vol. 5, p. 2466).

Like their seventeenth-century counterparts, eighteenth-century readers remained much attached to characters. The difference was that characterisation became one of the main attributes of Shakespeare's so-called naturalism. While some Shakespearean characters may not have appeared morally or ethically fitting to eighteenth-century critics, they were absolved of their improprieties thanks to their naturalism. Indeed, they offered the possibility of studying the moral complexities of mankind. Such changes of interpretation were particularly apparent in the last third of the eighteenth century, when 'character criticism' developed and Shakespeare's characters were almost completely detached from the plays.[516] To some extent, late eighteenth-century critics could be seen as ironically accomplishing Dryden's wish (a century before) to keep the characters separate, something that Fletcher and Shakespeare should have done: '*I would have the characters well chosen, and kept distant from interfaring with each other; which is more than* Fletcher *or* Shakespear *did*'.[517]

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[515] See Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie*, p. 37.

In the early eighteenth century, and in the absence of full-fledged character criticism, a reader like the compiler of BL Lansdowne 1185 could turn to prose works, and particularly to the writings of moralists and satirists, such as the English translation of Jean de La Bruyère's *Les caractères* (*The Characters, or, The Manners of the Age* (1699)). In the middle of his notes on *2 Henry IV*, the compiler drew a parallel between lines lifted from one of Falstaff's speeches in Act 5, scene 1 of the play ('O it is much that a Lye (with a slight Oath) and a | Jest with a sadde countenance will doe with a fellow that | neuer had the Ache in his shoulders') and a passage in La Bruyère's *Characters* which he also glossed:[518] 'This is ~~like~~ upon the same foundation with Bruyere who says that men | in ~~good~~ full Health and affluent circumstances will laugh at | a Dwarfe Monkey or a wretched Tale. Men less happy | never laugh but to *th*e purpose' (f. 6r-v).

Conversely, during the same period, critics who had more sceptical approaches to Shakespeare's characters could influence readers. This is partly the case of the annotator of Rowe's 1709 edition, who was familiar with John Dennis's *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear: with Some Letters of Criticism to the Spectator* (1712). On the title page of *Julius Caesar*, the annotator found, like Dennis, that the focus of the play was rather puzzling: 'It makes Cesar but a 4th rate Actor in his own Tragedy w[hi]ch is a fault vid.

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[516] Jack Lynch, 'Criticism of Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 41-59; pp. 41-2; Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 109; Brian Vickers, 'The Emergence of Character Criticism, 1774-1800', *Shakespeare Survey* 34 (1981), pp. 11-21.

[517] John Dryden, 'Preface', in *An evening's love, or, The mock-astrologer acted at the Theatre-Royal* (London: Printed by T.N. for Henry Herringman, 1671), sig. a1v. Wing D2273.

[518] On the glossing, see Estill, *Dramatic Extracts*, pp. 159-60, note 121.

Dennis Letters' (vol. 5).[519] Be that as it may, there are many positive personal evaluations of Shakespeare's characters by the same reader in the different volumes of the edition. Perhaps the most passionate is to be found paradoxically on the very last page of *Julius Caesar* (vol. 5, p. 2297) and concerns Mark Anthony:

W[ha]t Antony sayes to *th*e imaginary people
of Shakespears Rome is so ~~beautifull~~
artfull so finely taken from *th*e very nature
of *th*e things *tha*t it is a question whether not *th*e
reall March Anthony speaks c[oul]d be more
moving or better calculated to *tha*t effect.
vid his speeches. (Figure 18)

[INSERT: Inscription on verso of last page of *Julius Cæsar* in PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh.Col, vol. 5, p. 2297. By permission of the Folger Library.]

What emerges from this manuscript comment is the annotator's concern for the 'effect' produced on the reader or spectator. Also of significance is how the inscriber is personally moved by the character's speeches. Such a connection between character and reader is similarly evident in FSL Fo. 3 no.22, where a reader is touched by the words of Prospero's daughter on the opening page of *The Tempest* (sig. A1r): 'her Pity & Compassion for *th*e poor Sufferers im*m*eadiately engage us in her Favour'.

These last examples point to a significant development in reader response: as the eighteenth century unfolded, readers tended to be far more outspoken about their emotions and more explicit about the enjoyments procured by reading. Critics and editors in certain cases guided these pleasures. The reader of Rowe's 1709 edition notes on the verso of the concluding page of *As You Like It* (vol. 2): 'p. 625. fine speech of Jaques observ'd by our Rowe in *th*e life of Shakspear'. The inscriber is here alluding to Jaques's now famous speech on the Seven Ages of Man ('All the world's a stage' (2.7.139)). Likewise, the annotator concurs with Dryden about a passage in Act 3, scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'Titanias order to *th*e fairies to honour her Love one of the prettiest flights of fancy in Shakespear as Dryden says. p. 491. being extremely poetick & fine' (verso of title page of vol. 2).

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[519] See John Dennis, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear* (London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1712), p. 17. ESTC T71093.

Nonetheless, the same reader was capable of expressing personal preference and opinion too. Moreover, and as suggested, the sources of pleasure are more clearly identified by readers and the emotions procured highly rated: ‘The narration of *th*e discovery in *th*e Past act p. 969 is entertaining & moving’, wrote the inscriber of Rowe’s edition about Act 5, scene 2 of *The Winter’s Tale* (vol. 2; verso of the last page of the play (p. 975)). On the final page of *Measure for Measure*, the annotator left an even more explicit comment on the effects that the last act of the play had on readers: ‘*th*e Last Act wonderfull and moving to such a degree *tha*t he must haue very dull sense of things & nature who finds himself calm in *th*e reading of it’ (vol. 1, verso of p. 269). More predictably, a few sterner passages deserving readers’ attention are marked out as ‘worth reading’.[520] All the comments seem to stem from a first-hand reading experience of the text.

Even for those readers who were guided in their choices, there was often a way for them to steer their own course through Shakespeare’s works. As we have seen, some liked to chart that journey, to flag passages in Shakespeare that had given them pleasure and to insist on the need to go back to them and to read certain parts again and again. This is clearly the case of the reader of FSL Fo.3 no.22, who was particularly moved by the scene where Timon of Athens discovers the tragic truth of his financial ruin: ‘Here Timon & Steward enter in conversation together. This is a very fine Scene, well worth reading over & over’ (sig. Lll3r, Act 1, sc. 1).

Bardolaters and Nationalists: Misreading for a Cause

Clearly, it was possible for a number of eighteenth-century readers to stray from critical commonplaces. For example, there were those who *used* Shakespeare to pursue nationalistic agendas. The idea that Shakespeare was a natural genius was not far removed from the ideology of English nationalism.[521] In fact, it could be argued that the literary genius of Shakespeare was an invention ‘to exempt him from neoclassical requirements’ and so

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[520] For marking, see vol. 3, page facing epilogue of *2 Henry IV*; vol. 5, verso of *Julius Caesar* illustration; vol. 5, verso last page of *King Lear*.

[521] On this subject, see also Chapter 5.

'Shakespeare became, for the eighteenth century, a means of rebuilding a national character that had existed in his time but that had been eroded by French influence'.[522]

In this light, some readers could see it as their duty to protect Shakespeare from his editors,[523] who had misinterpreted his original meaning. Moreover, neoclassicism was associated with elite culture and French taste. As the tastes of the establishment waned and those of the bourgeoisie and the merchant classes rose, Shakespeare ceased to be an opposition or an establishment playwright, as Kathryn Prince explains:

> Patriotism, and especially anti-Gallicism, was a habit of the commercial classes. The rise of Shakespeare is ineluctably connected with the declining influence of elite values at this time and the rise of a bourgeois aesthetic in England. Nationalism, in which Shakespeare-worship played an increasing myth-making role, served an equalizing function essentially bourgeois in character.[524]

FSL MS N.a.2, a collection of verse assembled by the actor and playwright William Havard (1710–78), shows how Shakespeare's reputation transformed itself from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The manuscript contains a copy of an undated letter addressed to Henrietta Beard (1716/17?-53) in which Havard mentions a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon. The visit prompted him to write an extempore homage to Shakespeare.[525] Revealingly, the author of the homage insists on the fact that Shakespeare's appeal cuts across social classes and that 'all Mankind' should admire his talent:

> […]
> These Lines I dedicate to Shakespear's Name:
> Not to add Lustre to his Deathless Fame;
> But that I think, all Mankind who admire,
> Who honour, & who feel the Muse's Fire;
> Shou'd to this Darling Son of Nature bow,
> and pay that Rev'rence which I offer Now.
> […] (f. 132r)

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[522] Kathryn Prince, 'Shakespeare and English nationalism', in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 277-94; p. 285. See also Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997), pp. 168; 184.

[523] See also Chapter 3.

[524] Prince, 'Shakespeare and English nationalism', pp. 283-84; see also p. 285.

[525] For a similar example (*c*. 1767-76), see 'An Extempore Epigram in praise of Shakespeare', in FSL MS. M.a.173, f. 17r.

As Michael Dobson reminds us, ‘Shakespeare became national poet in the 1730s as an Opposition playwright rather than an Establishment one’.[526] Yet from the second half of the eighteenth century to its close, Shakespeare gradually served the purposes of a different kind of nationalism, one which emerged because of the combined effects of a particular set of cultural, sociological and historical factors:

> … the expansion of the reading public and the declining importance of aristocratic artistic patronage, and the intensified sense of togetherness and collective destiny brought about by the Seven Years’ War and the War of American Independence, the ‘chronic’ sense of military, economic and diplomatic competition with France during this entire period, the rising political activity of the middle and lower classes …[527]

This ‘sense of togetherness and collective destiny’ is apparent in the notes and letters of people who read Shakespeare and felt his nationalistic potential – even if it came at the price of forced or decontextualized readings of his works. Thus, a poetical miscellany compiled *c.* 1796-1818 (FSL MS. M.a.178), contains a series of patriotic extracts apparently assembled during the War of the Second Coalition, (1798-1801), when Britain, Austria, Russia, Portugal, Naples and the Ottoman Empire combined to fight Revolutionary France. ‘On the Destruction of the French Fleet by Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson’ (f. 22r-24r) is inscribed ‘[T?]Hirsk 18th Oct. 1798’ and ‘Maria Wild’ (f. 24r). Under that heading is found, among diverse other extracts, part of John of Gaunt’s ‘this sceptred Isle’ speech in *Richard II* (2.1.31-68). The extract is framed by the words ‘England’ and ‘Shakespeare’ inscribed in large handwriting with flourishes.

Likewise, some readers ransacked Shakespeare’s history plays to make fantastical claims. In April 1798—in the midst of the same international conflict—one anonymous ‘Loyal Briton’ sent a letter to the then secretary of state for war, Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville. ‘In case of an actual landing of the Enemy,’ the Briton wrote this request in his petition to Dundas:

> I would propose to have the following memorable lines of our immortal Bard written in letters of Gold on the colours of every Battalion and Corps embodied for the defence of the State.
>
> ‘Old England never did and never shall

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[526] Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet, Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 136.

[527] Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), p. 67.

> Lie at the proud foot of a Conqueror.
> Come the three corners of the world in arms
> And we will shock them; nought shall make us rue
> If England to itself do rest but true.'
>
> I conceive no Briton, however ignorant or illiterate, can read or hear of those lines, at this period without feeling an additional warmth of Zeal and Enthusiasm in the great Cause of his Country.[528] (Figure 19)

[INSERT: Autograph letter, 16 April 1798, to Henry Dundas, MS Y.c.823 (1). By permission of the Folger Library.]

The source of the Shakespeare extract is of course the Bastard's final speech in *King John* (5.7.112-18). The 'loyal Briton,' who also adapted Shakespeare's text, silently cut out two crucial lines and turned 'This England' into 'Old England'. Indeed, the bastard's lines 'This England never did, nor never shall, / Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror' are followed by 'But when it first did help to wound it self. / Now these her princes are come home again' (114-5). The whole notion that England may have brought these troubles upon herself because of her lack of unity and hence of her absence of adequate foreign policy is of course completely obliterated.

Personal Hierarchies of Taste: Establishing One's Place within 'Polite' Society

Nationalist readings of Shakespeare were crude and opportunistic attempts at constructing Shakespeare's fame. At the same time subtler transformations were also taking place. They were brought about by a recurrent practice, particularly among early-to-mid eighteenth-century readers. During the seventeenth century, annotators had commended some of Shakespeare's plays, but not as systematically as later readers. What is striking from the Augustan age onwards is inscribers' repeated propensity to construct—often inside their books—outspoken hierarchies of taste based on their personal appreciation of Shakespeare's various plays. In so doing they fashioned themselves as tastemakers. To pass judgement on a work is a way of establishing one's intellectual superiority and one's worthiness to express choice. Therefore, taste can be a reflection of the position that the chooser adopts, as 'choices always owe part of their value to the value of the chooser'.[529] Passing judgement is not only a way for readers to affirm themselves, but it is also, especially when their criticism is 'evaluative rather than analytical' and is 'concerned with assigning praise or blame', a way of situating themselves, and the works under their scrutiny, in time.[530] In other words, by evaluating Shakespeare's works and comparing them to those of other authors, readers were unconsciously deciding which works still spoke to the modern ear, which did not, and how the cultural field ought to be composed. Should the old be allowed into the present, in which case it could represent a challenge for modern writers, or were the works of the Moderns making Shakespeare's compositions even more remote? These are some of the underlying stakes behind the following examples.

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[528] Autograph letter signed 'A Loyal Briton', Surrey, to Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville, 1798 April 16. FSL Y.c.823 (1).

On the 'Catalogue' page of a First Folio currently held by the Victoria and Albert Museum, an early eighteenth-century reader has left marks of evaluation.[531] (Figure 20)
[INSERT: First Folio (L.1392-1882) 'Catalogue' page, National Art Library. By permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum.]
As far as Shakespeare is concerned, seven out of the fourteen comedies in the 'Catalogue' are marked with a 'G', presumably for 'Good'. Only one of the history plays has a 'G' next to it: *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*, one of the most appreciated of Shakespeare's plays since the sixteenth century (notably for the character of Falstaff). Eight out of eleven tragedies are marked with a 'G' (*Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens* and *Antony and Cleopatra* have no indication at all), which makes tragedy the most commended genre together with comedy. This concurs with the extensive preceding manuscript list of some ninety plays (arranged in ten collections and mostly dating back to the Restoration period or the early eighteenth century) revealingly entitled 'Tragy Comedys'.[532] (Figure 21)
[INSERT: Manuscript list of plays in First Folio L.1392-1882, sig. πA5v. National Art Library. By permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum.]
One play in the printed 'Catalogue' of the folio—*Love's Labour's Lost*—is clearly marked with an 'N' and so does not appear to have pleased the inscriber. This is hardly surprising as

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[529] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984 (1979)), p. 91.

[530] Lynch, 'Criticism of Shakespeare', p. 43.

[531] National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, shelfmark L.1392-1882. (formerly Jones 2B). The annotator has copied *dramatis personae* and a number of other elements from Rowe's 1709 edition, which gives us a *terminus a quo*, if we accept that these notes are in the same hand.

[532] This extensive list is on sig. πA5v, the blank page facing Ben Jonson's 'To the Memorie'.

the play's overuse of rhyme and its lyrical tone could make it sound dated.[533] The frequent puns on its title and negative comments by discontented eighteenth-century annotators are also informative. A disparaging manuscript addition appears after the title of the play in a First Folio now preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (RES-YK-29): 'Loues Labour's lost. [in MS:] & theirs that read it' (sig. L1v). In FSL Fo.1 no. 73 someone has taken up Braggart's concluding lines, 'The Words of Mercurie / Are harsh after the songs of Apollo', and has added mischievously 'So is his *tha*t reads thee' (sig. M6v). In the contents table of one of Rowe's 1714 editions, the title of the play has a cross next to it with the unambiguous mention 'very bad'.[534]

The annotator of the Victoria and Albert Museum First Folio appears to have placed (some of) Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies at the top of his personal hierarchy. Perhaps this was because Dryden's Neander had sung the praises of the English 'tragicomedie' in *Of dramatick poesie*.[535] At all events, and judging by the annotator's large manuscript list of plays, Shakespeare was still a relatively small player in that reader's universe. The largest collection in that list is that of Beaumont and Fletcher with some twenty plays, possibly taken from the 1679 folio of their works. It is followed by Dryden with sixteen titles. Restoration and early eighteenth-century plays outnumber pre-Restoration works and none of the latter are marked with a 'G' for 'good'.

Only the comedies seem to have drawn the attention of one of the annotators of the Bibliothèque Nationale First Folio. There are several hands in the volume, but the same person is mainly responsible for the inscriptions on the folio's 'Catalogue' of contents. (Figure 22)

[INSERT: 'Catalogue' page of First Folio RES-YK-29. By permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.]

The inscriber may have looked primarily for entertainment, or may never have finished reading the volume. Whatever the motive, this reader ranked Shakespeare's plays as 'pretty good' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Taming of the Shrew*), 'Good' (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *As You Like It*; *Twelfth Night*), 'Ind[ifferent]' (*Measure for Measure*; *The Comedy of Errors*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *Love's Labour's Lost*; *All's Well That Ends Well*; *The Winter's Tale*), and 'b[a]d' (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*). While the annotator engaged with Shakespeare's plays (the comedies only, it seems), just over half of them left him with an indifferent or bad impression.

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[533] See Anthony Davies, '*Love's Labour's Lost*', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 264 and 265.

[534] FSL PR2752 1714a Copy 3 Sh.Col., vol. 2.

[535] See Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie*, p. 39.

The evaluations left by another reader in a 1714 Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works[536] confirm that, for early-to-mid eighteenth-century readers, Shakespeare's histories and tragedies were not drawing much attention. In this edition, the plays clearly marked with a 'g' for 'good' are *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Likewise, the second hand in the Valladolid Second Folio, which belongs to an eighteenth-century reader, focused mainly on four comedies. They are designated as 'good' in black ink on their title pages: *The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Comedy of Errors, Much Ado About Nothing, The Merchant of Venice*.[537] On the opening page of an additional play, *Cymbeline* (now classified as one of Shakespeare's Romances), the same reader has inscribed the word 'rare',[538] meaning that it is 'of uncommon excellence or merit'[539] and therefore above the others. The five plays are ones which William Sankey, the seventeenth-century censor, either left untouched, or censored lightly. *Cymbeline* has a higher rating than all the others, possibly because it lends itself easily to a Catholic reading. Indeed, at the end of the play the semi-legendary king Cymbeline concludes a peace treaty with Rome and agrees to pay England's (financial, symbolic, religious?) debt to Rome.

Much has to be inferred, however, from the previous scales of taste left by readers. Some annotators were more outspoken in their choices and thus enable us to form a precise picture of Shakespeare's ever-fluctuating fortunes in the eighteenth century. In FSL Fo.1 no. 73, on the verso of the Hugh Holland epitaph, someone has indicated a number of missing plays in the edition, including *Troilus and Cressida*. The rest of the plays mentioned, *Pericles*, *The London Prodigal*, *The History of Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *Sir John Oldcastle, The Puritan Widow, A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Locrine* were added later in the second issue (1664) of the Third Folio (initially published in 1663). So these notes were no doubt taken after that date.

Again, the comedies have drawn the bulk of the attention, judging by the favourable comments. In FSL Fo.1 no. 73 the inscriber left this note on the concluding page of *Much Ado About Nothing*: 'here is something very plesant farce of *Th*e Constable & watch' (sig. L1r), a probable allusion to the comic scenes involving Dogberry and the Watch. *The Merchant of*

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[536] FSL PR2752 1714a Copy 3 Sh.Col.

[537] p. 39, sig. D2r; p. 85, sig. H1r; p. 101, sig. I3r; p. 163, sig. O4r.

[538] p. 399, sig. bbb1r.

[539] 'Rare', 5. a., *OED,* 2015. *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Venice is also well rated on its end page: 'In this, very prety things' (sig. V1r). As for *The Taming of the Shrew*, the annotator's opinion is that it could easily be adapted to a more agreeable genre: 'something prety might be made of this in Pastarole' (sig. V1r). *Twelfth Night* is 'a very prety play' (sig. Z6r), but some plays are commended only for certain scenes in them. In Act 4 of *All's Well That Ends Well* after the stage direction '*Enter Parolles with his interpreter*' is the note 'a good scene' (sig. X4r). While comedies or humorous scenes get most of the praise, two moments in *King John* stir the reader's emotions. In Act 3, scene 3, when Constance, mother of Arthur, confronts Pandulph and the Dolphin, the inscriber leaves this comment next to the stage direction '*Enter Constance*': 'very moving' (sig. Aa6v). Not long after, in Act 3, scene 3, when Arthur faces his executioners, the same marginal comment is left: 'very moving' (sig. b1r).

Occasionally, it is possible to witness the ebbs and flows of the critical fortunes of Shakespeare's plays, especially when they are compared to Restoration or early eighteenth-century work. This particular type of evaluation is useful in determining how far Shakespeare's 'Ancient' plays were allowed into the 'Modern' cultural sphere and also how the playwright himself measured up against classical literature. These evaluations may appear anecdotal, and yet they were fundamental in the shaping of taste and the dramatists' literary reputation.

In FSL Fo.2 no.17, Shakespeare is in fact rated above Virgil. Indeed, opposite Jessica's line in *The Merchant of Venice*, 'Did *Thisbie* fearfully ore-strip the dewe' (sig. Q1v), is this manuscript note: 'See Camilla in Virgil. Shakespeare excells him'. Another positive comment appears under the title of *Julius Caesar*: 'Worthy of Caesar, Brutus & Shakespear' (sig. ll5r). Moreover, a line in *Hamlet* is humorously topicalized and shows how Shakespeare could speak to the reader's present. The marginal comment 'Motto for the Methodists' appears next to Polonius's three lines (which are partly underlined by the inscriber): '*Pol.* Though this be madnesse, / Yet there is Method in't : will you walke / Out of the ayre my Lord?' (sig. qq1r). There is also a fiercely critical but witty comment on Nahum Tate's adaptation of *King Lear*: 'Tate alter'd this Playe murder'd Shakespear by saving Lear alive' (sig. rr6r). (Figure 23)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no. 17, sig. rr6r (*King Lear*). By permission of the Folger Library.]

Yet the annotator is not unanimously favourable towards all of Shakespeare's plays. There are some, which, according to the reader, fare better as modern adaptations. It is the case of *Troilus and Cressida*: 'This Play is much improved by Dryden; tho' some fine Lines are omitted' (sig. aa1v). Other eighteenth-century readers held the same opinions on a number of Shakespeare's plays, *The Tempest* in particular. On the 'Catalogue' page of the Bibliothèque

Nationale First Folio, next to *The Tempest*, is the inscription 'better in Dryde*n*'. Another First Folio reader (FSL Fo.4 no. 26) could not agree more: 'this play is lately revived by Mr Driden and much more correct' (*The Tempest*, sig. A1r).[540] In FSL Fo.2 no.17, Thomas Otway is admired for his transposition of a number of passages from *Romeo and Juliet*: 'Otway has transplanted some of the most beautiful parts of this play into his Caius Marius' (sig. gg5v). Nonetheless, the most damning comment by the reader of FSL Fo.2 no.17 is for *Titus Andronicus.* Just under the play's title (*The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*), a manuscript note picks up on it disparagingly: 'Lamentable indeed! for, in the general, 'tis a very sorry one! unworthy of Shakespear' (sig. ee6v).

Overall, the hierarchies we have looked at tend to privilege Shakespeare's comedies, leaving two thirds of his plays in the dark. 'Old' Shakespeare was partly faulted and survived largely thanks to his modern adaptors. This would of course change, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century when Shakespeare had to be defended at all costs, particularly for nationalist reasons, but also, as we shall see later, because tastes were changing.[541] Even if the eighteenth century had a far greater number of Shakespearean commentators, it would be an overstatement to speak of a 'collective order of readers' ensuring Shakespeare's 'literary endurance'.[542] For all the rise and influence of literary criticism, reading continued to be an idiosyncratic activity defying some of the canons of taste. Despite critical views on his work, Shakespeare remained part of the on-going cultural conversation. His reputation endured thanks to a variety of engagements—those which, in part, reflected literary trends and those emanating from idiosyncratic tastes (and sometimes from personal obsessions).

Idiosyncratic and Isolated Readers: Customizing Shakespeare

An eighteenth-century reader by the name of Mary Elmer is one of those annotators who certainly engaged with Shakespeare in a way which reflected her own opinions and sentiments. She overtly commented on two moments in *Antony and Cleopatra* in FSL Fo.2 no.57. This eighteenth-century female reader left the following note after Antony announces his wife Fulvia's death to Enobarbus: 'See what joy tis to heare of his wifes death' (sig. yy5v). (Figure 24)

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[540] Dryden's *Tempest* was first performed in November 1667.

[541] See also Jack Lynch, 'Criticism of Shakespeare', p. 44.

[542] Jonathan Brody Kramnick. *Making of the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 208-9.

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no. 57, sig. yy5v (*Antony and Cleopatra*). By permission of the Folger Library.]

A little later, she appears bemused by the nature of Antony and Cleopatra's love bond. She writes 'Mary | Elmer | this loue is a strang[e] thing' opposite Cleopatra's perplexing lines in the folio: 'Cut my Lace, *Charmian* come, / But let it be, I am quickly ill, and well, So *Anthony* loves' (sig. yy6r). (Figure 25)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 2 no. 57, sig. yy6r (*Antony and Cleopatra*). By permission of the Folger Library.]

A late eighteenth-century Sheffield diarist recorded his reading of various Shakespeare plays between July and August 1799.[543] This was someone who had read a few critical commentaries on Shakespeare's works, but whose notes bear little trace of their influence. The diary reveals the reader's taste for Shakespeare's comedies (nothing original in itself, as we know). Its main value resides in some of the comments, where he justifies his preferences and talks about his reading practices. It is clear that his tastes are for the most part distinctive. *Measure for Measure* appears to have satisfied him in part: 'Augst 6 Finished Measure for Measure, there are as many fine sentiments & speeches in this play, as many I have read. There is however a great deal of foolish stuff' (p. 9). Like many readers, he has a liking for *Much Ado About Nothing* and yet he does find parts of the plot difficult to believe: 'Thursday Augst 8 ... Sat up till after 11 o'clock reading "Much ado about nothing". This pleases me the more of any I have yet read. There is something unnatural too, that when Claudio supposes that he himself has been the means of killing Hero, his betrothed bride, & is pretty convinced of her innocence, he should so soon consent to marry another though that other be very like to his Hero' (p. 10). His appraisal of *As You Like It* is not quite what one might expect of an eighteenth-century reader, particularly because of his dislike of Jaques: '[entry: 13 August] Finished As you like it; I am much pleased with it. The speech of the banished Duke beginning "Now my co-mates & brothers in exile", is one of the finest in Shakespeare. I could not quite enter into the character of Jaques the melancholy man' (p. 14). Even after reading a play he did not like, the diarist's judgements are nuanced and display his ability to interpret the effects of a scene:

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[543] Anonymous, 'Diary of a Sheffield dissenter', Folger MS M.a.4. All future references will be given in the text.

> 16 [August] Read the Midsummer Night's Dream; this does not please me as much as some I have read; the description of hunting & 'the poets eye in fine frenzy rolling &c' are very sublime. In two lines of the Prologue to a play which some rustics performed, he thus ridicules the affectation of all iteration:
>
> 'Whereat with blade, with bloody, blameful blade,
> He bravely broaches his boiling bloody breast'. (p. 18) (Figure 26)

[INSERT: Anonymous, 'Diary of a Sheffield dissenter', MS M.a.4, p. 18. By permission of the Folger Library.]

Some of Sarah Burnes's notes in her Fourth Folio (FSL Fo.4 no.12) are more succinct but equally idiosyncratic. She is acquainted with some eighteenth-century critical commentators, but often chooses to air her personal views instead. In the scene in *Richard III* where Richard of Gloucester appears with a book of prayers in his hands, making a show of his alleged religious virtues (*'Enter* Richard *aloft, between two Bishops*', sig. Ss2v), Sarah Burnes cannot resist commenting: 'a fine pece of Policy *tha*t was Concertid between [rest is cropped]'. When Antony tells the citizens that he means no harm to Brutus and Cassius after Caesar's murder, the inscriber is clearly sensitive to the tone of the speech and adds a manicule opposite Antony's 'I will not do them wrong' with this brief comment: 'Ironical' (sig., Ccc4r).

While it is necessary to highlight some general trends in the reading practices of eighteenth-century readers, sweeping statements about them are defeated by a small group of reader-annotators, who must also be accounted for. The latter are particularly opinionated and obsessive readers of Shakespeare. They form an essential part of the picture of eighteenth-century reading, since they were people who pushed back the limits of interpretation—sometimes considerably.

One example is a reader's obsessive focus on the couplet rhymes in a 1635 edition of *Pericles*. An eighteenth-century hand with the unmissable mention of 'bad Rhyme' repeatedly marks out the allegedly distasteful rhymes.[544] More easily identifiable than the previous inscriber, John Sherwen was an amateur literary scholar who held very personal views when it came to editing Shakespeare (see also chapter 3). He was likewise an intractable, if not eccentric reader, as could be expected. In FSL Fo.1 no. 73, opposite the opening page of *Julius Caesar*, Sherwen confesses with a measure of wry humour: 'but I acknowledge myself so poor a Casuist as not to be able to imagine any Situation in which it can be meritorious or even justifiable in a Man to kill his Father' (sig. ll4v). He also owned a copy of Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works. In the sixth volume, as a manuscript footnote to the *Dramatis personae* page of *The Tragedy of Locrine*, Sherwen left this mocking note: 'If Shakespeare was the Author of this Tragedy I should suspect that he wrote it either at School or soon after leaving the gram*mar* School of Stratford. — There are in it some Shakesperian Germs not Gems. …'[545]

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[544] Horace Howard Furness Memorial (Shakespeare) Library, PR2750.A30 1635.

Even someone who contributed to the preservation of so many Shakespearean editions and who was himself a book collector, King George III (1738-1820) famously held rather unconventional critical views on Shakespeare. Before his madness, in 1785 (a period during which Shakespeare had gained much prestige) he admitted not liking Shakespeare very much, but at the same time he recognised that he might be going against the grain of literary fashion.[546]

Shaping and Leading Opinion Through Shakespeare

As we have seen, idiosyncratic readers are often animated by convictions that remained on the fringes of the general conversation on Shakespeare. Ideas diverging from the mainstream, leading to the study of necessarily multifarious 'horizons of expectation', produce a picture which is wider and far more complete. Another field of influence to which we must now turn is that of social exchange through dialogue and correspondence. It is beyond the compass of this book to survey the letters exchanged by eighteenth-century readers interested in Shakespeare. However, because she was not a 'professional' Shakespearean editor, but a patron of the arts who fostered and influenced social dialogue around Shakespeare's works through her famous literary circle and salon, we shall focus on some of the letters written by Elizabeth Montagu, née Robinson (1720-1800).

Montagu was the author of *An essay on the writings and genius of Shakespear, compared with the Greek and French dramatic poets. With some remarks upon the misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (published 1769). As a reader of Shakespeare, her letters reveal how firmly she personally intended to defend Shakespeare against one of his most condescending

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[545] FSL PR2752 1709a Copy 8 Sh.Col.

[546] See Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 190. See also Tom Matheson, 'George III', in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dobson and Wells, pp. 160-1.

French critics, François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, a man of letters, a philosopher and also, to some extent, a cultural ambassador of neo-classical values.

A letter to her sister, Sarah Robinson Scott, dated 18 November1755, shows how much she disagreed with Voltaire on the subject of Shakespeare. It also discloses her intentions to alter tastes significantly: ‘I read what the saucy Frenchman calls les farces monstreuses of Shakespear, I could burn him and his tragedy. Foolish coxcomb! rules can no more make a poet, than receipts a cook. There must be taste, there must be skill’.[547] Yet changing tastes was an arduous task even for someone as influential as her. In 1765 *Mr. Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespear's plays* was published and Elizabeth Montagu made her differences with Samuel Johnson's interpretations known to the poet and writer Elizabeth Carter who was a member of her circle. On 17 October 1765 she wrote to Carter: ‘Mr Johnson asserts that Shakespears genius lay wholly to Comedy. Let ye Merry Wives of Windsor & Mackbeth [sic] scold that out’.[548] Be that as it may, a few days later, she confided to her sister her uncertainties, doubting that she could make a change: ‘I don't know whether after Mr Johnson people will desire any more criticisms on Shakespear. I understand he was only to write notes upon him, & these merely to rectify ye errors of the copies, but alas his Preface is so ingenious it terrifys me’.[549]

She also had to face the objections of another friend, George Lyttelton, first Baron Lyttelton (1709-73), a prominent politician and, like herself, a patron of literature. That same month of October, Lyttelton stated his admiration for Shakespeare's works, but underlined their flaws as well: ‘His writings are like some streets in London, where some of the Buildings are fine, but all of different Heights and discordant Architecture: whereas a good French Play is constructed on one uniform Plan; and the Eye of the Critick is charm'd by the Result of the whole …’. Using another salient architectural image, Lyttelton insisted that Shakespeare's plays were like ‘some high Towers, that strike one with awe and veneration, but patchd up with mud Walls, and preposterously adorn'd with rude Gothic Figures, without symmetry, without Taste, without Elegance, without Judgement’.[550]

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[547] Matthew Montagu, ed., *The letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu: with some of the letters of her correspondents*, 3 vols. (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1825), vol. 3, p. 48.

[548] HL, MO 3157, p. 3.

[549] 26 and 27 October 1765, Sandleford, Berkshire, Elizabeth Montagu, to Sarah Robinson Scott, HL, Mo 5830, p. 5.

[550] 13 October, 1765, Hagley, Worcester, George Lyttelton, 1st Baron to Elizabeth (Robinson) Montagu, HL, MO 1336, Box 56, pp. 5-6.

These were strong words, but in her reply Elizabeth Montagu used a horticultural image and, although Shakespeare's style had recurrently been called 'natural' in the past, Montagu shifted the critical paradigm to insist on the fertile ground on which the playwright's works had grown, sometimes wildly: 'Shakespears lot fell into so luxurious a soil it produced the finest flowers & the rankest weeds' (Figure 27).

[INSERT: Letter; Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton (20 October 1765), MO 1444, box 56, p. 4. By permission of the Huntington Library.]

This rich 'soil' could excuse Shakespeare's alleged shortcomings and, in time, it could be the soil for more nationalistic ideas such as the defence of England's cultural and geographic territories. The 'pride' that Montagu used in her response to Lyttelton was not entirely devoid of national pride:

> From want of skill in gardening he suffer'd them all to grow & flourish together. This garden will never be deserted, because it is enrich'd with all the pride & excellence of nature, her most beautifull & most vigorous productions, at the same time, it can never be seen without regret & indignation at the neglect & ignorance of the Owner.[551] (Figure 28)

[INSERT: Letter; Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton (20 October 1765), MO 1444, box 56, p. 5. By permission of the Huntington Library.]

Just over a decade later, with the war of American independence serving as a backdrop, the cultural battle around Shakespeare raged between British and French taste. By that time, Shakespeare had gained much ground. Indeed, in 1776 the first complete translation into French of Shakespeare's works by Pierre Le Tourneur was published.

To counter what he perceived as an assault on French culture and values, Voltaire asked his friend Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, who was secretary of the *Académie française* to read out a letter of protest. The letter, in which Voltaire underlined Shakespeare's deficiencies and also criticized Lord Kames' disrespectful treatment of Racine in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), was read out on 25 August 1776 at the *Académie* in the presence of the British ambassador and Elizabeth Montagu, who had specifically attacked Voltaire in her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769). Not all Academicians approved of Voltaire's initiative. In early September, Montagu described the incident with biting irony in a letter to an important member of her circle, Elizabeth Vesey:

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[551] 20 October 1765, Sandleford, Berkshire, Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, HL, MO 1444, box 56, pp. 4-5.

> Had Homer himself been there he would not certainly have got one Sprig of Lawrel. Old Shakespear and he must be content with the immortal Garlands with which great Nature crowns them, they are the evergreens of time, gather'd in her Universal common field, where genius ranges uncontrouled; not cull'd and pick'd in the nice parterre or hot House, where Regions and Seasons are confounded and blended.[552]

These few lines are striking as they show how much Shakespeare's reputation had changed since the Restoration. 'Old Shakespear' was now rated as highly as classical authors and guaranteed relevance in the present, like other 'evergreens of time', who spoke to the universal community of readers, the 'Universal common field'. Montagu's letter describes the change of paradigm beautifully (and in no uncertain terms).

Nevertheless, if the reading of Shakespeare once more became synonymous with taste, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it would be incorrect to speak of a universality of taste. There were clearly trends, which were influenced by certain commonplaces of education or criticism or by the rise of nationalist ideas. Readers remained attuned to their needs and their curiosity. These were sometimes very personal or 'local', even if some readers played a decisive role in rescuing Shakespeare's fortunes.

Reading Shakespeare as a Community: A Fallacy?

Was there a sense on the annotators' side of being part of a community of readers and interpreters? Clearly, there was. Perhaps the main differences between seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century readers are that the latter reflected more on the act of reading and interpreting Shakespeare. The works of the dramatist and poet had begun permeating British culture from the outset through commonplace books and miscellanies. His poems and plays became merged in a larger literary culture, frequently in an anonymous fashion. Yet, as the decades went by, Shakespeare was, as we have seen, one of the authors who helped define what the literary taste of the nation should be and why one should care for literature at all.

Miscellanies and commonplaces could be the work of successive generations of collector-readers, typically of the same family. In the course of the eighteenth century, and as criticism turned increasingly into a social activity – a dialogue about British culture – the family response to Shakespeare transformed itself into a cross-generational social interchange about the poet and dramatist. In this way, one could speak of a growing sense of being part of a larger community of interpreters of Shakespeare.

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[552] 7 September 1776, Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Vesey, HL, Mo 6486, box 83, pp. 3-4.

The annotations in FSL Fo. 3 no. 8 are direct and almost literal expressions of the feeling of engaging with a well-read author. This last case study will provide a fitting conclusion to the present chapter. In this folio, annotators indicate explicitly that some plays have in fact stood the test of reading. On the final page of *Merchant of Venice*, one can read ‘An Excellent Play. An entertaining Play’ and next to these comments ‘Probatum est’, that is, ‘it has been tried or proved’, an expression often appended to recipes or prescriptions in early modern times (sig. Q2v). (Figure 29)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 3 no. 8, sig. Q2v (*The Merchant of Venice*). By permission of the Folger Library.]

Another manuscript note ‘legi per legi’ indicates that the play has been shown to be worthy through the work of reading. A further inscription (‘Ego Croxal’) suggests that these comments were the work of poet and Church of England clergyman Samuel Croxall (1688/9-1752).[553] ‘Probatus’ occurs again in the margins of *As You Like It* (sig. S2r), but Croxall was not the only reader in the volume to have tried and tested the plays and to have left an evaluation of them. On the same concluding page of *As You Like It*, other (anonymous) readers expressed their views too: ‘a very admirable Play’, ‘An incomparable Comedy’.

As they travelled through time and passed from hand to hand, early editions of Shakespeare became places of intellectual and critical transaction and some pages even operated as forums for readers to express and, to some extent, share their views across generations. In the same volume, the final pages of *The Winter’s Tale* and *Hamlet* offer particularly apt examples of this process. *The Winter’s Tale* is considered alternatively by its readers on its final page as ‘A wonderfull Pretty Play,’ ‘A comical merry Play’ and ‘A good play’ (sig. Cc2r), while *Hamlet* is also seen on its concluding page as ‘An Admirable play’, ‘A delicat play’, ‘a fine Tragedy’, ‘An excellent tragedy’, ‘A Courageous Play’, ‘A dismal Tragedy’ and ‘A Lamentable Play’ (sig. qq1v). (Figure 30)

[INSERT: Folger Fo. 3 no. 8, sig. Sss5v (*Hamlet*). By permission of the Folger Library.]

Possibly again by Samuel Croxall, a quotation from Horace’s *Art of Poetry* (‘—Decies repetita placebit’) indicates that though ten times repeated, *Hamlet* and no doubt the reading of *Hamlet* will continue to please. FSL Fo. 3 no. 8 shows how much ground had been covered since the sixteenth century—it is rare to find such critical interpersonal manuscript dialogue about Shakespeare in one copy of Shakespeare's works before the Augustan age. Ultimately, these 'local' inscriptions prove how much the reading of Shakespeare was considered to be a form of social and communal dialogue in eighteenth-century England.

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[553] The inscription ‘I am Croxall St Iohn’s’ on the last page of *Twelfth Night* (sig. Z6r) appears to confirm the identity of the annotator. According to the *ODNB*, Samuel Croxall was educated at Eton and went on to complete his studies at St John’s College, Cambridge. James Sambrook, ‘Croxall, Samuel (1688/9-1752)’, *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6838.

Conclusion

On the final page of *Hamlet* – the one facing the opening of *King Lear*, John Keats wrote his now famous poem (a sonnet, in fact) entitled 'On sitting down to read King Lear once again'. Keats consciously dated the poem and its inscription: 22 January 1818. The lyric was composed in Keats' own copy of the 1808 facsimile of the Shakespeare First Folio.[554] The word 'again' in the title of the poem indicates that, by 1818, Shakespeare was an author repeatedly read, or one that deserved to be.[555] More importantly for our purposes, Keats' Shakespeare is surely one that is meant to be read. The sonnet is more than marginalia from a man who also annotated Shakespeare[556] – it is a recognition of Shakespeare's literariness and an attempt on Keats' part to gain credit by closely associating himself with Shakespeare and his 'holy book', the First Folio (be it in facsimile), using Shakespeare's allegedly most intimate form of expression – the sonnet.

Other pre-Romantic and Romantic poets used marginal notes for a variety of purposes. William Blake used marginalia as 'an alternative form of publication', while Samuel Taylor Coleridge employed the whole gamut of note-taking: marginalia could be used for rapid responses to passages, for 'marking a book for a friend', for making notes for a lecture or on a specific subject, and as a first step towards transferring the inscriptions into his notebooks.[557] In preparation for his lectures on Shakespeare, Coleridge 'annotated several copies of Shakespeare's works in different editions. The most important of these is a two-volume set edited by Samuel Ayscough (1807), which Coleridge had bound up with blank leaves between each two pages of text, so that he could annotate freely'.[558] According to H. J. Jackson, the word 'Marginalia', the plural of the Latin neuter *marginale*, was imported into the English language by Coleridge himself 'when he first published some 'things in the margin' of his own … in 1819'.[559]

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[554] For these details on Keats' poem I am indebted to Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, From the Restoration to the Present* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), pp. 152-4 and 157-9.

[555] See also ibid., p. 153.

[556] R. S. White, *Keats as a Reader of Shakespeare* (Norman, OK: University Oklahoma Press, 1987), esp. chap. 2, pp. 31-55.

[557] H. J. Jackson, '"Marginal Frivolities": readers' notes as evidence for the history of reading', in *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*, ed. Robin Myers, Michel Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2005), pp. 137-51; at 139-40.

[558] R. A. Foakes, ed. *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare: A Selection*. (London: The Athlone Press, 1989), p. 3. The notes that Coleridge took in his editions have been edited and assembled in *Marginalia IV- Pamphlets to Shakespeare*, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley, Bollingen Series LXXV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Thus, more than ever, the practice of annotating Shakespeare's works persisted and continued to diversify and serve the needs of new generations and new movements. It would be wrong to say that Shakespeare had been part of a 'reading revolution' by the beginning of the nineteenth century — his works were not necessarily being read more extensively (in greater quantities and with less focus) rather than intensively (fewer editions read more in depth).[560] However, the period we have studied was decisive in the sense that it gave birth to the dramatist and poet's reading public and revealed the manifold practices that could or would lead individuals to engage with Shakespeare's works[561]. To return to the introduction of this book, and more specifically to Crites' words in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668), Shakespeare had indeed been 'pushed by many hands'.[562]

The early modern era considerably diversified and facilitated approaches for Shakespeare's readers, in particular because the printed vernacular book was essential to the way society wanted to picture itself, as a civilised 'nation of readers', in the famous words of Dr Johnson. It paved the way for the partly elitist and nationalistic appropriations of the Romantics (Keats being a case in point). Print Shakespeare continued to offer a communal text, the ownership of which was essentially undecided. The first half of the nineteenth century was, therefore, an era when the literary ownership of Shakespeare was a contentious topic (as it had been from the beginning), but it was also a time when the question of who had the right to interpret his works had not been resolved – hence the large number of extremely diverse case studies presented throughout *Shakespeare's Early Readers*. While for a long time the purchase of Shakespeare's works[563] remained a considerable investment for the poor, the situation first changed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and then again at the outset of the following century. Andrew Murphy found that not only had illiteracy rates dropped to almost nil by the middle of the nineteenth century, but that also ‘individual Shakespeare plays could be had for as little as 1/2d. each’[564] (a trend that had begun a century before, despite some fluctuations).Thus, reading Shakespeare was not necessarily socially skewed towards the wealthy, particularly during the latter half of the period covered by this book. Editing Shakespeare’s works remained an amateur hobby throughout the era. A variety of annotators immersed themselves in the works, sometimes for very personal, existential reasons, at other times out of sheer fascination for his words and their alleged capacity to uncover a hidden world of knowledge. Theatre productions – be they amateur or professional – used, modernized and transformed printed source texts in profound ways. Stage managers, actors and adaptors were all avid readers and annotators. Like other types of readers, they perpetuated Shakespeare by keeping the textual cycle alive.[565] Reading Shakespeare was also a way of taking part in the cultural life of the nation, as personal aesthetics became a manner of showcasing one’s citizenship and social allegiances.

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[559] H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia, Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 13.

[560] This view has been proved false by historians of reading: Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 19-20.

[561] As Kevin Sharpe has argued cogently, 'the culture of early modern England, for all its rhetoric of common codes, was multivalent' (Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 307).

[562] John Dryden, *Of dramatick poesie, an essay* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1668), p. 9. Wing D2327.

[563] Of course, as we have shown, there were other ways of reading his works: borrowing from friends, relatives, or strangers (for a small fee). Libraries and their travelling equivalents offered other possibilities.

Today, as we know, Shakespeare’s ‘owners’ can be named more clearly: academics, professional educators (‘cultural mediators’, as they are now called, whether they belong to the school system or to other institutions such as museums and libraries), and journalists. As Shakespeare has really fallen into the public domain, one could also add the tourist industry and the manufacturers of cultural goods, who often live in symbiosis. All vie for a piece of the Shakespearean cake.

What we have uncovered in this book is a world in which no potential ‘owner’ was in any position to hinder readers. The latter remained ‘ free to ignore or misread the protocols that authors and publishers hoped would direct them’.[566] During much of the nineteenth century, this situation went on almost unimpeded. Andrew Murphy pointed out that it was still possible to read Shakespeare against the grain, or to ‘misread’ his works in blatant fashion. For instance, some members of the Chartist movement in the nineteenth century turned him into a writer for the people, ‘a card-carrying member of the working class’, to cite Murphy’s witty analysis.[567] It is true that if schooling had drastically improved since the sixteenth century, reading Shakespeare was still an extra-mural activity[568] – one that was practised for pleasure or personal improvement. The real rupture was when Shakespeare became ‘tedious classroom drill’ through the ‘bureaucratized system of compulsory education’ towards the end of the nineteenth century, as Jonathan Rose has argued.[569] What had gradually brought people together for two centuries split them apart again. The working class gradually turned away from reading Shakespeare and other major authors. Their attention was captured by new forms of entertainment: the cinema, newspapers, sport, and then radio and television.[570] As a result, the elitism attached to early printed Shakespeare at the beginning of the seventeenth century returned, as the Bard’s works were once again considered to be highbrow. The theatre was seen to be a place for the happy few – a social and intellectual ghetto for people who had the means to pay for expensive seats. The story of a controversial but communal literary Shakespeare, which I have attempted to relate in this book, then came to an end.

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[564] Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People: Working-Class Readers, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 4-5. See also William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 157.

[565] ‘The text is the reason for the cycle of the book: its transmission depends on its ability to set off new cycles’ (Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, ‘A New Model for the Study of the Book,’ in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 47-65, at 53.

[566] Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, p. 13.

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[567] Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People*, p. 138.

[568] See ibid., p. 51.

[569] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 124.

[570] Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People*, p. 184.

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STC 26101 Copy 10. *Pericles*, 1619
Eighteenth-Century Shakespearean Editions:
PR2752 1709a Copy 1 Sh.Col. Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works, 1709.
PR2752 1709a Copy 4 Sh.Col. Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works, 1709.
PR2752 1709a Copy 8 Sh.Col. Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works, 1709.
PR2752 1709c copy 1. Sh.Col. Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works, 1709.
PR2752 1714a Copy 3 Sh.Col. Nicholas Rowe edition of Shakespeare's works, 1714.

Free Library of Philadelphia

Free Library of Philadelphia First Folio

Georgetown University's Lauinger Library

First Folio.

Glasgow University Library

Sp Coll BD8-b.1. First Folio.

Horace Howard Furness Memorial Library, Philadelphia

PR2750.A30 1635. *Pericles* (1635).

Library of Congress, Washington, DC

PR2751.A1 1623 Batchelder Coll: fol. Copy 1. First Folio.

The Lilly Library, University of Indiana

PR 2751.AI. First Folio.

Meisei University Library, Tokyo

MR 1447. William Shakespeare, *Poems*, 1640.
MR 1479. *Hamlet,* 1773.
MR1944 S. & S., II, 3976. First Folio.
MR3600. First Folio.
MR774. First Folio.

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L.1392-1882. (formerly Jones 2B). First Folio.

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Bute 480. *2 Henry IV* (1600).

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