CHAPTER SEVEN

Consolidating the Shakespeare Canon 1640-1740

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In 1640-1, a year before the theatres closed, the former clothmaker Philip Chetwinde made his first forays into the publishing world. Chetwinde was something of an interloper into the London book trade, having not come up through the usual apprenticeship route. Instead, he had acquired through his marriage in 1637 to the widow Mary Allot the rights to the published works of her late husband Robert. Allott's portfolio included a substantial proportion of both Shakespeare and Jonson's dramatic works. There followed a legal dispute over Jonson's works between the 'non-stationer' Chetwinde and the 'proper stationers' Andrew Crooke and John Leggatt that lasted until 1639 and contested both the rights to Jonson's plays and the legitimacy of Chetwinde's entrance into the publishing trade (Williams 1977, 95). The dispute and Chetwinde's drive resulted in the first substantial updating of the Jonson canon in the 'second volume' of Jonson's works (1640-1), gathering together the previously printed *Bartholomew Fair*, *The Devil is an Ass* and *The Staple of News* (1631) with a further three new plays, fragments, masques, poems and miscellanea (Creaser 2012, Happé 2012).

Chetwinde did not appear as the listed publisher of the 1640 Jonson volume, which was instead published by Richard Meighen, although Meighen may simply have been a 'front man' for Chetwinde (Williams 1977,

92). However, Chetwinde's silent involvement in this expansion of the Jonson canon is significant as it provided a direct model for the expansion of the Shakespeare canon that he kickstarted some twenty years later. Critics have long recognised the role of the 1616 Jonson Folio in setting a precedent for a folio collection of plays that the publishers of the first Shakespeare Folio followed in 1623. What critics have tended to overlook, however, is Chetwinde's role in the expansion of literary canons and the ways in which the augmented Jonson Folio of 1640/1 set a precedent for the inflated third Shakespeare Folio of 1663/4. The consolidation of the Shakespeare canon in the early Restoration is thus best understood in the context of broader marketplace strategies for reinforcing the worth of authors.

Following the closure of the theatres in 1642, the King's Men ceased playing and dispersed, some travelling to the continent, others retiring in London and elsewhere. As the primary players of Shakespeare's plays, as enshrined in the 1623 and 1632 Folios, the company had provided the most sustained enactment of ownership of the plays, even while rights to the printed versions were contested and transferred. By the time the theatres reopened in 1660, however, ownership of Shakespeare was much more dispersed. While Shakespeare's plays were off the stage, printed editions became the primary means of transmission of the plays, though the 1662 publication of *The Wits, Or, Sport upon Sport* by Francis Kirkman, with Falstaff and the Hostess featured prominently in the opening illustration, attests to at least the performance of drolls based on Shakespeare

throughout this period (1662, A1^r). The period 1640 to 1740 marks the development of many aspects of Shakespeare's printed presence, including editing practices and new forms of presentation, as discussed in the final section of this volume. Yet this was also the period where debates about the size and shape of Shakespeare's canon began to take precedence, both in theory and in practice.

Activity in this area encompasses two main groups of texts: plays of disputed authorship and the poems. The First and Second Folios (1623 and 1632) had both included the same thirty-six plays, but the claims of other works to be Shakespearean quickly took hold. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* received its first printing in 1634 and *Pericles* was reprinted in 1635, both publications following hard upon the Second Folio that excluded them. Further, following the Restoration of Charles II and the reopening of the theatres, there was a sudden surge in fresh attributions to Shakespeare. Kirkman and Henry Marsh published *The Birth of Merlin* (1662), with a title page attributing the play to Shakespeare and William Rowley, and two years later Chetwinde added *Pericles*, *The London Prodigal*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *1 Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Puritan Widow*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *Locrine* to the second impression of the Third Folio, comprising all the plays that had previously been published in Shakespeare's lifetime bearing his name or initials.[1] The case of the 'Shakespeare Apocrypha' has been the focus of substantial attention in recent years, especially in Lukas Erne's work on Shakespeare and the book trade (2013), Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen's new edition of disputed plays (2013) and my own study of the

development of the idea of the Shakespeare Apocrypha (2015), and in the furore surrounding the 2010 publication of Brean Hammond's edition of *Double Falsehood* (1728) in the Arden Shakespeare and the concurrent championing of the play's relationship to *Cardenio* by Gary Taylor (Carnegie and Taylor 2012, Bourus and Taylor 2013). Yet while attribution studies tend to look back to the period of the plays' original performance and publication, the essays in this section focus instead on the period in which these plays and poems enjoyed their highest profile and during which the shape of the Shakespeare canon came to be determined. As such, several of the essays in this section take a broader chronological focus, showing how ideas about the texts developed alongside changing practices in the Shakespeare book trade.

While the 1640/1 Jonson second Folio was perhaps the most substantial literary publication of that year, 1640 is also notable for the appearance of John Benson's much-maligned *Poems*, the edition of the sonnets that reorganised, regendered, retitled and remarketed the sonnets. Faith Acker begins this section by addressing the problems of anachronistic literary valuation (Chapter 8). Paul Cannan's chapter later in this book (Chapter 13) demonstrates the early eighteenth-century marketing conflicts that led ultimately to the deprioritisation of Benson's text, but Acker here shows how Benson's volume functioned as part of a mid-seventeenth-century marketplace, with the stationer seeking to utilise the most up-to-date features of poetry publication and create something that could be enjoyed by readers. Acker's chapter shows the literary work that went into

the construction of this volume and, even if it does not seem to have been a big seller, *Poems'* influence remains significant, not least in the regendering of pronouns and in the grouping of Shakespeare's poems under sententious headings designed to separate out the speaker's thoughts. One of the most significant problems facing book historians is the tendency to evaluate innovations and decisions according to how far they anticipate current consensus, but Acker's chapter argues that the later degradation of Benson's reputation should not blind critics of the poems to the quiet success of his edition for a century, nor to the editorial decisions that contributed to making the poems a viable commercial property once more.

The poems were peripheral to the Shakespeare canon for much of the period covered by this book. Yet while it was not until Edmund Malone's 1790 edition that the poems finally appeared alongside the plays in something more closely approximating a 'complete works' volume, this was only the culmination of a series of movements to establish Shakespeare as a poet and the poetry as part of the 'works'. These movements, like those pertaining to the dramatic canon, were not linear. As Lukas Erne argues in Chapter 9 below, Shakespeare's popularity as a poet seems to have diminished during this period, at least in terms of the sheer number of publications and attributions, as well as misattributions, the significance of which for understanding marketplace movements Erne has argued elsewhere (2013, 56-89). Yet before the consolidation of the canon of poems, it is possible to see a more mutable connection between Shakespeare's name and poetry books. Erne's work on *Cupid's Cabinet Unlock't* discusses an

unusual instance of misattribution in which Shakespeare's name is attached to a miscellany of poems, none of which are by Shakespeare. Yet the presentation of Shakespeare's name may give us some clues about the importance of Shakespeare to this period. Erne's dating of the attribution to 1662, immediately after the reopening of the theatres and in the same year as *The Wits* and *The Birth of Merlin*, suggests that the return of Shakespeare to the stage may have something to do with the appearance of the name on all of these title pages as Shakespeare's potential marketability grew.

Unlike the misattributions in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, retained by Benson in his 1640 *Poems* and even recently edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Henry Woudhuysen as part of the Arden edition of the poems, the 'Shakespeare' poems of *Cupid's Cabinet Unlock't* have had no further afterlife in a Shakespearean context, and Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen's edition of the poems does not even mention this volume (2007). The fact that Shakespeare wrote none of the poems is, of course, significant from the point of view of a canonical tradition that prizes authorship and literary coherence, but such a tradition elides the fact that these poems – many of which are by John Milton – were sold and read as Shakespeare's. More to the point, the volume's association with Shakespeare means that Milton scholars have also overlooked the presence of several important variants and alternative readings present within the book. Erne's chapter offers a salient warning against allowing current notions of canonical fixity to obfuscate the complex history of poetic miscellanies in which poems, detached from authorial contexts, appear in mutable forms.

The question of misattribution continued to have a significant impact on the canon during this period. While the seven additions to the 1664 Folio are something of a footnote in a modern history of the canon, it should not be forgotten that the same market forces that proliferated the main canon proliferated the additional plays on an equal footing. These plays were part of the 1734-35 publishing wars Anthony Brano discussed in Chapter 6, and Rowe accorded them the full editorial treatment and frontispieces as the rest of the Shakespeare canon in his 1709 edition. The history of Shakespeare publishing is not one of teleological, linear progression towards the canon in its modern state; rather, this key period of the consolidation of the canon saw conflicting organisations of plays and poems as editors attempted to wrest them into meaning.

Commentary on the expansion of the canon is tied further to the essays in Part III of this collection, as editors began chronicling their thoughts and setting out their own stalls in relation to what should be included or excluded. The most obvious example is that of Alexander Pope, who was the first to remove the seven 1664 plays in his edition of 1725 after some sixty years of their inclusion alongside the more established plays. Yet the plays then reappeared in a new volume added to Pope's 1728 duodecimo edition, the market forces of expansion trumping Pope's own stated beliefs. Lewis Theobald similarly excluded the additional plays from his 1733 edition, as well as his own *Double Falsehood*, yet the 1734-35 stand-alone editions of individual plays included all forty-three in new printings by Tonson and Walker. The division between what editors believed and what

publishers sold is particularly striking during this period as editors attempted to establish what the very role of the modern scholarly editor could and should be.

The mutability of texts in printed editions in this period also affects the plays in the vexed negotiation of their relationship to theatrical presentation; in 1734-5, Tonson and Walker even quibbled in print over whether an authentic text of *King Lear* should adhere more closely to previously published editions or to Nahum Tate's theatrical version that then dominated the stage.[2] Following the Restoration, the Folio-derived editions that made up the through-line from the 1663/4 and 1685 Folios to the editions of Nicholas Rowe, Alexander Pope and Lewis Theobald shared the marketplace with a growing number of adaptations representing the fortunes of Shakespeare's plays in the theatre. From the 1670 publication of Dryden and Davenant's hugely influential *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* to John Dennis's muddled but patriotic *The Invader of His Country: or, The Fatal Resentment* (published 1720 and 1721), the Shakespeare canon in print expanded exponentially during this period, with dozens of variant versions of the plays coming into print, often reflecting particular political concerns of the day. One of these was William Davenant's *The Rivals*, performed by the Duke's Company in 1664 and printed 1668. This condensed retelling of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* went on to have influence on later eighteenth-century adaptations (Potter 1997, 74-7), even while the play itself faded into deeper print obscurity than the 1664 Third Folio additions, appearing solely in occasional reprintings of the Beaumont and Fletcher

canon. While it would take until the twentieth century for the canonicity of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* to begin having significant influence on editions of Shakespeare, the fortunes of this explicitly Shakespearean play lingering in an alternative canon offer a corollary to *Cupid's Cabinet Unlock't* and a reminder of the fluidity of canons.

Perhaps the Shakespeare adaptation that has received most attention in recent years is Lewis Theobald's *Double Falsehood,* not least because of the debates over whether or how far the play *is* an adaptation of Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Cardenio.* Arguments surrounding that play's authenticity, textual state and sources are generating much rich scholarship (Stern 2011, Carnegie and Taylor 2012, Bourus and Taylor 2013), but less remarked is the play's Lewis Theobald received 100 guineas from the stationer John Watts for publication rights for *Double Falsehood* in 1728, almost twice the average for mainpieces (Milhous and Hume 2015, 167). Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume's tables note a spike in the mid-1720s, with a sudden cluster of plays generating payments of a triple figure sum, but the payment for *Double Falsehood* was not matched again until Lillo's *London Merchant* in 1735, and payments of this size only became relatively common by the 1750s (2015, 366-70). The price that *Double Falsehood* commanded, and the fact that Theobald procured a royal licence for the play, suggests that he at least considered this 'an unusually valuable piece of literary real-estate – a view echoed by the book trade' (Hammond 2010, 17). Regardless of current arguments about the authenticity of Theobald's

claims, the scale of investment in what was avowedly 'only' an adaptation is indicative of the saleability of Shakespeare's name at this point.

While some scholars have cast aspersions on Theobald's reputation more recently owing to the revived prominence of *Double Falsehood*, it should be remembered that, as an editor, Theobald's 1733 edition was the one that returned the canon of Shakespeare's plays to thirty-six after some sixty years of a forty-three play canon. That the editions of Rowe, Pope and Theobald – the first editions of Shakespeare's plays to be created by named editors – were able to make such significant interventions in the presentation and canonisation of the plays is indicative of the new frontiers being opened up in scholarly editing. Anthony Brano in Chapter 6 argued that the introduction of frontispieces in Rowe's edition had an impact on performance, interpretation and adaptation, while Jonathan Holmes (Chapter 14) illustrates the more insidious ways in which an editor could affect the Shakespearean text beyond the explicit derogation of passages and marking up of beauties. Edmund King's contribution to this section (Chapter 10) argues that the process of establishing and debating the Shakespeare canon in this period was another formative part of the development of editorial principles, particularly the faculty King terms 'connoisseurship'. King's chapter begins with Pope but looks beyond the limits of *Canonising Shakespeare's* period of focus to consider how editors of the later eighteenth century, particularly George Steevens, evolved the application of the practices of the earlier part of the century. In concert with Adam Rounce's chapter later in this book, King's work here demonstrates

the shift of canonisation from the inclusion or exclusion of texts to the negotiation of value and authenticity in paratexts. The experimentation by the editors of the early eighteenth century with the format of the book, from Rowe's presentational layouts to Pope's codification of value within the *mise-en-page*, aligns the work of literary canonisation inextricably with the development of the book for sale.

Ultimately, the canonisation of Shakespeare in this period, ratifying and reifying the body of plays and poems that continue to form the core of his canon today, is a product of many factors, but we argue that it is chiefly an effect of the book trade. Attempts to mark what a published canon actually included necessitated debates over the literary state and value of the texts. Acker shows here the literary precedents that went into presenting the poems; and the rejection of particular texts for editions involved the claiming of particular kinds of value and connoisseurship being imposed on the main canon, the work continued by Pope and others as outlined by King. The work that went into consolidating the Shakespeare canon between 1640 and 1740 – at both ends of the period a canon of thirty-six plays, but in between incorporating other plays and poems – marks a series of marketplace movements that sought new and competing measures of value for Shakespeare as author.

Notes

[1] The 1600 quarto of *1 Sir John Oldcastle* bearing Shakespeare's name was, however, a forgery by Chetwinde; the play did not in fact bear Shakespeare's name until 1619.

[2] Robert Walker printed Tate's version as *The History of King Lear, and His Three Daughters: A Tragedy, As it is acted at the Theatres* in 1734. Tonson's edition, bearing only Shakespeare's name, concluded with an advertisement from William Chetwood, the Drury Lane prompter, declaring 'That no Person ever had, directly or indirectly from me, any such Copy or Co-pies' (n.p.). Walker responded in '*A Specimen of Tonson's Omissions and Blun-ders in the Tragedy of King Lear, which render the same useless and unintelligible*' appended to *The Puritan* (1734). He defers to the currency of Tate's version of the play, against which he judges Tonson's: 'how can it be called *The Life and Death of King Lear*, when in the Play as it has been acted for near 50 Years last past (tho' Tonson's spurious Edition kills him on the Stage) King Lear at the Conclusion of the Play remains alive, and gives his Daughter Cordelia in Marriage to Edgar, Son to Glocester' (n.p.).