A Note on Texts, Editions, and Critical Traditions

The plays on which I focus all appear in only one early text. *The Tempest, The Winter’s Tale, Henry VIII*, and *Cymbeline* were first printed in the First Folio of 1623. *Pericles* appeared in quarto in 1609, was reprinted six times through 1635, and was later incorporated into the Third and Fourth Folios. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* appeared in quarto in 1634 and was reprinted in the Beaumont and Fletcher folio edition of 1679. In the absence of competing early texts, the modern editor’s task should seem straightforward. It has not been so. Editions of the plays first printed in the First Folio have dealt with matters of lineation, of redistributing poetry and prose, of spelling and punctuation, and of stage direction. As I will occasionally discuss, the activities of compositors and scribes (especially Ralph Crane) have compelled modern editors to question what is Shakespeare and what is the work of his transmitters (such questions are especially acute for the plays with extensive stage directions, massed entries, and frequent uses of parentheses and other idiosyncrasies of punctuation). For those plays generally accepted as collaborations—*Henry VIII, Pericles, and The Two Noble Kinsmen*—editors have often interceded to distinguish Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean sections, to modernize, and to emend.
I began work on the late plays with the exemplary Oxford editions of Stephen Orgel: *The Tempest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), and *The Winter’s Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). The Shakespeare that emerges from these editions is one of willful verbal density, of constant concern for the actor’s challenge in performance, and of imaginative command of classical and continental source material. The texts that emerge from these editions are ones marked by understatement and contingency. Their place in the First Folio, for Orgel, largely hinges on the chances of transmission and transcription. There is little claim for an intended thematic or political placement of these or of any other plays in the volume. Other editors have been less reticent. Others, too, have been prepared to argue and emend. One of the questions, then, that I will raise throughout this book is how the placement and appearance of the plays in the First Folio has meaning: to early readers, to later scholars, and to us.


Editions of *Pericles* have either been so aggressively intrusive (the Oxford edition incorporating material from George Wilkins’s prose version of the story as part of a “reconstruction” of a putative original) or resignedly hands off (the Cambridge
edition going so far as to question collaborative authorship itself, and to restore readings from the quarto) that I have opted to quote directly from the 1609 quarto. Finally, Lois Potter’s revised Arden edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* incorporates such a wealth of critical material and engages so fully with the editorial issues of the text that I have used it rather than the older Oxford edition of Eugene Waith.

No one can work on John Dowland without the foundational work of Diana Poulton, and I have relied on her scholarship (as well as that of others who have qualified and challenged her research) for my understanding of Dowland as an artist highly self-aware of the relationships of patronage to personal expression. Quotations from the lyrics set to Dowland’s music are from David Nadal’s editions (with their slightly modernized spelling), *Lute Songs of John Dowland: The Original First and Second Books Including Dowland’s Original Lute Tablature* (New York: Dover, 1997) and *John Dowland’s Lute Songs: The Third and Fourth Books with Original Tablature* (New York: Dover, 2002).

Throughout this book, I have tried to attend to representative traditions of criticism and scholarship. My notes seek to record my debts to critics whom I follow and to those I do not. In particular, I have been attracted to the lineage of critical approach (or sensibility) that may be traced from Emrys Jones through Jonathan Bate, Colin Burrow, and Raphael Lyne. Such an approach, by and large, seeks an aestheticized engagement with the classical tradition and a recognition of the late plays as returning to and recasting idioms and issues of the early ones. In addition to these critics, I have been moved by Anne Barton’s “Leontes and the Spider,” an unrivaled anatomy of the making and unmaking of linguistic meaning and personal interiority, not just in *The Winter’s Tale* but throughout the late plays. Much recent work on early modern musicality (especially that of David Lindley, Joseph Ortiz, Linda Austern, and Amanda Eubanks Winkler) has directed me away from older, even sentimentalizing, impressions of a Shakespeare songbook to a more social and contingent sense of voice and lyric in the plays. The
research of Tiffany Stern on playhouse habit (of both performers and audiences) reveals a fluid world of day-to-day production in Shakespeare’s time. Finally, the increasing body of scholarship on Shakespearean lexicography speaks to my own training in historical linguistics. The work of Simon Palfrey and of David Crystal (very different in approach and purpose though they are) pushes me to see, in individual word histories and usages, a drama of making meaning in a culture that, as Stephen Orgel has averred, often valued a “poetics of incomprehensibility” in its rhetorical brio.

Quotations from the First Folio are from the facsimiles available online at internetshakespeare.uvic.ca.


I abbreviate references as follows:


*PMLA*: *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.

*SQ*: *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Concordance: Concordance of Shakespeare’s Complete Works, available online at http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/.