NEW DIRECTIONS IN EDITING RENAISSANCE DRAMA: READING,
PERFORMANCE, AND THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

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While Renaissance dramatists like Middleton have long stood in the shadow of Shakespeare’s modern editorial presence, new critical spotlights have focused on the dearth of editions and neglected editorial consideration for Shakespeare’s contemporaries, spurred by projects like the recently released *Oxford Thomas Middleton*. In this thesis, I examine current editorial trends and interpretations informing critical editions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, acknowledging the continued impact of Shakespearean editing on the larger field of textual criticism. This examination also extends to the new realm for editions of Renaissance drama – electronic editions and hypertext.

Ultimately, I argue that, while electronic editions offer new, exciting methods for editorial representation unavailable in codex form, editors must carefully consider the implications of readers as “critical performers” of these new editions, as well as effective usage of digital media to enhance and promote better understanding of performance-friendly, accessible texts highlighting collaboration between Shakespeare and his contemporaries.
This is for my classmates in a long ago undergraduate seminar on Renaissance Drama – I owe my obsession with Thomas Middleton all to you, my fellow Revenger’s Tragedy enthusiasts.
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

What is the editor, but the unrepresentable other of the author? - Gary Taylor

What do readers do when they usually look at a text? They examine the text for its interpretive meanings, its metaphors, symbols and its form. They might comment upon its aesthetic beauty, or try to derive some new meaning of the work through a Marxist reading, or look at its historical sources or cultural influences. But, do they ever think about the marks on the page and how these markings shape the meaning of the text—how features such as punctuation, footnotes, titles, white space, and editorial annotations contribute to the text’s meaning? G. Thomas Tanselle, a well-known textual theorist, once observed that “every act of reading is in fact an act of critical editing: we often call critical essays ‘readings,’ and critical editions are also the records of readings.”

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while the typical reader might be ‘editing’ the text through observations on the
historically-charged political implications for a play like Thomas Middleton’s *Revenger’s
Tragedy* (staged in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot), critical editors are also “reading” the
text – they are scrutinizing it for the phenomena of literary production that typical
readers might ignore in their literary interpretations: interesting cruxes and problematic
moments in the genesis, production and variation of documents and texts. Editors think
about items such as: what punctuation mark is indicated obscurely here in the manuscript? What could the author possibly have meant to write? Could this be a slip of the pen? What could the compositor’s copy have read given that the sense in the printed document is faulty here? Editors are faced with decisions such as which reading to use as the ‘base text’ for Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* when text A and text B present different readings of the same passage, which of the eight variant readings of Thomas Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* to relegate to the apparatus (appendices, commentary, etc.), and which to entirely disregard, as well as whether they should emend (or not to emend) the original spelling and punctuation of Ben Jonson’s *Volpone.* Further, they have to consider what type of edition they are going to create – whether it

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3 First staged in 1606-7 in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, the Catholic conspiracy of 1605 to blow up the King and Parliament, which was justified by claims that King James was a heretical tyrant. *The Revenger’s Tragedy* contains a particularly sensitive and politically charged subject matter relevant to this historical event, depicting the problem revenge represents for public order when Vindice, the main protagonist, kills an immoral and licentious monarch on the basis of exposing the corruption of his social world (though this rationale is motivated by a very personal moral agenda), only to be promptly executed at play’s end by the legitimate duke and thereby restoring the moral balance to society. For further reading, see Thomas Middleton, *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002) 1297 – 1370.


will be a critical *Oxford* or *Arden* edition meant for a scholar or for an undergraduate classroom, or a practical *Penguin* edition for the friendly book-lover at Barnes & Noble.

Editors also have to decide what principle or theory on which they are going to base their edition. Some editors, like Fredson Bowers, view their duty as so-called objective textual arbiters, serving as guardians for the works of individuals such as Shakespeare or Ben Jonson. Some editorial theorists, like Jerome McGann, however, would argue that this view is in contrast to the truth of the matter – that all marked texts are in fact interpreted texts and that editors are always providing some sense of their own interpretation through the editorial apparatus. Or, to go back to Tanselle’s observation, editors are always going to be providing their own “reading” of the text for others to interpret. But how does this “reading” on the part of the editor, which is then left for further interpretation by other readers, reflect the intentions and original work of the author? Is the editor really, as Gary Taylor puts it, “the unrepresentable other of the author?”

The issues central to these crucial questions about the role of the editor, the author, and the reader are Foucauldian issues of power and control. In particular, due attention needs to be paid to the ways in which an editor’s interpretations and theories about interpreting the text have been localized in both Shakespeare and the works of his fellow Renaissance playwrights, especially given Shakespeare’s central role over the past

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century in the development of editorial theory and subsequent battles over the ‘work’ to be edited. While much ink has been and continues to be spilled on the large machine that is the system of Shakespearean editing and the perpetual changes in approach that have been argued for in editing his work, only in the past few years has any major critical interest been kindled for the editorial apparatus and theories informing the smaller corpus of available edited works for his contemporary dramatists, such as Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher, to name a few.\textsuperscript{8}

Given the relatively new critical spotlight on this matter, we should also examine the ways in which the large impact Shakespeare has had on the editorial movement also affects the editorial apparatus and guidelines that have been applied to his fellow dramatists, acknowledging the groundwork Shakespearean editors have laid for the new and exciting critical projects being completed on this playwright’s contemporaries, as well as differentiating those textual and evidential circumstances unique to these other playwrights (such as Thomas Middleton who presents an exciting and potentially fruitful contrast to Shakespeare, whose works have been provided in an editorially mediated format from the start). Also at play in this overall discussion is the way in which an editor’s interpretation or “reading” can often place limits upon the subsequent reader’s interpretation, necessitating certain guidelines and new editorial codes in order to open up the imagined possibilities for a critical reader, especially in the case of the dramatic work. These limitations have particularly come into question with the recent debate regarding definitions and standards for performance-friendly editions and how an editor takes both

performance and textual matters into account when tasked with creating the next edition of early modern plays.\(^9\)

1.2. Considering Shakespeare with his Contemporaries in Editorial Theory

Part of my interest in a serious consideration of not just Shakespeare, but also his contemporaries within the history of their print editions and their place within the numerous debates regarding editorial theory and its future stems from my personal belief, founded from much reading on the various theories of textual criticism and of Renaissance dramatic editions, and from my early experiences as an editorial assistant, that we have entered a new and exciting period in the editorial field of Renaissance drama. While there will never cease to be a market for the proliferation of print critical and practical editions of Shakespeare’s work, now with the long-awaited release of projects such as the *Oxford Thomas Middleton* and the forthcoming *Cambridge Ben Jonson*, exciting ‘in progress’ works on editions of Shirley and others, and individual Renaissance plays through the *Arden* Early Modern Drama series, as well as the recent attention to Shakespeare’s collaborative efforts in plays like *Timon of Athens*,\(^{10}\) we have the opportunity to read, promote and better understand Shakespeare as a collaborator with

\(^9\) For an excellent overview and representations of various sides in this theoretical debate within editorial and performance studies, see the collected essays on memory and performance in Peter Holland, ed., *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006). See also the collection of essays from more of a textual perspective in Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie, eds., *Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare’s Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

and in relation to his fellow dramatists, who are also just as worthy of scholarly 
consideration, but not always as well known or readily available for a critical read, and
definitely not as well considered yet within the realm of editorial theory.

As an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to think about, edit and “read”
Shakespeare as a collaborator with his contemporaries in my work as an editorial 
assistant with Professors Gretchen Minton and Anthony Dawson on the Arden Third 
edition of Timon of Athens, co-authored by Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton. Gaining 
a first-hand knowledge of the role the editor plays in creating a text for the consideration 
of the intended audience, be it scholarly, student, actors, or general public, I was amazed 
at the vast history and wealth of work that was encompassed within each new edition, 
adding to the chain of those that had come before. Until that time, I had not really 
considered how my understanding of Shakespeare as a playwright/author and of his plays 
(and the creative process through which they developed) had been guided and influenced 
by the choices and interpretations of numerous editors who had determined what my text 
would look like, how I would approach the text, and how I was to understand the nature 
of Shakespeare’s work through commentary and explanatory notes. Never before had I 
truly realized the power wielded by editors over my interpretations and understanding of 
the ‘work’s’ formation, or how often my seeming control over the text in front of me had 
already in fact been manipulated through pervasive editorial apparatus and processes.

While this may seem a simple epiphany for a young student in her academic career, it 
was a very important one as I have come to realize in my continued research. The texts I 
have read are always in some way mediated by the editorial apparatus and the choices of 
the individuals who put together that particular text for my study or for a Tanselle
reader’s “act of critical editing” – the choices editors make do play a crucial role in what I do or do not know about the text and its forms, about the variants that have occurred, about the look of the text when it was originally published, and about how often I visualize the performance of a work when reading its print form. But, if I had not worked on this editorial project early on in my academic career, would I have realized the depth of control the editor has over the texts I read – the power that is subtly influencing my interpretations and my critical reading? How often is this truly flagged for readers, and I began to wonder, just how exactly do editors come to their own particular interpretations for editorial guidelines governing their work? Is it the same for all, or is there something different for Shakespeare versus, for instance, his collaborator Middleton – how do we reconcile these differences if they exist, and how is this collaborative nature and creative milieu of the Renaissance drama encapsulated in the editorial ‘reading’? This led me to a second realization, to which I have already alluded in this opening: while there is a great deal to be said for the long-standing machine that is Shakespearean editing in comparison to the fairly fresh interest in critical editions for his fellow dramatists, such as Middleton, there is a great opportunity now for scholars to more easily compare and discuss the editorial practices underpinning the representations of collaboration by Shakespeare with his contemporaries, thus aiding and increasing the editor’s ability to provide new horizons of interpretation for the critical reader of these texts.

Until the last few years, there had existed a stark contrast in available critical treatment of the editorial apparatus and theories underpinning Shakespearean editions versus those of his contemporaries (with the notable exception of scholarship on Ben
Jonson). Such a contrast was immediately apparent when one searched for scholarly works on the field of Renaissance dramatic editing. You could easily find numerous arguments for editing Shakespeare – *Revising Shakespeare; Reforming the “Bad” Quartos; Shakespearean Suspect Texts; Shakespeare and the Editorial Tradition; Re-Editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader; Editing Shakespeare; Shakespeare at Work* (I could go on, but this gives you an idea).\(^ {11} \) But for his contemporaries? *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlow, Milton; Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance* (emphasis added); *The Renaissance Text; Editing Renaissance Dramatic Texts*; and *Editing Early Modern Texts* are but some of the few that will have to suffice.\(^ {12} \) Recently, however, there has been a surge of interest in and production of critical pieces devoted specifically to editorial and critical areas of attention relevant to Shakespeare’s contemporaries. The Revels Play Companion Library, for example, was developed as a set of as critical companion pieces to the editions put forth in the well-known Revels Play

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series published by Manchester University Press. There are also several massive critical companions recently released and in the works for Thomas Middleton and Ben Jonson. This recent surge in critical interest for editorial issues with Shakespeare’s contemporaries is also connected to a number of key individual play series and large collected editions.

1.3. Argument and Chapter Summaries

Why the disparity up until these recent projects and why this current surge of interest in editing Shakespeare’s contemporaries? Was it due to the lingering effects of a long-standing perception that Shakespeare really was the great genius of his age, the man “not of an age, but for all time” as Ben Jonson said? I originally speculated that this disparity might have resulted from the utilization of editorial practices that, while ripe for a Shakespearean text and its particular eccentricities, are not always as well-suited to the variances and richness that inform the works of his fellow stage crafters. In my efforts to confirm my speculations about this seemingly ignored issue, I examined several major projects of non-Shakespearean editions and the editorial guidelines informing their work: the recently released Oxford Thomas Middleton edition, the Cambridge Ben Jonson edition (forthcoming soon), and on a more cursory level the Arden Early Modern Drama

13 For more information on the dozen or so texts available in this series, see the “Catalogue,” Manchester University Press, 2006, University of Manchester, 28 Mar. 2008 <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/catalogue/asures.asp?id=35>.

14 See Taylor and Lavagnino, Harp and Stewart. A much more comprehensive and complete critical companion will be released with the upcoming Cambridge Ben Jonson project.
series (which will begin publishing in 2009), as well as the single scholarly plays in the Revels series. In order to better understand these editorial projects in relation to the larger debates by Renaissance editors and textual critics, I have prefaced this examination with a somewhat lengthy discussion of the formidable issues surrounding the history of Shakespearean editing and his contemporaries, as well as the current arguments and issues informing Shakespearean editorial programs, with special attention paid to the recent scholarly focus on issues of performance-friendly texts, multi-versioning, and the power plays between editor and reader. This particular argument is one that, while largely derived from examples in the Shakespearean editorial program, also proves applicable to the recent editorial projects for his contemporaries.

The textual problems and hot topics revealed in my examination of the typical print editing of early modern dramatic works, with special attention paid to the issue of performance-friendly texts and the role of the reader in relation to the modern edition, will serve as the impetus for my later chapter on Renaissance drama’s usage of and presence in the latest developments in the broader realm of editorial theory – the digital medium and hypertext. Due to some revealed limitations with representing the dramatic work in a static codex format as well as larger issues regarding the conceptualization of the ‘work’ itself, my aim in this chapter is to suggest the possibilities and for unique engagement of the reader through additional forms of representation and editing of early modern drama – specifically through hypertext editions and hypermedia archives.

The electronic realm offers a wealth of new possibilities and new means for representing works to ‘readers’ (if that even serves as an adequate term when looking at hypertextual possibilities); it also offers its own share of problems and issues for an editor
willing to take on the challenge. Yet, I believe the electronic possibilities would serve well as a new mode of consideration for the editing of early modern drama, especially the non-Shakespearean plays due to their relative freedom from the constraints and historical weight of editorial arguments that hang over and inform Shakespearean editions.

Additionally, a turn towards the digital age might also offer a more viable approach for getting editions of other early modern drama into mainstream consideration, rather than in the hands of select scholars and students who happen to take a class on someone other than Shakespeare.

In order to reach some conclusions on the values and faults of editing Shakespeare and his contemporaries in electronic format, I will be surveying the different types of electronic editions and archives currently available for these playwrights, focusing on the problems I have already previously outlined in current editorial debates about early modern drama. This survey will be foregrounded by a brief overview of hypertext editions and archives as they are currently articulated by various editorial theorists and by the creators of several major projects, as well as a general discussion on the pros and cons inherent in the digital media. Drawing from the results of my extended survey, I will evaluate the merits and advantages that these current electronic archives offer to readers according to larger theoretical conceptions of electronic media from critics like Jerome McGann, Peter Shillingsburg, C.M. Speerberg-McQueen, and R.G. Siemens. Based upon my general findings in this survey (revealing a current under-utilization of the hypertext tools), I offer several brief, potential archive designs and basic suggestions that could be completed to better address the ways in which hypertext can be utilized to address some of the issues vexing editors of print editions.
Finally, I focus on the merits of electronic media versus codex editions for Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights in order to support my thoughts and suggestions on the future role for editors of Renaissance drama. Ultimately, my examination of the current print editions and theories surrounding early modern drama should help to illuminate the new paths editors may begin to consider for future collected editions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, highlighting the issues of collaboration and performance-friendly text. Because performance is a key to these texts, a turn towards the digital realm is also an excellent new source for dealing with this crucial issue, since hypertext editions and archives provide a wealth of opportunities for multi-media collections, extended commentaries, and easily searchable performance archives.

These hypertext editions also offer another series of issues for the editor to consider in the power structure inherent between the reader, the editor and the author/work - who has control in this new medium and who should have control in their electronic reading performances? As editors of early modern drama, if we turn towards the electronic edition or archive for these works, we can provide new opportunities for imbuing these texts with a sense of the performance, and also for encouraging reading itself to become more performative. The electronic space also allows for a different type of performative relationship between the reader and the text not easily conceived in a codex edition, letting readers to become not just “critical editors” of the text, as Tanselle envisioned, but “interpretive performers” who are able to perform a wide range of distinct readings within the hyperlinked space. To achieve such new types of relationships between reader, text and editor, however, requires a more concerted usage and better understanding for the different interpretations and textual representation allowed within
the digital realm. If not just Shakespeare, but also his contemporaries are to be “not of an age, but for all time,” then we need to continue to revisit our editorial theory and strategies for representing Renaissance drama in the digital age.
CHAPTER 2:

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN THE HISTORY OF EDITING

2.1. Background on Renaissance Dramatists

Editing Renaissance texts has always proven to be a challenging endeavor due to the nature of the material available for adaptations of the original ‘work’ itself. Part of the problem lies in the change in attitude toward the printing of plays during the Renaissance. In the sixteenth century, many of the plays printed came well after performances. During the early seventeenth century, however, more plays began to work their way into print closer to the time of their actual performances on stage. Ben Jonson especially opened the door with his supervision of the publication of his works in an expensive folio edition in 1616. Jonson was a playwright concerned with maintaining his reputation in the future and saw in the printing of his works the opportunity to represent himself in posterity exactly how he wanted to be remembered. The printing of his folio precipitated several other projects, such as Shakespeare’s well known folio edition printed in 1623 by Heminge and Condell, and a 1647 folio of works from Beaumont and Fletcher.

By collecting the works of these playwrights into folios, however, these early editors sometimes created a consideration of the plays as works expressly by single playwrights – Jonson and Shakespeare for instance - rather than works born out of the collaboration between playwright and theater company, or even out of the actual collaborative process that went on amongst playwrights. Even the Beaumont and Fletcher edition, though
seemingly implying a more collaborative-friendly collection, shows a bias against the concept of collaborative authorship by not acknowledging the work by other playwrights and additional collaborators contained within the folio edition. These folios as titled created a false image of single authorship, when in fact many of the works contained therein were highly collaborative works. These folios also separated out the plays to single individuals, rather than collecting plays by dates or genres, again promoting the conception of sole authority.

When looking at the playwrights on an individual basis, numerous problems abound due to the differences in material available – folios or none, quarto editions, manuscripts in the playwright’s hand, actors’ notes, etc. In the case of Shakespeare, we have no existing manuscripts of the plays in his own handwriting, nor do we have any record of Shakespeare’s intended revisions for his plays. Instead, we can only approach the original text itself through various early published forms. The earliest versions of his work consist of numerous extant quartos for individual plays, which were published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To complicate matters, multiple quartos exist for a number of plays (as exemplified by the 1603 and 1604 *Hamlet*). Editors also rely on the First Folio, published by John Heminge and Henry Condell in 1623 seven years after Shakespeare’s death. This is the first collection of Shakespeare’s corpus, and it was followed by three subsequent Folio publications in 1632, 1663, and 1685 (each proclaiming to be a newer and more complete edition than the last through inclusion of additional materials such as Shakespeare apocrypha and plays like *Pericles* that were not provided in the original collection proclaiming to be Shakespeare’s ‘Complete Works’). According to the prefatory address by Heminge and Condell, who were theatrical
colleagues of Shakespeare, the First Folio provides an almost perfect representation of Shakespeare’s works because “what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.” Of course, we know this is not the case, as many people have since wished that Shakespeare had devoted more time in his later years to rectifying the ‘blots’ in his texts. For instance, Thomas Edwards, in a short sonnet within his seventh edition of Canons of Criticism in 1765, lamented Shakespeare’s lack of later revision:

When full of fame Thou did’st retire to live
   In studious leisure, had thy judgement sage
   Clear’d-off the rubbish cast on thy fair page
   By Players or ignorant or forgetive—

   O what a sea of idly squander’d ink,
   What heaps of notes by blundering critics penn’d
   [The dreams of ignorance in wisdom’s guise]
   Had then been spar’d . . . .

Over a century and a half later (and after many more ‘heaps of notes by blundering critics penn’d’), W.W. Greg, one of the most prominent figures in twentieth century editorial theory, echoed Edwards’ sentiments:

I do not think that Shakespeare would have laughed at those who spoke of their plays as ‘Works’; but I am afraid he was too easy-going to shape the text of his own with the precision with which we have come to think that it is the duty of the author to shape it. At least that was so during the stressful years of writing. If he had enjoyed a longer evening of leisure, who can say what might not have happened? Did he sometimes dream in his garden at Stratford of a great volume

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16 Quoted in Murphy 204.
of his plays, such as his friend Jonson was busy preparing? And did he go so far as to talk over the idea with his old colleagues when they visited him in those last peaceful days?

‘It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings; but since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right….’ Is this merely rhetorical regret, or is it a hint of a project actually discussed? We can never know. Only we can say that had the dream come true the editorial problem in Shakespeare might have been very different from what it is.\(^\text{17}\)

Unfortunately, such a dream can only remain a fantasy for editors who have to deal with the often conflicting extant versions of Shakespeare’s plays (as for instance, has been the case with numerous editions for King Lear). Because of the wide ranging evidence in the folios, the quartos, promptbooks, and private transcriptions, representing the Ur-text of Shakespeare has posed one of the largest problems to Shakespearean editing. As early as the eighteenth century, editors such as Alexander Pope and Nicholas Rowe first began to raise the important question as to what had greater authority in the Shakespeare canon – the Quartos (which Pope supported), the First Folio, or a later Folio (which Rowe supported). Rowe tried to interpret variants among the quartos and between the quartos and the folios as instances of textual corruption, while Pope posited them as instances of authorial revision. More recently, editors have shown concern over the mediation of these texts through actors, scribes, compositors, and proof-readers.

In the case of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, a widely disparate set of problems exist. Ben Jonson, whom we mentioned previously, showed an extreme interest in controlling the presentation of his works to the reader. According to Martin Butler:

\(^\text{17}\) Quoted in Murphy 203.
Jonson's self-fashioning in the Folio is clearly seen in his careful exploitation of its textual features to project the author as a stable, self-determining and consistent persona. He ignored all his early hackwork and collaborations, and suppressed the information that *Sejanus* had been co-authored; he made extensive revisions to his early plays, particularly upgrading *Every Man In* so that it appeared to be the initiation of a new way in contemporary comedy; and he organized the volume as a whole so as to imply that it delineated an inexorable advance towards professional and social acclaim. Experimental comical satires lead into fully achieved comedies and tragedies; dedications to friends are followed by dedications to aristocrats and statesmen; stage works are succeeded by patronage poems, then by revels and entertainments commissioned directly by the court itself. In this way the volume rewrites Jonson's stormy career as a serene unfolding of his talent rather than as a process of competition, trial and error. By conducting us (misleadingly) from his "first fruits" to "the ripest of my studies,"(3) Jonson reinforced the illusion that his was a unique and self-contained genius.18

At the time that Jonson published his canon of works in the 1616 Folio edition published by William Stansby (which, as Butler demonstrates, Jonson clearly oversaw and had a heavy hand in), the idea of a collection of ‘workes’ was not a popular on in the seventeenth century, as works were typically seen as the realm of classical writers – prior to this edition, no one had before thought that a collection could include mere plays: “To Mr. Ben Johnson demanding the reason why he called his plays works./Pray tell me Ben, where does the mystery lurk/what others call a play you call a work./thus answered by a friend in Mr. Johnson’s defense/the authors friend this fur the author says/Ben’s plays are works, when others works are plays.”19

Jonson, however, was extremely interested in being remembered for his authorship, rather than as a playwright, making numerous classical references throughout the

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physical presentation of his Folio edition. For instance, on the title page of his Folio edition, there were numerous classical references made, such as a motto from Horace – “I do not work so that the crowd may admire me: I am content with a few readers.” This Folio edition was very far from a performance text, but in fact a carefully crafted and edited set of literary texts, as Jonson worked his printed plays into the format of classical dramas by following precedent established in Latin plays printed in his time, as is the case with his stage directions. For example, he begins a new scene whenever a new character enters, listing at the head of each scene the characters that have appeared at any point. In Act Two of *Volpone*, scenes one and two are divided as follows:

In this high kind, touching some great men’s sons,  
Persons of blood and honor –  
PEREGRINE: Who be these, sir?

2.2

[Enter] Mosca [and] Nano [disguised as a mountebank’s assistants].

The Folio served as a tool for Jonson to set himself up as an author, not as a playwright – a man interested not in the acclaim of the rabble at the local theatre, but of the elite and future readers in ages to come. Jonson also changed other aspects in the nature of his works which would vary from their performance texts, as was the case for *Sejanus*. This play was originally a collaborative effort with possibly either George Chapman or Shakespeare and was performed as such on the stage; in the printed Folio edition, however, Jonson excised and edited all collaborative elements in this play so that

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20 Jonson n.p.

he could claim sole authorship of his works. He also demonstrates attempts to control the interpretation of his work through numerous prefaces and annotations, asserting his authority over readers and protecting against “invading interpreters who cunningly and often utter their own virulent malice under other men’s simplest meanings.” He even uses suggestive disclaimers to protect his plays from interpretive invasion. In the prefatory epistle to *Volpone*, Jonson warns that “Application is now grown a / trade with many, and there are that profess to have a key for the / deciphering of everything; but let wise and noble persons take / heed how they be too credulous, or give leave to these invading / interpreters be overfamiliar with their fames, who cunningly and / often utter their own virulent malice under other men’s / simplest meanings.”

Evincing slight control issues when it came to the proper interpretation of his plays, Jonson would be a man very much against Tanselle’s reader as a “critical editor.”

In this folio, he invited his reader to assess the unity of his works as a whole, seeking the identity of a sole author and denying the collaborative nature of the stage. He had also planned but never released another “Workes.” After his death in 1637, Jonson’s friend and literary executor Sir Kenelm Digby oversaw the posthumous publication of a second folio edition of the Works in 1640, which reprinted earlier work and contained plays, poems, and masques. Several of Jonson’s works are also available before and after the Folio in quarto formats. *Volpone*, for instance, was issued in quarto in 1607 by

22 Butler 377.


Thomas Thorpe – with Jonson’s approval of course, and the Alchemist was published in 1612.

Francis Beamount and John Fletcher, as mentioned before, were also lucky enough to have a Folio edition of their works printed in 1647 (well after Beaumont’s death in 1616); however, most of the plays in the Folio largely did not contain any contributions by Beaumont, and that Folio also contained works by Massinger, Rowley, Nathan Field and others. This Folio, as mentioned earlier, at least in part highlights the collaborative nature of the playwriting process more so than the Folios of Jonson or Shakespeare (though still in a somewhat deceptive manner since there are indeed other collaborators present in addition to Fletcher and Beaumont), and their writing partnership is one of the most well-known in Renaissance drama, running from 1609-11 and including The Maid’s Tragedy, Philaster, and A King and No King. Several of their plays also appear in other physical formats – for instance, The Maid’s Tragedy appeared in quarto format in 1619 and in 1622 (this second quarto added eighty lines and numerous word changes), and again in 1630. The Knight of the Burning Pestle, which has been attributed to Beaumont, was first published in quarto in 1613, and a second quarto of this play was not published until 1635, long after Beaumont’s death. The play then also appeared in the second folio edition of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher that was published in 1679. Fletcher’s The Woman’s Prize, first published in the 1647 Folio, also appears in a manuscript format as a presentation copy of a promptbook.

For most playwrights, whose printed plays, if they appeared at all were in single-play quarto editions, we have sometimes unreliable and scanty evidence. Part of the problem is that the quarto editions have proven more perishable in subsequent centuries than the
expensive, carefully produced folios, skewing our sense of what was performed. For Kyd, we only have one definitive surviving play – *The Spanish Tragedy*. Some of Middleton’s plays were never printed (and there was most certainly no early large collection like that of Jonson or Shakespeare), and we’re uncertain as to whether others can be attributed to him. Beyond this, depending on when these quartos were printed, the playwrights may or may not have even had a hand in the proofreading process (especially if printed post-humously). Unlike Shakespeare, we also have numerous “dramatic manuscripts” available – Richard Proudfoot includes the following items under this general terminology:

manuscript play texts of many and various kinds, dates and origins, as well as the small and miscellaneous selection of other manuscripts relating to plays and to their performance which have survived . . . players’ parts, for example, and ‘plots,’ both those used to control performances and one or two scraps of ‘author’s plots’ or scenarios for plays to be written. Among the play texts are complete plays written for the companies of professional players (some in the hands of their authors, some scribal copies) many of which reveal….that they were either used as prompt-books or at least marked up to provide the basic texts from which prompt-books could then be copied.25

There are dramatic manuscripts for plays such as Thomas Middleton’s *Hengist, King of Kent*, and *A Game at Chess*, Thomas Heywood’s *The Escapes of Jupiter*, and more. We have manuscripts in the handwriting of playwrights such as Middleton, Philip Massinger, Thomas Heywood, Anthony Munday, Thomas Dekker and Henry Chettle (and even some proof of Shakespeare’s handwriting, though no surviving manuscripts currently exist for his plays). And of course, there is the ever-present issue of

collaboration to consider in all of these texts, since not only Beamount and Fletcher, but other dramatists including Shakespeare, Middleton, Dekker, Heywood, Thomas Nashe, George Chapman, and Jonson (though he would not like to admit it) collaborated with fellow dramatists at one point or another in their careers. Editing such varying materials poses quite the task, but a rich and fruitful one to the potential editor.

2.2. A Brief History of Editorial Theory and Shakespeare’s Looming Presence

How should these texts be edited? How are these texts edited? And who determines these guidelines with respect to Renaissance drama? In order to properly understand the formidable issues surrounding these questions with regard to the corpus of editions for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we need to understand the editorial camps and current practices utilized in Renaissance drama within the larger context of past and ongoing theoretical debates amongst textual critics and editors. Shakespeare, in particular, has served well as a litmus test for the evolving nature of these debates and their effect on editorial practices and, perhaps to the detriment of editorial programs for his contemporaries, Shakespeare has been at the forefront of most of these editorial discussions and revisions.

As numerous websites and scholarly articles will probably tell you, the prolific production of Shakespearean editions certainly seems to provide ample evidence corroborating Ben Jonson’s assertion in his prefatory epistle to the very first collected Shakespeare edition, the First Folio of 1623, that the Bard was “not of an age, but for all
time.”26 Students and scholars have to choose from an overwhelming number of different editions—do they want the New Cambridge Shakespeare? The New Oxford Shakespeare? Or how about the New Folger Shakespeare, the New Variorum Shakespeare, the Norton Shakespeare, the New Arden Shakespeare, the Riverside Shakespeare… and the list goes on. Obviously, not all editions are created alike, and numerous editorial theories underpin each version of Shakespeare’s work.

Shakespeare has been a particularly prominent figure in the various editorial and theoretical debates over the course of this last century. Since W.W. Greg famously proposed a new model of editing texts (instigated by his work on Shakespeare) in his seminal essay, “The Rationale of Copy-text,” ushering in the era of the New Bibliography and subsequent dissension among textual critics and editors alike, Shakespeare’s texts have most often served as the barometer reflecting these different theoretical climates in which they were produced. What part, however, does the editor play in the creation of Shakespeare’s text as we know it today? From the beginning, we have received Shakespeare’s works as mediated through the codes of editorial commentary. When two theatrical colleagues of Shakespeare, John Heminge and Henry condell, published the First Folio in 1623, they humbly proclaimed that they “ha[d] but collected [the plays], and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of self-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, and Fellow aliue, as was our Shakespeare.”27 Even this first ‘collection,’ however, provided a certain amount of commentary upon Shakespeare and his works.

26 Shakespeare A6v.

27 Shakespeare A2v.
while ‘keeping his memory alive’: the various prefatory epistles and poems emphasized the Bard’s gentlemanly qualities and the sublimity of his verse, and even the catalogue invited specific perceptions of the plays, dividing them into comedies, histories, and tragedies. Since then, Shakespeare’s play texts have continued to exhibit the markings and codes of editorial programs and conceptions. Through annotations, glosses, and introductory commentary, editors attempt to elucidate the ambiguities and problems of Shakespeare’s text for the modern reader, providing answers from past editors, historically pertinent information and even their own suggested paraphrases and readings.

In the New Bibliographical era (the Golden Age of Editing), editors such as R.B. McKerrow, A.W. Polard, and W.W. Greg attempted to solve the problem of the authorial text through a modern re-examination of Elizabethan dramatic texts, analyzing the text’s material history and focusing on editing the physical object, which embodies the play in manuscript or print. W.W. Greg’s theories in particular developed the central textual conceptions which have informed subsequent assertions for the existence of an ‘ideal’ or ‘definitive’ text. A specialist in English Renaissance literature who published numerous influential editions on Shakespeare and early dramatic texts,28 Greg argued in his seminal essay “The Rationale of Copy-Text” that the critical editor should favor the earliest extant state of a work as copy-text. The earliest extant text allowed an editor (according to Greg) to retain as many authorial usages as survived the printing or copying process and to account for “accidentals,” which were spelling, punctuation and word-division that

fallible typesetters were more apt to miscopy or alter without worrying about the author’s wishes.\(^{29}\) In order to not tie the editor down in a “tyranny of the copy-text” and to give him critical freedom,\(^ {30}\) Greg also believed editors should compare later states of the work with the copy-text in order to establish the “substantives,” or the verbal readings that affect the author’s final text that had never previously been captured in print. When applied to Shakespeare, this meant that Greg’s method attempted to identify the now lost manuscript copy that once lay behind an early printing of Shakespeare’s play. Thus, certain earlier-published, shorter quarto versions were general viewed as ‘bad quartos’ (which were either pirated versions or ‘memorial reconstructions’ of the play in performance), while longer, later-published quarto and folio versions were regarded as more authoritative in terms of ‘substantive’ meaning.\(^ {31}\) Greg’s views of the text were a departure from his colleague and fellow editor of Shakespeare, R.B. McKerrow, who refused to combine readings from two Shakespearean editions in order to achieve an authorial intended text.

The underlying ideology of Greg’s theory privileged both the author and the editor’s ability to establish an author’s final intentions. In the case of Shakespeare, for instance, this editorial ideology would result in an ‘authorial version’ of *King Lear* that was an ideal, a-historical amalgamation of the quarto and folio versions. Greg’s methodology was then used behind much of the imposing series of postwar editions of the works of


\(^{30}\) Greg, “Rationale” 24.

seventeenth century. This attempt to establish the text of final authorial intention was further popularized in editing by Greg’s follower and fellow specialist in early modern dramatic texts, Fredson Bowers, who turned Greg’s Rationale into the cornerstone of his editorial enterprises, adopting it as an “editorial manifesto that subsumed (encompassed) all the accomplishments and ambitions of the New Bibliography.” According to Bowers, the job of the editor was to guard the “purity” of the text from “the remorseless corrupting influence that eats away at a text during the course of its transmission.” Shakespeare’s timeless quality had to be preserved from the publishing and printing hacks who permitted error to creep into his sacred verse. A cascade of editions for Renaissance dramatic texts then followed his lead, starting with Bowers’ own four volume edition of *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, as well as his edition of *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon* and *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe.*

The Greg-Bowers school of thought was successful in part due to the view that proper critically edited texts were more in accord with the author’s final intentions, which was a guiding principle for scholars after World War II and seen as a vital cultural rescue mission. It also suited the desires of New Criticism for a clear text that represented the integral work – the Greg-Bowers copy-text theory offered a practical means of attaining


33 Quoted in Murphy 205.

this in the face of competing textual authority manifested in written and printed
documents.  

Since then, however, although the Greg-Bowers School of Copy-Text editing has continued to be defended by Bowers’ student, G. Thomas Tanselle, numerous textual critics have subsequently found the search for authorial intent and the original text in Shakespeare’s works a particularly problematic area, or as T.H. Howard-Hill put it, “fresh winds of change [are] now sweeping through the musty mansions of Greg-Bowers editing.”

Rather than trying to distinguish between good and bad quartos, or attempting to reconstruct the author’s ideal text, editorial theory in the past twenty years has stressed the validity of multiple versions, the collaborative nature of authorship and publication, and the social components which accompany the making of a literary text. Jerome McGann’s 1983 work *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* and his essay “The Monks and the Giants” marked the first effective critique against the Greg-Bowers school of thought, arguing that literature “was essentially a social act, and that the writer, whatever his or her individual genius, was inextricably enmeshed in the various cultural institutions of publication, reception, and dissemination.” McGann argued that the editors should be prepared to see as legitimate rather than corrupt the alterations of publishers, editors, compositors and friends in the publication of literary works, as writing was a ‘social act.’ The “work” also had to be seen not as a single bound volume, but the entire pre-publication manuscripts to the initial public reception to the subsequent public forms of

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that work up to its contemporary reception. Thus, the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries needed to be seen in the context of the social milieu in which they were working in order for a reader to properly understand the variant levels of meaning inscribed upon the received text. With texts such as Timon of Athens, Pericles, and Henry VIII, Shakespeare in particular also had to be seen not as the Romantic monolithic genius behind the text, but rather as a collaborator with fellow playwrights such as Thomas Middleton and John Fletcher. As Jack Stillinger more recently pointed out, collaboration should be seen as the norm rather than the exception and the “romantic notion of single authorship….so widespread as to be nearly universal” is a myth.37

The distinction of ‘bad quartos’ has also dropped as recent critics have argued for Shakespeare as a reviser and augmenter of his work. Such critics have viewed the shorter and earlier quarto versions as earlier stages in Shakespeare’s own evolving creation of the plays. Recent editions of King Lear, Othello, and Hamlet particularly reflect these new views towards the multiple extant versions of Shakespeare’s work. According to the observations of E.A.J. Honigmann, “a strong case can be made for the ‘revision’ of Othello and of King Lear; the fact that Shakespeare is thought to have re-touched not one but two of his greatest tragedies, and to have strengthened both in similar and unusual ways, makes the ‘revision-theory’ more compelling – and more exciting.”38

This view of the quarto and folio versions has led to further critical questions on the value of the different texts – whether variants between the texts were so valuable that they

37 Eggert, “Recent Editorial Theory” 366.

should be read separately as distinct stages in the text’s composition, or as different creations of it. The 1983 word edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, *The Division of the Kingdoms*, was a particularly ground-breaking commentary upon the multiple texts of *Lear* influencing numerous subsequent editions, such as the 1986 *Oxford Shakespeare* and the 1997 *Norton Shakespeare*, both of which published *Lear* in multiple text-format.39

An even more radical take on the issue of versioning, known as “un-editing,” seeks to take authority over the text entirely away from the editor, positing it with the reader who is then free to choose whatever sort of text he or she may want.40 Scholars such as Randall McLeod (aka Random Cloud, Clod, Clvd) suggest that no edition can be faithful to the supposed original or be ‘definitive’ and thus no edition is or can be better than any other – “someone has to tell the editors that critical editions suck.”41 Specifically in his work with English Renaissance texts, McLeod argues that some of the “errors” that editors have corrected in these texts were perfectly legitimate readings - that these editors have not corrected the texts, but in fact garbled them. For McLeod, a facsimile of an early edition may have more “errors” in it than a modern reprint, but it also “provides far more of the information we need to read as Renaissance readers did,


with their understanding of what was right and what was wrong, and their awareness of the degree of uncertainty in the text; our corrected modern editions make it look as if we’re quite certain bout what the text is supposed to say, an error no contemporary reader would have made.”

2.3. Editorial Concerns and ‘Hot Topics’ for Renaissance Drama

Of course, all of these views of the text raise problems for the editor of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The former security of the Greg-Bowers model has been replaced with either the problem of presenting multiple versions of texts to the reader, or the question of whether texts should even be edited. Editorial decisions on how to present the work are also still limited as much by commercial and pragmatic restraints as they are by intellectual commitments, so the presentation of multiple versions in later critical editions is often limited by the very conception of the ‘single’ work itself through printing. And the theory of un-editing raises problems of its own as one cannot help but ask whether there can be such a thing as an ‘unedited’ text.

In addition to these over-arching debates in editorial theory that have lurked behind the various editions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, editors have had to take into account a number of issues related to the early modern play, such as spelling, punctuation, stage directions, the use of commentary, gender and race issues. Editors have had to consider, for instance, how a reader’s experience of the dramatic text is inflected and might be inflected differently by the way in which the text is shaped

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through spelling, annotation, page layout, appendices, etc. With the Warren edition of King Lear, for example, readers are able to compare simultaneously the variant texts on the left and right hand pages; readers of the English Renaissance Drama, Norton Anthology texts are treated to modernized spellings of playwrights such as Ben Jonson (who is most often considered in original spelling, due to the influence of the early twentieth century Oxford edition). ‘Serious’ modern spelling editions of Shakespeare come as standard today (in contrast to Bowers’ advocated approach) in order to make editions more accessible, but there is little consistency in the way editors approach this modernization. Through modernizations, the editor also subjects the play to his or her own critical understanding of language and action. While Variorum editions have tended to preserve more of the linguistic medium, like a type-facsimile of the copy text or a diplomatic copy, ‘reading’ texts like the Riverside, Oxford, and Cambridge editions have become associated with more of this regularization and modernization. Proponents of unediting, however, would argue that “much modernization of punctuation is undesirable interpretation in the guise of editorial responsibility.”

Editors are also faced with issues in developing the critical apparatus surrounding their texts, such as the look and length of the commentary. The commentary in particular raises issues with the expected length of editions and how much information readers can be expected to absorb. About 35% of the New Cambridge Shakespeare, for example, is

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43 For a consideration of this aspect, see Wells.


devoted to commentary and editorial annotations. Editors have to consider potential ways in which to use the commentary for more extensive, even exploratory, critical discussion without unduly tipping the balance between text and annotation. Modern commentary is also in part driven by the market, attempting to meet the reader’s needs either by being designed to accompany a reading of the play in its entirety and therefore contained in the quick glances at the bottom of the page, or alternately, provided copiously in notes at the end and consulted for specific insights into local passages. Editors also have to be careful on how they are directing readings of the plays through these notes, watching for narrative bias creeping into the textual notes and the slant of the commentary (is it performative, antitheatrical, editor who really does not know what he is talking about with performance as he is not a professional actor, etc.), as well as the particular way in which the editor decides to present the text.46

Whether to create editions based on authorial intentions, or socialized or multiple versions of texts, whether to present critical apparatus or to provide the reader with freedom to control their own interaction with the text, or challenges presented by the texts - choices in spelling, emendations of textual cruces, treatment of stage directions, etc.: these are but some of the over-arching problems posed to any individual wishing to work in the field of Shakespearean and early modern dramatic editing. Perhaps the most key issue in current editorial debates about Renaissance dramatic editing is performance-friendly texts.

In recent years, a number of Shakespeare editorial programs have come under fire for a perceived antitheatricalness – a lack of attention paid to the performative aspect of Shakespeare’s works. Shakespeare’s works were, after all, designed to be understood through performance and print editions needed to make readers better aware of the vibrant stage possibilities. One might think the fact that Shakespeare, Middleton or Jonson wrote for the stage would be a relevant consideration and even the necessary starting point for any editor’s consideration for the text. As Richard Steele observed in his 1723 Preface to *The Conscious Lovers*, “it must be remember’d, a Play is to be seen, and is made to be Represented with the Advantage of Action, nor can appear but with half the Spirit, without it.” Yet, how does an editor try to engage the minds of readers with the performative nature of Shakespeare’s work in a textual edition? Numerous modern editions have claimed to shift their focus in this direction by including stage histories in the introduction and by addressing stage issues in the commentary. As Michael Cordner has observed on numerous occasions, all the ongoing print series of Shakespeare editions “proclaim, in obedience to current fashion, that they aim to be more performance-oriented.” For instance, the General Editors’ Preface to Arden Third editions asserts that its editions’ notes and introductions will “focus on the conditions and possibilities of meaning that editors, critics and performers (on stage and screen) have discovered in the play.” The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* advertises its theatrical

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48 Cordner 182.

49 Quoted in Cordner 182.
“orientation,” “understanding,” or “perspective.”\textsuperscript{50} The Wells and Taylor Oxford Shakespeare series claims to be geared towards a performance-based style by drawing on the so-called ‘promptbook’ texts preserved in the First Folio. The Oxford edition in particular is a reaction against the more traditional approach that was taken by the Arden\textsuperscript{2} series and the former approach by New Cambridge which sought to return to the author’s so-called ‘foul papers.’

Whether or not they accurately succeed in representing performance, however, is another question. Part of the problem with stage directions, for instance, is their veritable paucity within the extant quartos and folios. We often simply do not know how particular scenes were originally performed. In the case of the problematic Monument scene in Antony and Cleopatra, all we know in terms of staging is that “They heave Antony aloft to Cleopatra.”\textsuperscript{51} How is Antony heaved aloft? Is there a pulley system? Do men physically hoist him up to the awaiting women? One way in which modern editors can attempt to heighten such problematic moments and highlight their performative nature involves the usage of stage history in the commentary or introduction, providing information on how recent productions have addressed such issues. Editors can also include a sense of performance through pictures and illustrations of productions. They further attempt to convey the sense in which lines are delivered through textual annotations. But is this really enough for a reader to gain a sense of performance? As

\textsuperscript{50} Quoted in Levenson 248.

\textsuperscript{51} SD IV.xv. 38. First Folio SD as provided by William Shakespeare, G. Blakemore Evans, and J.J.M. Tobin, The Riverside Shakespeare, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
M.J. Kidnie has observed, “performance haunts our studies, but cannot be found in books.”

The focus on performance and theatrical orientations with editorial projects is, in fact, nothing new, as Jill Levenson is quick to point out: “major editorial projects since the Oxford Shakespeare continue to advertise their theatrical ‘orientation,’ ‘understanding,’ or ‘perspective.’ If the publicity is new, however, the editorial premise goes back to the eighteenth century. Even Alexander Pope used theater history to explain textual errors; he had no compunctions about making it up.” Samuel Johnson also incorporated bits of theatrical data in some of his annotations, and of editorial projects in the eighteenth century, George Steevens and Edmond Malone offered the most extensive dramaturgical notes in their edition. Editors even at this time were trying to “re-create the physical conditions of early performances in order to interpret plays and resolve textual anomalies.” The distinction that should be made here, though, is that while there has always been an interest in performance in the editorial projects of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the modern argument related to performance and the editorial project is in fact a concerted effort to focus editorial theory and guidelines for Renaissance drama squarely around the issue that the real work that we should be aspiring to, that we should be drawing the attention of those ‘reading’ Shakespeare and


53 Levenson 248.

54 Levenson 248.
his contemporaries, is the performance itself – the words and interpretations of the characters in action before us.\textsuperscript{55}

The real problem at the crux of this argument is how does one get at the performance when editing and working with a textual and inherently print-bound version of the work? Proponents of this argument would suggest that we stop privileging the notion that 

*Hamlet* can be found in a book, a concept that valuates print over performance and in fact often enshrines performance through print. But, while one can argue that we should try to demarginalize performance and recognize that plays such as *Women Beware Women*, or *Volpone*, or *The Duchess of Malfi* all exist in a shared cultural space, in the performance memory that can be found in a range of editorial mediations of early texts, developing a set of editorial guidelines and understanding of what this means in practice is an entirely different matter that has yet to be resolved. Print editors are faced with the daunting quandary of representing the vast stage space, the theatrical event, with all of its manifold performance possibilities within the boundaries of codex form. As Levenson reminds us, “modern editors cannot fully recover what the actors did on stage beyond the dramatist’s printed instructions,”\textsuperscript{56} and, of course, we do not always have these original printed instructions left to us in the dramatist’s own hand, or in a print form which we know was checked and approved by the dramatist, rather than the project’s editor. While the text has long been held in editorial theory as the ultimate source of the work (and while this may or may not be arguably the case for literary forms such as the novel and


\textsuperscript{56} Levenson 250.
poetry), it has become increasingly apparent in this debate over the performance-mindful text that editorial theory does need to take the nature of drama into consideration, both in the general discussions on how to go about editing Renaissance drama, and in the practical realm of the nitty-gritty editing itself. Perhaps by even simply acknowledging different performances within the editorial apparatus accompanying a text, editors can begin to find ways to acknowledge the mutability of the dramatic form – not only should editors not deny different readings for the text; but they should also be acknowledging the different and ever changing possibilities of the work itself, which cannot easily be pinned down in that one ‘definitive’ edition, at least not as it is currently constituted.

In any case, we should test whether or not modern editions have become successful in their attempts to become performance friendly, considering, as Michael Cordner, Margaret Jane Kidnie, and Barbara Hodgdon among others, have all pointed to the absence of any common rationales or established conventions for editors to follow in addressing performance within the printed text. Thus, while recent editions have tried to engage with this new paradigm shift in the editing of Shakespeare for instance, the results have often fallen far short of the endeavor’s exciting potential due to the editions’ problematic and questionable usage of performance. To evaluate the integration of performance in the text and full and appropriate use of the ‘infinite variety’ of possibilities at their disposal, Cordner and others have suggested looking to the following elements for vital clues: an edition’s use of stage history in the introduction and commentary, determining whether they have a bias towards the ‘unknown’ early modern performance or have made judicious use of recent productions; ways in which different editorial programs have limited the interpretive possibilities for the reader; where the
reader has been positioned in relation the dramatic work; usage of sources such as earlier editions, production promptbooks, theatrical reviews of modern stage productions, and film examples, etc that show how dramatic moments have been played out upon the stage and might prove useful for encouraging a reader to imagine future performance possibilities. By thinking about performance, the editor should be trying to create an editorial program that would turn modern readers into active interpreters of imagined performance possibilities, rather than passive receivers of an editor’s directed theatrical fantasy in print.

When looking at Shakespeare, as mentioned previously, there appears to be an interest in performance friendly approaches. According to the New Cambridge’s general editor, Philip Brockbank, this series “reflects current critical interests and is more attentive than some earlier editions have been to the realization of the plays on the stage, and to their social and cultural settings.”57 He adds that editors usually attempt to integrate illustrations and reconstructions of early performances into their discussion; he also suggests that some even make use of advice from a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.58 In the case of the Oxford series, the general editor Stanley Wells has expressed his hope that “scholarship could be made interesting, even exciting,

58 Brockbank n.p.
that introductions and notes could convey and stimulate enthusiasm, and above all that the texts would be presented as works that achieve full realization only in the theatre.”

_Arden Third_ makes available to readers the most thorough general discussion of its guidelines, which are intended to stimulate texts reflecting serious considerations of performance. In the “General Editors’ Preface”, the editors make a series of statements asserting a more performance-oriented approach: the series is valued by “scholars, students, _actors_, and the great variety of readers;” the notes and introductions “focus on the conditions and possibilities of meaning that editors, critics and _performers (on stage and screen)_ have discovered in the play;” headnotes to acts or scenes discuss, among other things, “major difficulties of _staging_;” and finally, that both the introduction and the commentary “are designed to represent the plays as _texts for performance_, and make appropriate _reference to stage, film and televisions versions_, as well as introducing the reader to the range of critical approaches to the play.”

By focusing on a performance-minded approach to the editing of Renaissance drama, the texts created will potentially provide more active interpretations on the part of the reader; by highlighting such programs in general prefaces, editors also allow readers to understand the editorial apparatus and its intentions which inform the presentation of the text, thereby empowering the reader and encouraging a more interactive space between editor, text, and reader. Certainly, through considerations of performance,

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multi-versions, un-editing, modernized spelling, and other issues, editors are always going to be placing an interpretation on the text when they have to make specific choices about what kinds of information to include and not to include. While these issues are highly visible in more recent editions of Shakespeare, we need to ask if these same considerations are present in the recent editorial projects devoted to his contemporaries, not only to ascertain any potential real differences that have developed or are being utilized for Shakespeare’s contemporaries, but also to promote a continued conversation about Shakespeare with his contemporaries.
CHAPTER 3:

CURRENT MAJOR PROJECTS OF NON-SHAKESPEAREAN EDITING

3.1. Overview

While playwrights such as Middleton or Rowley or Shirley have not been central figures like Shakespeare in the past century’s evolving debate on editorial theory and practices, they have certainly become more prominent figures for editorial consideration alongside Shakespeare in new early modern editorial projects. Indeed, as I indicated earlier in my discussion, there has been a recent surge in editorial projects devoted to collaborations between Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as several series of individual plays devoted to non-Shakespearean drama, such as the Revels Editions and the forthcoming Arden Early Modern Drama Series. Even more importantly, two recent substantial and complete critical editions have encompassed the work of dozens of scholars across the globe – the recently released Oxford Thomas Middleton and the Cambridge Ben Jonson. Both of these editions are particularly exciting for scholars as they are accompanied by substantial critical companion pieces outlining the various editorial considerations and cruxes relevant to these two particular playwrights, as well as by websites providing both information on the editorial process involved and further resource material to complement the print publications.
3.2. The Revels Plays and Arden Series

While several series in the past few years have encouraged considerations of collaborative projects between Shakespeare and his contemporaries, such as the *Arden Third* series edition of *Timon of Athens* by Shakespeare and Middleton in which I took part, there are also several series of individual play publications that specifically devote their attention to Shakespeare’s contemporaries. The *Revels Plays*, a renowned series put forth by Manchester University Press, along with the complementary Companion Library and Student Textbook Editions, is a well-established series with a long list of publications, including plays by Massinger, Ford, Heywood, Marston, Jonson, Lyly, and Marlowe, to name just a few. ⁶¹

A number of the Revels plays currently in the publication phase emphasize their performance-friendly nature: Martin White’s edition of Philip Massinger’s *The Roman Actor: A Tragedy*, is described as including:

- a detailed commentary on the play designed to be of value to students, specialist readers and performers, and an appendix discussing the play’s textual history. The edition focuses on the play’s theatrical life in its own time and ours and, in addition to a detailed stage history, includes an interview with Sir Antony Sher, who played the role of the tyrannical Roman emperor, Domitian, in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s acclaimed production in 2002. ⁶²

A.T. Moore’s recently released edition of John Ford’s *Love’s Sacrifice* contains “notes [that] provide full explanations of obscure words and phrases, and offer analyses of many aspects of staging and interpretation” as well as “detailed discussions of both

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the theatre where *Love's Sacrifice* was first performed and the acting company for which it was written. As a final example, W. Reavley Gair’s 1999 edition of *Antonio’s Revenge* by John Marston has been described as “seek[ing] to evaluate the play not merely as a literary text but as a drama for a particular company within a specific theatre….explor[ing] the high degree of originality in Marston’s dramatic techniques.”

Individual plays within this series also reconsider the former approach of debasing one version in favor of another by reconsidering versions that have been ignored in a text’s previous editorial history. For instance, Robert S. Miola’s edition of Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour* “breaks with usual practice by presenting the 1601 quarto version of Jonson's play, set in Florence, instead of the revised 1616 version, set in London,” and he has collated all fifteen known copies of the quarto in the preparation of this particular edition in an attempt to understand the quarto for its own sake, as well as in relation to the folio version. The David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen edition of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* is also an excellent example in which the multiple versioning issues of both the A and B text of the play, as already outlined in my discussion of Michael Warren’s edition of *King Lear*, bring into

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consideration the theories of ‘un-editing’ formerly put forth by Leah Marcus and Randall McLeod.  

The *Arden Early Modern Drama* series also considers these ‘hot topic’ issues in their forthcoming editions, set for publication beginning in 2009. According to John Jowett, General Editor for this project along with Suzanne Gossett and Gordon McMullan, this series will “both complement the Arden Third Series of Shakespeare editions…and significantly extend the range of publishing offered under the Arden name.” The intent is for these editions to be published in a format similar to the *Arden Shakespeare Third* Series, in the hopes of considerations of Shakespeare’s texts side by side with his contemporaries as created under similar editorial guidelines and premises. These editions are to be affordable, current with present editorial and critical theories, and utilizing new resources previously unavailable. As for the textual engagement on the part of readers, the series editors hope that these editions “will also encourage readers to engage positively with the text they are editing.”

While the *Revels* and *Arden Early Modern Drama* Series provide a number of single edition plays by Shakespeare’s contemporaries which demonstrate an interest in the current theories on performance, the de-emphasis on privileging so-called authoritative versions, and a marked interest in the relationship between the reader, editor and text, the complete and complex editorial guidelines and critical approaches that have

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68 Jowett.
been delineated through the large critical editions devoted to Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton most notably in the past few years provide a remarkable wealth of information for the treatment of these fellow Renaissance playwrights.

3.3. Cambridge Ben Jonson

Originally scheduled to be published in 2005, the still-pending *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* plans to offer a complete re-editing of the entire Jonsonian canon, superseding the previous collection undertaken by C.H. Herford’s and Percy & Evelyn Simpson’s large Oxford *Ben Jonson*, published between 1925 and 1952.69 This particular edition will provide several new features for Ben Jonson, including treatments of recently discovered works by Jonson, as well as the future availability of an edition in electronic form. The editorial team asserts that this edition will give “a clear sense, afforded by no other modern edition, of the shape, scale, and variety of the Jonsonian canon.”70

The project plans to include several different components – there will be a six-volume print edition presenting a modernized text of the complete works, full scholarly apparatus, introductions to Jonson’s life, theatrical context, critical reputation and more. In a related format, a simultaneously published electronic edition will contain the contents of the print edition, as well as supplement this with a range of early manuscripts.

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and print texts, electronically searchable texts, versions in both original and modernized spelling, and a fully searchable archive of life records, stage history, masques and more. Further discussion on this electronic edition will be provided in a later chapter.

The “Detailed Project Description” provides an excellent outline for the ambitious scope of the print edition and its editorial principles, design structure, and unique features. One highly notable feature is the modernization of Jonson’s spelling in this critical edition, a distinct departure from the previous standard set by the monumental Herford and Simpson edition, which followed a distinctly Bowers approach to the text with old spelling texts. While these modernized texts will be linked to the earliest relevant texts in the electronic edition (allowing for easy textual comparisons), the Cambridge Jonson editors are of course subjecting the works to their own critical understanding of language and action, imparting a new interpretation of Jonson for future readers and critiques that is certainly more of a ‘reader-friendly’ text. Through modernization of punctuation, the Cambridge edition will “aim to capture the rhythm of the original as expressed in modern idiom.”71

In part, by modernizing the Jonson texts, Bevington et al will provide a text that fights against the “notion of Jonson as a less accessible, more formidably learned writer than Shakespeare.”72 Shakespearean editions, as I have already mentioned, are standardly presented in modern spelling editions, though I have already noted the lack of consistency in the ways in which editors have approached such modernization. By following this editorial interpretive principle already made popular in the Shakespeare

71 “Detailed Project Description,” Jonson website 1.5.1.

72 “Detailed Project Description,” Jonson website 1.5.
editions, this new edition of Jonson may indeed help to create an image of Jonson as an accessible playwright just as easily understood in our modern language as he is in his original spelling. The modernized text also opens up the readership door to a wider audience and helps to make comparisons between Jonson and Shakespeare a more level playing field – rather than comparing apples (original spelling) to oranges (modernized texts), both students and scholars alike will be able to better appreciate both the rich similarities and subtle nuances inherent in each dramatist’s writing.

Like a number of recent editorial projects for Shakespeare (*Lear*, *Othello*, etc.), the *Cambridge Ben Jonson* also shows a demonstrable interest in the issues inherent in multiple available versions for plays, including the issues involved in privileging folio versus quarto versions, how to read distinct variations between two available texts, and their critical relationship to one another. In the *Oxford Ben Jonson* edition, Percy Simpson followed the traditional modes as represented by the Greg-Bowers school, placing a great deal of emphasis on the authority of one text – namely the 1616 Folio. According to Simpson, Jonson himself had carefully supervised this folio’s progress through the press and Simpson believed that it represented most closely Jonson’s authorial intentions; therefore, the majority of the plays in the latter volumes of the Oxford edition are reliant upon the authority of the 1616 Folio. The *Cambridge Ben Jonson* edition is not without its critics, however.

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73 “Detailed Project Description,” Jonson website 1.6.1. As Bevington et al also point out, Simpson’s insistent reliance on the 1616 Folio as the definitive text containing Jonson’s intentions and design has been subsequently brought into question by the work of Johan Gerritsen (“Stansby and Jonson Produce a Folio: A Preliminary Account,” *English Studies* 40 (1959): 52-55) and Kevin Donovan (“Jonson’s Texts in the First Folio,” *Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio*, eds. Jennifer Brady and W. J. Herendeen (University of Delaware, 1991) 22-37) all showing that while Jonson indeed had a remarkably heavy hand in the production of the 1616 Folio, there are still a number of issues concerning its use as the authoritative underlying ‘copy-text’.
Jonson, however, takes a more measured approach, evaluating texts on a case by case basis. In the case of Every Man Out of His Humour and Cynthia’s Revels, for instance, a number of scholars have argued for favoring the quarto text over the folio in order to better represent the play as experienced in the playhouse, rather than the controlled version available in Jonson’s self-selecting, self-editing Folio. While these considerations by the Cambridge editorial team certainly provide a new and different copy-text in contrast to their predecessors from the Oxford edition, they also foreground for the Jonson reader such textual problems in a fuller and more complex manner than previously available, providing the reader with more control and understanding over the textual cruxes and problems floating beneath the surface of some of these works.

This increased visibility of the textual variant navigations played by editors will be most evident in the two versions that will be available for Every Man in His Humour – this play will be presented in the print edition in two separate and distinction versions, quarto and folio. While Bevington et al acknowledge that there would be great value in presenting these two versions on facing pages, in a format similar to the radical one utilized by Taylor and Warren’s Lear text for instance, such representation in the print edition was not possible given the chronological arrangement of works chosen as the organizing factor for the various works. The editorial team does, however, plan to provide the two versions in separate volumes for easy side-by-side reading – they even note that “special care will be taken with lay-out and presentation to make this an easy experience, and avoid the necessity of repeating certain notes” and suggest the future
development of such a two-text edition as a potential spin-off from the main text at a later point in time.74

The Cambridge Ben Jonson’s editorial program also indicates an interest in creating a much more performance friendly text than that of the Oxford edition:

Unlike the Oxford Ben Jonson, which paid relatively little attention to such matters, the Cambridge edition will attend with particular care to questions of staging and performance. Editors will be encouraged to remain alert to the plays as texts for the theatre as well as texts for reading: ambiguities of staging will often be as deserving of a note as are lexical ambiguities. Editors will also be encouraged to be wary of providing directions that unnecessarily limit the possibilities of stage action. Any additions to or expansions of copy text stage directions will appear within the text in square brackets. The significance of particular stage directions and any problems arising from them will be discussed from time to time in the annotation.75

By foregrounding the importance of these plays as “texts for the theatre as well as texts for reading,” the Cambridge Companion’s critical apparatus and editorial approach may very well produce a performance-friendly reading text which Michael Cordner and others have stressed. Such a text would facilitate readers’ critical considerations of Jonson not only as the learned figure of the page, but also of the stage, again highlighting the many wonderful nuances and devices he developed in his more than thirty court masques and entertainments and his numerous plays. This blatant intention to create a performance-friendly reading through the works also outlines a specific rationale to the individual editors for addressing performance in the print edition (a rationale that Cordner, Kidnie and Hogdon have all indicated as frequently missing in a number of the available Shakespearean projects).

74 “Detailed Project Description,” Jonson website 1.7.

75 “Detailed Project Description,” Jonson website 1.10.
Ultimately, this edition will be composed of a set of six volumes, hopefully in an “attractive and easily manageable size and shape” as promised by the editorial team. The critical apparatus will be geared towards an undergraduate and graduate student level of understanding; however, one must point out that a six volume set, whether boxed or sold separately, will undoubtedly be beyond the means of many students – likely limiting the majority of sales for classroom, library, and scholarly use, rather than readily accessible to lay readers as well. The *Cambridge Ben Jonson* project, however, will certainly provide a new definitive edition that takes some cues from the modernized proliferations of Shakespeare, as well as an interest in the question of multiple-version and performance friendly texts. Such an interest and inclusion of these hot topics in recent editorial debates will provide new methods of critical engagement for a reader of Jonson, just as they already have for readers of his great contemporary Shakespeare.

### 3.4. Oxford Thomas Middleton

Though we are still waiting for the release of the editorial trend – savvy *Cambridge Ben Jonson*, the long-awaited *Oxford Thomas Middleton* edition has finally made its debut on the open market. While over twenty years in the making, this project was certainly well worth the wait, given the fact that it is the first one-volume collection of Middleton’s works ever published (unlike Jonson and Shakespeare for example).  

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76 “Detailed project description,” *Jonson* website 1.4.

77 Though the Middleton edition has finally been released, I am highly disappointed as a great Middleton enthusiast to say that I have not yet been able to borrow or afford to buy a copy. My discussion of the editorial guidelines and rationales for this edition’s creation, like my treatment of the *Cambridge Ben Jonson* project, will be based on the readily available information put forth by the general editor, Gary Taylor, on the accompanying Middleton website.
According to Gary Taylor, general editor for the project, this edition was based on the rationale of making “the full range of [Middleton’s] work accessible to modern readers, in a way which will encourage both a wider appreciation of his achievement and a new understanding of the English Renaissance.”78 Taylor also interestingly asserts that “editorial paradigms based upon the unusual conditions of the Shakespeare canon are of limited relevance to Middleton (and may other writers)” and the Middleton editorial team has therefore sought to represent Middleton’s works in the manner most appropriate to their nature.79 The editorial team for this critical edition evinces a distinct interest in separating its editorial practices as distinctly unique and different than those typically utilized and better suited for Shakespeare’s works; in looking closer at the editorial guidelines and process provided by Taylor in this handy guide to the collected edition, I certainly argue, however, that this distinction and attempt to break from ‘Shakespearean’ editorial approaches cannot and should not exist.

What exactly are these differences in editorial practices that are so-called unique and relevant to Middleton, rather than Shakespeare? Taylor offers several items for our consideration: first, he asserts that the plays of Middleton were not usually written as uninterrupted performance, in comparison supposedly to Marlowe or Shakespeare; instead, Middleton regularly wrote plays for companies that provided four musical intervals between the five play acts and Middelton’s usage of act divisions within his manuscripts specify such intended performance conditions. Certainly one other issue


79 Taylor, “How To” 1.
present, though not specifically pointed to by Taylor, would be the various manuscripts existing in Middleton’s own handwriting for his plays, presenting another textual crux for the editor of Middleton that is not encountered in the editing of Shakespeare’s plays. Taylor also notes that Middleton’s plays were more often accompanied by illustrations than other Renaissance playwrights and so the edition incorporates all relevant title page images.⁸⁰ Additionally, treatment of Middleton’s revisions to his own work are offered – for example the two texts of The Lady’s Tragedy are printed in parallel to demonstrate the evolution of a play from the original author’s manuscript to an acting company’s promptbook.

While Taylor generally points to other unique nuances specific to a consideration of Middleton, some of the differences he attempts to draw between editorial practices for Middleton versus other playwrights (namely Shakespeare) are actually false oppositions. For example, he notes that early seventeenth century collections of Jonson and Shakespeare were divided into specific literary genres – since no comparable early collection exists for Middleton’s works, his works have not already been divided into ‘traditional formal categories’. While this is indeed true that Middleton’s work has not been divided into any particular genres by previous editors, it does not necessarily mean that Taylor’s edition provides a particularly unique practice of non-grouping by genre in favor of a general chronological approach. As we have already seen in the details for the forthcoming Cambridge Ben Jonson, a similar organizational structure by chronology rather than genre will be utilized. Besides, the prior organization of Shakespeare and

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⁸⁰ Taylor, “How To” 3.
Jonson collections by categories of genre does not necessarily represent an authorial, but rather an editorial choice/interpretation placed upon the text, and not an “editorial paradigm based upon the unusual conditions” of a particular author’s canon.81

Additionally, while Taylor asserts the usage of an editorial process unique to that of Middleton at the forefront of his detailed description of the editorial underpinnings for the edition, rather than hijacking systems supposedly unique to the Shakespearean canon, he actually frequently demonstrates that this is not, in fact, the case: when discussing the set-up of the annotations and commentary found throughout most of the works, for example, Taylor acknowledges that the annotations used are “comparable to those in many one-volume textbook editions of Shakespeare.”82 It should be noted, however, that Taylor goes on to demonstrate how these annotations have been expanded in some cases beyond the glossarial commentary at the foot of the page in order to “make a virtue out of multivocality, illustrating a range of possible approaches to annotation by providing special commentaries for certain works.”83 While such a wide-ranging approach to annotation programs contained within one edition is certainly a unique approach and one that calls “attention to the ways in which annotation itself shapes our experience of a text,” Mr. Taylor can hardly claim that the various annotation approaches used for texts is something that would not work just as well for an edition of Shakespeare, if we were to give an editor the opportunity – for example, he notes that the commentary to A Game at Chesse is devoted to the play’s historical and political

81 Taylor, “How To” 1.
82 Taylor, “How To” 1.
83 Taylor, “How To” 1.
references. This very same approach could be used on any number of Shakespeare’s
history plays, or to several of Ben Jonson’s politically charged works, or even Dekker’s
*The Whore of Babylon*. Taylor also notes a detailed economic commentary for the
*Triumphs of Honour and Industry* – what about a similar approach to Middleton and
Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*, or any of Dekker’s plays concerned with London city
life? The feminist commentary approaches provided for plays such as the *Roaring Girl*
would also readily apply to any number of Renaissance plays, including Shakespeare’s
*Taming of the Shrew*, or Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*. This multi-format approach, while
perhaps original in its conception and its specific flagging of its own editorial
construction and interpretation to readers, certainly should not be construed as applicable
only to Middleton. It does, however, leave open the possibility of multi-layers of
interpretation available depending upon the skill level of the reader, and the different
annotative approaches available amongst the text also encourage a wide range of readers
to approach these texts.

Taylor also notes other ways in which the edition specifically flags the process of
editorially constructed texts and apparatus for the reader:

This edition does not attempt to provide or impose a unified view of Middleton or
his works. The contributors come from different disciplines (literature, history,
theatre, and theology); the annotations focus upon different aspects of the texts;
different editorial practices are adopted for different works; and the critical
introductions adopt different critical perspectives (from the performance
orientation of *A Mad World, My Masters* to the postcolonial focus of *The
Triumphs of Honour and Virtue*). This diversity is deliberate. It derives from a
belief that authors and their readers are better served by a ‘federal’ than a
‘unified’ edition. By calling attention to the variety of ways in which the works of
an author may be interpreted and edited, a ‘federal’ edition celebrates the play of
difference and acknowledges the foreclosure of possibilities entailed in every act of choice.84

In effect, Taylor’s choice to create a ‘federal’ edition for readers turns the edition itself into an example of McGann’s theory of literature and the creation of the ‘work’ as a social act – by drawing a reader’s attention to the editorial interpretations and subjective annotations demarcating the appearance and formulation of the text, the editorial process itself is revealed as part of the larger social act that creates the reader’s sense of the work. Rather than throwing up one’s hands and throwing the texts to the winds of ‘unediting’, this particular technique by Taylor nicely intertwines with the interest in the reader’s role and understanding of the power struggles at play within the physical presentation of the edition.

Taylor’s editorial program also engages with the reader on another critical level already mentioned as a hot topic of concern for renaissance drama – performance-friendly texts. Each work deals with the issue of performance and inclusion/reference to staging history in various forms – the commentary to A Game at Chesse: A Later Form is described by Taylor as “systematically literary and theatrical.”85 Editorial practices such as the identification of the title, author and acting company on the first page of each play – i.e. “Thomas Middleton, The Revenger’s Tragedy, for the King’s Men” – or the charts of double possibilities for certain characters printed after plays such as A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, or the notes to Your Five Gallants that pay attention to theatrical problems and opportunities provide ample evidence that this edition not only attempts to provide

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84 Taylor, “How To” 2.

85 Taylor, “How To” 1.
annotations for the first time in many cases for these places; it also attempts to present reading texts that also flag staging, the theatrical companies, and general performance issues for the benefit of the reader’s interpretation.

The persistent level of insistence evinced in the editorial program of this collection upon the work’s editorially mediated existence is a rather interesting and unique way of engaging the modern reader upon multiple levels – both encouraging variant levels of textual interpretation, as well as forcing the reader to recognize that this Middleton edition is still very much controlled and shaped by the editorial programs developed by Gary Taylor and his team. While the edition as a whole is quite exciting for its complex and original critical insight into the complete works of Thomas Middleton, this edition is also a particularly fascinating voice in the larger debates amongst editors and textual critics with regard to early modern drama, insisting that it be given its due consideration alongside and separate from editions of Shakespeare. I also think that the unique and widely variant forms of editorial practices encased within this one collection may spur further innovations in future editions of other critical collections, including those possibly of Shakespeare as well.

3.5. Summary

While editorial theories and considerations of Shakespeare’s contemporaries are certainly less abundant in comparison, these examples of major projects devoted to non-Shakespearean drama do reveal a greater interest and rapidly increasing availability of knowledge on the editorial concerns and practices for fellow Renaissance playwrights. These projects also reveal that the editorial practices and concerns are largely the same
across the board, whether one is studying an edition of Shakespeare or awaiting the latest collection of Ben Jonson. Gary Taylor, though, maintains the adamant view that Shakespeare’s contemporaries should not, in fact, be edited using the same guidelines and practices that one would apply to Shakespeare; while this is certainly true to a point on a practical level (obviously one has to treat handwritten manuscripts of Middleton’s plays slightly differently than the Folio collections for Shakespeare when constructing a base text from variants), I do not think there is a large difference to be found, or that should be argued for on a theoretical level. Granted, each playwright had particular topics and themes of interests, particular quirks in style and innovations in staging; however, these playwrights were all creating theatrical works under similar conditions in the same time period – they were even frequently collaborating and sharing with each other! Should we be so quick to try and separate practices in editing Middleton from that of Shakespeare when the two obviously collaborated with each other on various works and most likely picked up shared traits and tactics? I think the better approach would be to continue developing a broader editorial theory encompassing the collaborative nature of these works and continuing to strive for performance-friendly texts that actively engage the reader on multiple levels, illustrating the texts as examples of McGann’s ‘social acts’ of writing, publishing and reception, rather than static ‘definitive’ works.
4.1. Editing in the Digital Age

Perhaps electronic editions and archives offer more viable solutions to these major issues of collaboration, multiple versions available, performance-friendly texts and engagement on the part of the reader. After all, as Grace Ioppolo has asked in her discussions of editing Middleton, “If we demand that our undergraduate students recognize the multiplicity of form and meaning and interpretation of a literary work, that they appreciate the multiple layers and structures, how can we demand that they use only fixed, limited, and copy-text texts? Both textual and literary critics must now re-evaluate and re-define the idea of ‘the text’; it is no longer editorially or theoretically composite or finite, but multiple and ever-revising.”\footnote{Grace Ioppolo, “UnEditing Middleton.” Paper delivered at the Society for Textual Scholarship conference, 1991, 15 – quoted in Lavagnino 68.}

According to Leah Marcus, the electronic medium offers new editorial opportunities precisely because it can foreground evidence of textual instability which might allow readers to discern how non-authorial agents constructed the printed texts from which ‘Shakespeare’ for instance emerged as an early modern dramatic author.\footnote{Marcus 96.} For James O’Donnell, electronic technologies are an exciting new format in which “primary and secondary materials will interact more powerfully
than before as both are online side by side. Scholarly discussions will quote the original by pointing to it, and leave the reader to explore the original context, not just the few words or sentences most apposite. Conversely, texts will acquire structured commentaries not by single hands but organized out of the work of many.”

Others hail the development of digital technology and its widespread availability on the desktop computer as “bringing about not simply a modification or an improvement in the ways in which literary texts are created, preserved, disseminated, and studied, but a revolution, a fundamental paradigm shift.”

Electronic text has also been compared to the revolution of the printing press – “Electronic text processing marks the next major shift in information technology after the development of the printed book. It promises (or threatens) to produce effects on our culture, particularly on our literature, education, criticism, and scholarship, just as radical as those produced by Gutenberg’s movable type.”

Perhaps most striking is Richard Finneran’s proclamation about the coming of the digital age: “We live, in other words, in the twilight of the Age of the Printed Book.”

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91 Finneran ix.
4.2. Overview of Electronic Editorial Theory

While I do not think, as some scholars have suggested, that many children will come to think of the printed book as “a quaint device from another era,” 92 I do agree that the electronic text and digital possibilities require a fundamental shift in the attitudes and theories about the ‘work’ and the representation of literary texts within this new medium. It is indeed a paradigm shift, and one that should be readily considered in the future of editing early modern drama for today’s technologically savvy ‘reader.’ Already in the past twenty years, major issues concerning the creation and implications of electronic editions have been acquiring more prominence in the debates among textual critics - key arguments laying the foundation for this engagement with digital technology have been delineated by scholars such as Jerome McGann, in his influential essay on the issue, “Rationale of Hypertext,” as well as by Peter Shillingsburg, R.G. Siemens, and Kathryn Sutherland, among others. Part of this increased attention among textual critics to the implications of electronic editions has stemmed from the fact that hypermedia technology for the computer has become available at the same time as this fundamental shift in textual theory I described earlier: the shift away from the notion of a single-text “definitive edition” (the Greg-Bowers school) toward the recognition of the multiplicity of works and the importance of the social aspects of a work for which McGann has been a proponent. It should come as no surprise, then, that McGann continues to be a key figure in the ongoing editorial theory debates, especially given the inherent possibilities of the new medium for creating his ‘social’ text.

92 Finneran ix.
In his essay on “The Rationale of Hypertext,” McGann calls into question the viability of all codex-based editions of any orientation, as he sees that using book forms to study other books as problematic in that it limits the possible results. By utilizing electronic editions and hypermedia, McGann argues that this new form is a ‘decentered text’ that can be created to not privilege any one document over another, allowing the reader to create his or her own edition. For McGann, the new editorial goal is to create an archive for all of a work’s public forms, providing easy access to all related materials – this is the driving force and theory behind his multi-media, computer-based archive for all of the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (who was both a verbal and visual artist). In effect, McGann theorizes an edition that passes the ‘author function’ from the editor to the reader, changing the established patterns of power that were previously at play in the codex form.

When looking at this from the perspective of dealing with dramatic works and not merely books, I would add to McGann’s assertions that not only is it problematic to use book forms to study other books, but I think part of the problems inherent in properly representing some of the performance and staging aspects of plays lies in the usage of book forms to study not just the dramatic text, but also the accompanying theatrical Ur-performance. As Peter Shillingsburg has pointed out, there are numerous possibilities available in the electronic format previously limited by the codex format – “in the electronic age we have seen new things we want to do with texts that print scholarly editions don’t let us do—such as having a concordance of the work or, ….being able to

search for all occurrences of some name or word or phrase; such as being able to see reproductions of the covers and title pages and facsimiles of the texts of significant historical editions; such as having textual notes in more than one level of “verbosity” (either with or without accidentals); such as having the explanatory notes with the possibility of several levels of detail and pictures to go with descriptions of buildings, people and places.”94 While there are numerous possibilities and great potential for this new phase in electronic editing, it would be wise to heed the cautions of C.M. Sperberg-McQueen, who reminds us that we still need to meet the intellectual needs of our readers in these editions, and important guidelines and considerations of this medium need to be taken into account.95

4.3. Definition of an Electronic Edition

I would like to delve further into the practical implications electronic editions have for early modern texts with a survey of current projects utilizing this new possibility and the ways in which they have engaged with the current problems inherent in the print editions of early modern drama, but first, I need to briefly outline the general basic constructs and conceptions of these electronic formats in order to provide better points of comparison in my subsequent discussion. Generally, the term ‘electronic edition’ has been used variously to mean electronic archives, scholarly editions, critical editions,


diplomatic editions, documentary editions and more – all centered around electronic representations of primary-source material. When comparing electronic editions, there are two basic models for editions of a scholarly nature: the hypertextual edition (which often encompasses several sub-distinctions between editions and archives that I’ll explain momentarily) and the dynamic text.

In rather simplified terms, R.G. Siemens defines a hypertextual edition as one that “exploits the ability of hypertextual organization to facilitate a reader’s interaction with the apparatus (textual, critical, and otherwise) that traditionally accompanies scholarly editions, with relevant external textual and graphical resources, critical materials, and so forth.”96 Jerome McGann further divides this category into hypertexts and hypermedia programs: “hypertexts allow one to navigate through large masses of documents and to connect these documents, or parts of the documents, in complex ways...[they are called hypermedia programs when they] have the power to include audial and/or visual documents.”97 According to Peter Shillingsburg, however, this sub-distinction does not necessarily need to exist if electronic editions are designed correctly for “multipurpose, multimedia presentations” because they will then break down barriers existing between the concepts of archives, editions, tutorials, etc.98 In any case, this type of electronic edition, according to Michael Suarez, offers a “powerful tool that allows authors and editors to overcome the limitations of the codex’s page sequence by creating ‘webs’ of


98 Shillingsburg 25.
linked documents . . . the hypertext editor can create a seemingly limitless weave of intertextuality.”\textsuperscript{99} Because the edition or ‘archive’ no longer depends upon the coded features and scientific structures of the book as such – the layering of information on the page focusing on the reading of text from top to bottom, with commentary in smaller fonts - and the physical page changes that need to occur to consult the complex appendices or notes relative to a certain portion of the page in question, the electronic edition can constitute text in multiple forms, allowing readers the ability to view text and commentary, or text and text, etc all at the same time, without necessarily privileging either format. As Sutherland aptly puts it, “to invoke a now outmoded set of terms and values, we have in the electronic medium the disassembled ‘texts’ but not the reassembled ‘work’. The clear outlines of the ‘work’ . . . become blurred as its textual and extratextual boundaries expand.”\textsuperscript{100}

In comparison, the older model of electronic edition, known as the dynamic text, puts forward “the idea of an electronic text that, in essence, index[es] and concord[s] itself, allowing the reader to interact with it in a dynamic fashion . . . [through] text-retrieval and analysis software.”\textsuperscript{101} These two electronic edition options have also been described alternately in the following manner:

The form of hypertext editions that is most closely analogous to conventional scholarly editions is a multilayered set of notes to a main text; the reader selects


\textsuperscript{101} Siemens 6.9.
from among hypertext links that have been provided by the editor. The other basic structure for hypertext is an archive of interrelated databanks that the reader consults by inventing links among information, but the reader’s ability to browse within that archive is nonetheless limited by the structure of the data and by the tools provided by the editor or software designer.102

The layered note structure assumes that the reader will begin at the main text and will want to return there. For an example of this structure, see O’Donnell’s hypertext edition of W.B. Yeat’s poem “Lapus Lazuli.”103 Conversely, the archive of interrelated data banks allows the reader to enter from any of its data banks. Overall, hypertext offers the editor of an electronic edition the potential of meeting the needs of a wide range of readers – from someone encountering the work for the first time, to an upper level undergraduate or graduate student ready to explore the text more in depth.

Hypertext editions are able to offer this wide range and fluidity of nature based upon their technical systems and programs. The most common approach advised and taken in these editions appears to be a combination of SGML (Standard Generalized Markup language – this provides a way of encoding electronic texts) and TEI (Text Encoding Initiative – elements suitable for use with scholarly texts in the humanities and provides tag sets as defining ways of encoding source material). Connecting these two elements provides mechanisms for linking “sections of text and….for cross-reference within a document….extended…to provide cross-referencing to their documents and to


103 This hypertext edition has features such as textual history, explanatory notes, audio options, etc., that can be turned on and off to leave the screen blank to just the text if preferred – hypertext links are provided from the explanatory notes.
images." Basiclly, SGML codes text so that the file uploaded by the originating location of the hypertext material (whether on the internet, on a network or on a CD-Rom) is downloaded exactly the same by a user who may be utilizing different software and different hardware systems. The information about the origin, structure and appearance of the original text is preserved and also encoded with the ability to search, display and quote items. The TEI system provides a system of tags for flagging the various problems arising in textual criticism, such as creating a critical apparatus, noting alterations and physical damage to the print source, indicating uncertain readings, and associating annotations with various passages of text.

4.4. Benefits to an Electronic Edition of Renaissance Drama

On a practical and economic level, as well as a theoretical level, there are a number of fruitful applications that should be considered as benefits to creating electronic editions of non-Shakespearean early modern drama. Generally speaking, first, they would provide a step beyond the print texts, offering interactive versions of drama that readily allow readers to compare different versions of texts, read the historical and cultural references to various words and phrases, see the editorial apparatus/history behind the appearance of the dramatic text, and also visualize and think about the play as

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105 Shillingsburg 29.

106 Sperberg-McQueen 51. For an excellent and much more knowledgeable discussion of TEI, refer to Sperberg-McQueen’s article in the section beginning on page 48. See also McGann’s research on SGML and TEI for the creation of the Rossetti Archive to gain a sense of how these two systems interact in the hypertext edition.
a performance through video, images and descriptions of past performances. The ability to compare these different versions and have ready access to multimedia would immediately serve as a great time-saver in comparison to the old method in relation to the print format. As one scholar put it, “integration of editions into a virtual digital library is the electronic equivalent of getting both volumes onto our desk at the same time.”

This would be especially useful for the collections of non-Shakespearean material, as I have already alluded to, since these materials are often much more difficult to find and bring together for comparison, often due to the fact that there are simply not as many materials devoted to dramatists besides Shakespeare.

Second, they would facilitate both an interactive and a collaborative process – depending upon the design scheme, the reader/user of the electronic edition would be collaborating with the editor in making new meaning and constructing a performative reading of the text dependent upon how the reader/user interacted with the resources and options provided by the editor. This would encourage a collaborative, highly-interactive approach on the part of both the reader and editor, incidentally drawing interesting parallels to the approach used by the renaissance playwrights themselves in creating these performances, thus drawing us closer to the mentality of the time period. And, if hypertexts are seen as imbibing the potential for perpetual revisions and reworkings of the text into something much beyond what was originally put down, in the case of renaissance drama, was it not a collaborative form of writing in which various authors worked together to shape and reshape a play, or rewrote pieces based on performances

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107 Stubbs and Toma 21.

108 Sperberg McQueen 58.
went wrong; additionally, is the current field of textual editing not also a constant revision and reworking of these texts, a new performance of the work each time, though many claim to be getting back at the basics and at the authorial intent? Are we not always reworking a text into something new, and does every editor not become a collaborator in the project, along with every producer and every actor who puts his own twist on a line? The electronic medium, then, would be a much more friendly approach towards early modern drama for the modern reader, as “the technology of the printed critical edition . . . has not kept pace with either literary theory or the needs of readers who want texts that reflect the processes of composition and that facilitate interpretative interactions.”¹⁰⁹

Third, in more practical terms for the mainstream public, there are a number of commercial uses and benefits to an electronic edition – electronic systems offer several economic benefits, such as cheap and rapid processing of data, large storage possibilities, easy general access through networks, and the development of a large and complex “edition” that is still easily accessible to users. In terms of the monetary issue,

The economics of publishing printed codices have sustained the often acrid conflict between proponents of two partial editorial ideas, each in itself answering well to practical necessities, but neither in itself fully adequate. That is, the costs of setting, printing, storing, and merchandising books have tended to force editors and their publishers to decide among three practical alternatives: ‘best text’ editions with full or selective variants recorded from other witnesses; parallel text editions (or entire series of ‘best’ texts); or reconstructed critical texts. With any of these alternatives, the …text becomes fixed in print either as an editor’s reconstruction of an author’s putative ‘original’ or as one or more of the ‘least bad’ scribal copies. With each, the exigencies of print deprive the reader, who receives either a privileged editorial critical reconstruction or a privileged scribal

version. The editor of the electronic edition need not privilege either kind of text.110

Specifically speaking in terms of potential for the editing of early modern drama, there are several interesting benefits to be considered. Such editions could be developed to hyperlink between Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights, illustrating interconnections and common threads on a number of aspects of contemporary culture—history, politics, social customs at every level of society, religion, jurisprudence, and more. One can also read and understand a play in this medium not only in the traditional mode promoted by the codex format, but in numerous other ways, limited only by the designs of the online editorial theme. The electronic edition could serve as a bridge between the definitive and the practical edition, appealing to both academics and non-academics, and thus facilitate the ability to recruit more readers to the contemporaries of Shakespeare: “an electronic edition need not be limited to a single audience; much more readily than print editions, electronic editions can serve both general and specialized audiences.”111 By utilizing a medium more and more appealing to the modern age, more readers could be drawn to the appeal of both Shakesperean and non-Shakespearean texts through a new medium.

For the scholar, the electronic medium would also provide a way in which to create a critical edition containing all of the commentary, notes, and general annotations that one could possibly want, without worrying about space constraints on the print page. “As we work with our texts over the years, we will gradually enrich them with layer after

110 Duggan 79.
111 Sperberg-McQueen 58.
layer of annotation. Eventually the electronic representation of the text will become a more adequate representation of the text and our understanding of it than even the most elaborately annotated printed page—because the electronic version can be directed to display or to conceal each layer in turn, so that the visual representation of the text can mirror our changing focus of interest as we study it.”¹¹² The electronic medium could also address the complaints by scholars of the “losses and distortions of textual information in printed critical editions.”¹¹³ For instance, with Middleton manuscripts and early printed editions, the electronic editor could convey changes in hand, script, and color through unmediated high quality color facsimile editions and in machine-searchable form by sophisticated SGML markup in the documentary editions, due again to the vast space available in the electronic archive design. Thus, the electronic medium could also serve not as a departure from the history of the book and the print culture that is such a crucial part of these early modern texts, but also serve to highlight their important print features, as it can “empower the editor to record layout, physical appearance, and printing history—the stuff from which social history is formed.”¹¹⁴

The electronic text might indeed more suitably address the general issue of performance-friendly texts as well. For instance, think about the fact that most early Renaissance editions upon which modern editions are based do not have many stage directions, or production indications. The early print forms of the plays themselves are not performance-friendly, in the sense that they do not give us an idea of the original

¹¹² Sperberg-McQueen 57.
¹¹³ Duggan 80.
¹¹⁴ Lintz 246.
performance intents, or what they were to look like; even if stage directions are included, how are we to know that they were the author’s intention, or if they were taken from a promptbook and include a director’s changes or actor suggestions? Reliance upon just the text for a Renaissance play is not necessarily the ideal state in the first place for getting at the memory of performance, and the hypertext archive’s ability to represent not just text, but image, sound and video could go a long way towards encouraging a view of dramatic works as excellent examples of McGann’s ‘social text.’

On another level of consideration, the marked concern by many Renaissance dramatists for the visual and physical layout of these works could also be readily presented to the reader, even in searchable formats. We can look, for instance, at Ben Jonson and his meticulous concern for how his plays should be interpreted and his complete control over the textual elements, or authors like Middleton who have addresses to the “reader” of the play, as well as numerous title pages with engravings. There is an interest and concern for the textual elements shown on the part of these playwrights, which might argue that the visuals and actual appearance of the text were just as important as the play performance, and so attention has to be duly paid to these elements when editing such individuals. Perhaps an electronic edition, which can highlight to the concern for the textual elements, while also still providing a text that is performance-friendly, could recognize and display this concern for both the visual and the physical appearance on the part of these other dramatists.

Ultimately, as Kathryn Sutherland sums up the advantages of the electronic edition, “electronic technology…gives us access to more—to more texts…, to more
4.5. Disadvantages to an Electronic Edition of Renaissance Drama

One might argue that the time, money and labor involved in producing a scholarly electronic edition “may make the important editorial work of recovering forgotten and overlooked authors and works from earlier periods even more difficult,”¹¹⁶ but I do not think that should preclude editors from exploiting the advantages electronic media has to offer in the wider dissemination of lesser known works. After all, as Gary Taylor muses, “how can you love a work if you don’t know it?”¹¹⁷

Of any concerns expressed, I think one of the most pressing ones to seriously consider as an electronic editor is the potential for overzealousness and overwhelming the reader with hypertextual methods and materials: “there is a real problem of gimmickry – of doing this kind of thing just because it is possible to do it, without sufficient reference to the requirements of the text itself and the proper function of explanatory annotation. Such material is not intended to be a substitute for the text, but an enlightenment of it for readers who do not have the resources…”¹¹⁸ In other words, there is the potential that an editor will just jump into hypertextual projects because the technology is available, not

¹¹⁵ Sutherland 8.
¹¹⁷ Taylor, “Renaissance” 133.
¹¹⁸ Gatrell 192.
because the editor has a true interest in the potential possibilities latent in this media for bringing new understanding to the reader. Additionally, editors should be undertaking electronic projects with sufficient knowledge of the issues surrounding electronic editing and they should be very transparent about the guidelines and parameters they will follow in developing their electronic edition.

While the interesting possibilities and design behind the hypertext and the dynamic text editions may sound useful in theory, their usability and potential problem-solving ability for editing the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is another question entirely. To answer whether or not this system is even practical as a suggested method for future editorial models and for resolving some of the current issues with multiple versions, performance and collaboration, I have made a brief survey of some of the notable electronic editions currently available for Shakespeare, as well as a survey of the majority of electronic editions available or in process for his fellow playwrights, both to determine their current status in the realm of electronic editing, and to see if there are any potential possibilities that are currently being under-utilized.

4.6. Shakespeare Digitized

As has been the case with previous editorial theories and trends, Shakespeare’s work still serves as the litmus test for the current electronic editing debate, reflecting the latest movement in editorial theory towards electronic media and the World Wide Web. Now one can find numerous electronic editions of Shakespeare on CD-Rom, such as the WordCruncher Bookshelf Shakespeare and William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Electronic Edition. Many electronic archives containing editions of Shakespeare’s text
along with selected stage history, biographical information, and even pictures and film clips have also added to the wealth of technology available at the click of a mouse. Such archives include MIT’s *Hamlet on the Ramparts* (the only part of their *Shakespeare Electronic Archive* available to the public) and the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* project.

How well, however, do these new electronic representations of Shakespeare’s work adequately reflect the theoretical approaches that critics like McGann advocate, and what impact have they had on codex representations and the larger theoretical debates in Renaissance editing? Does Shakespeare’s timelessness transfer to digital technology, or is he a man of the print age? Or have these new electronic editions in fact debunked Ben Jonson’s well known statement about the bard altogether, revealing limitations inherent in all editions of Shakespeare, whether they are electronic or print? These questions are not easily answered and I do not pretend to offer the final solutions; however, by examining both the various underlying theoretical concepts informing these different electronic archives and the adequacy of their engagement with current problems plaguing Shakespearean and the larger field of Renaissance dramatic text editing, I hope to provide some ways in which these electronic archives offer potential solutions to problems inherent in the print editing of Renaissance drama, as well as the new problems they raise for both the editor and reader of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Drawing from the results of my survey on electronic editions currently available for Shakespeare, I also plan to evaluate the merits and advantages that these electronic archives offer to readers according to larger theoretical conceptions of electronic media from critics like Jerome McGann, and I will move the argument towards a consideration ways in which hypertext editions could be utilized not only to create a different type of active reading for these
texts, but also to suggest unique ways in which Shakespeare and his contemporaries could be represented together, highlighting general similarities with regard to performance, but even more promisingly with the collaborative nature of Renaissance playwrighting.

Previously, I had outlined the excitement expressed by numerous scholars, including Leah Marcus, James O’Donnell, and Jerome McGann, in the revolutionary opportunities and paradigm shifts potentially inherent within the electronic medium. In surveying the different types of electronic editions and archives available for scholars, however, I do not think that Shakespearean editors have caught this same sense of excitement and possibility inherent in the new technology. While there is certainly an abundance of facsimile editions to be found on the web, Shakespeare’s works still have only a handful of hypertextual treatments and constructed archives.

Before I elaborate any further on the results of my foray into the available electronic Shakespeare media, a few prefatory remarks about the scope and intentions of this survey are necessary. First, I provide only a cursory treatment of the available CD-Rom editions and electronic facsimile editions, instead saving lengthier discussion for the hypertext examples of electronic editions. In my survey of individual hypertext editions, I limited my treatment to available editions that offered some embedded hyperlinks and attempts to utilize advantages of electronic technology (though this was a surprisingly weak point in all of the editions), or that treated texts such as *King Lear* and *Hamlet* (which offer particularly promising possibilities for electronic editions to engage with the major issues currently debated in Shakespearean editing). Finally, in surveying the archives available, I only looked at the few examples which contained substantial hypermedia resources.
utilized in conjunction with critical editions of the plays. Internet databases which only
provided information and links for Shakespeare, while helpful, did not suit the editorial
parameters of my current discussion and did not lend themselves to the theoretical
conceptions of archives proposed by textual critics like McGann. My survey contains
mainly examples of the hypertextual edition, since it is the more recent and (to my mind
and argued by many others) the dominant approach for future electronic editing. For
further clarity, I have organized the different electronic Shakespeare editions into editions
on CD-Rom, online facsimiles, individual hypertext editions of plays, and hypermedia
archives.

One of the first ways in which Shakespeare’s works were put into an electronic
format were CD-Rom programs. In 1990, the three leading electronic editions were the
*Word Cruncher Bookshelf Shakespeare, William Shakespeare: The Complete Works,*
*Electronic Edition*, and the Oxford Text Archive of early quarto and First Folio
editions.\(^{119}\) Since then, A.R. Braunmuller’s edition of *Macbeth, the Complete Moby[tm]†*
Shakespeare, the *Arden Shakespeare CD-Rom*, and the *Shakespeare Suite* (available from
the Internet Shakespeare Editions Project) have been added to the major list. The
*WordCruncher*, which combines an electronic text of the 1974 *Riverside Shakespeare*
edited by G. Blakemore Evans with the WordCrunch text analysis software, exemplifies
the dynamic text model.\(^{120}\) The *Complete Works* is very similar, reproducing the 1986
modern-spelling edition produced under the general editorship of Stanley Wells and Gary

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\(^{119}\) Siemens 6.7.

\(^{120}\) Siemens 6.9.
Taylor.\textsuperscript{121} The \textit{MacBeth} and \textit{Suite}, on the other hand, are good examples of hypertextual editions. The \textit{MacBeth}, for instance, provides the text, its collation, commentary, annotation, a concordance, Royal Shakespeare company audio performance, video clips from three film performances (Polanski, Welles, and Kurosawa) and several critical essays.\textsuperscript{122} The \textit{Arden} appears to attempt a union of the dynamic and hypertextual edition.\textsuperscript{123}

Facsimile editions of Shakespeare have also seen an explosion in electronic format. EEBO, or \textit{Early English Books Online},\textsuperscript{124} and \textit{Editions and Adaptations of Shakespeare (1591-1911)}\textsuperscript{125} are perhaps the most prominent examples. EEBO has provided keyboarded editions of the entire contents of the \textit{Short Title Catalogue}, thus providing images of numerous Shakespeare quartos and folios, as well as transcriptions of the texts. \textit{Editions} contains digital images of eleven major editions from the First Folio to the Cambridge edition of 1836, twenty-four separate contemporary printings of individual plays, selected apocrypha and related works, and more than one hundred adaptations, sequels and burlesques from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Both collections are examples of dynamic texts. They also offer a good model for the type of approach Randall McLeod believes should be taken in editing, or ‘un-editing,’

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Siemens 6.4.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Siemens 6.19.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Siemens 6.19.
\end{itemize}
Shakespeare because they lack the editorial encrustation which McLeod feels muddies the text, and they allow the reader a clearer access to a more originary, historical form of the work. They also do not posit any one version as more ‘definitive’ than another. On the negative side, such electronic models also illustrate the potential dangers of an ‘un-edited’ text because they fail to provide the readers with a background in the problematic nature of certain versions and often place an unqualified reader in the position of determining the most authoritative text for their needs.

In opposition to this complete lack of an authorial version and of accompanying editorial apparatus are several individual hypertextual editions available for Shakespeare’s plays. The editions I surveyed treated Richard III, Hamlet, King Lear, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The hypertext Richard,126 prepared by Charles Ross, was the least satisfying example, making no attempts within the edition itself to address any performative or authorial version issues (though one can find references to films and performances on the larger Richard III Society website). It is largely a glorified print edition with hyperlinks to definitions and historical information. The Enfolded Hamlet,127 edited by Bernice Kliman, is a unique hypertext rendering both the Second Quarto and First Folio versions of Hamlet in one searchable HTML document. The reader can choose to explore either the quarto, the folio, or a version ‘enfolding’ the two texts together (differentiating the two variant versions within by different colors of font-


127 Bernice W. Kliman, ed., The Enfolded Hamlet, 2 Jan. 2008 <http://www.globallanguage.com/enfolded.intro.html>. Kliman also has a newer version available – Hamlet Works – but I was not able to include this in my current survey.
thus allowing the reader to compare the two versions on one screen, if somewhat awkwardly.) Kliman states that she created this ‘enfolded’ text because she was tired of the scholarly view that the Folio was a text corrupted by theatrical experience and should not be the basis of a scholarly edition. She wanted to expose readers to the realities of more than just the Second Quarto; however, Kliman notably ignores the other quartos available for the play, which still reveals a privileging of certain texts as the ‘best’ texts for comparison. Her edition provides no textual notations or commentary, thereby forcing the reader to make the connections with the problematic versions. Her hypertext also provides no treatment of the performative nature of the work, and it lacks the potentially interesting insights which performances that choose to privilege the quarto over the folio, or vice versa, might offer.

The hypertext King Lear edition also addressed the problems of multiple versions within its design, though in a different manner. Professor Larry Brown’s edition provides a concerted effort to discuss the different texts of Lear and his method of privileging the Folio reading in his work, while noting interesting readings from the quarto. He provides links on tragedy and commentary for the play, but I found no evidence proving his claim that he included stage history in his notes. Once again, this electronic edition appeared another glorified print edition with hyperlink notes.

Of all the individual hypertext editions I surveyed, the University of Virginia’s

A Midsummer Night’s Dream\textsuperscript{129} contained some of the most promising qualities. Apparently based on the 1866 Globe edition edited by George William Clark and William Aldis Wright, this edition provided the reader with the ability to have more than one window open in the browser screen, allowing the reader to compare the text with commentary side by side. The text appears on the left-hand side with embedded links that take the reader to commentary on certain words, ways in which they are used, how many times they appear in the play and arguments regarding their usage. This particular annotation of the text was the most comprehensive of the hypertext editions. The edition also provides different avenues for the reader to enter the text through the commentary, such as through thematic options (love, gender, etc.) and history of staging that has pertinent examples in the play. While some of these thematic pathways begin to address the issue of performance, the edition lacks any images, audio or film clips (or modern production examples textually described) which at the very least might alert the reader to the work as a dramatic play.

The two hypermedia archives of Shakespeare that I explored (the Internet Shakespeare Editions and the MIT Shakespeare Electronic Archive) promised the most interesting engagement with his work, addressing both the problem of multiple versions and the performance aspect. Unfortunately, the MIT Shakespeare archive is currently available only in an abbreviated or unfinished state, hindering an examination of its full treatment of hypertextual possibilities; however, both at least present a fair amount of material to be analyzed, and the Internet Shakespeare Editions’ vast treatment of

\textsuperscript{129} Electronic Text Center, U of Virginia Library, ed., A Midsummer Night’s Dream, University of Bergan, 2 Jan 2008 <http://cmc.uib.no/dream/frames/main.html>.
materials is quite impressive. While just as ambitious in scope as the MIT archive, the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* project\(^{130}\) is not necessarily as compelling in the design of the individual texts – the overall scope of the project, however, attempts to provide a lot of information easily accessible at the click of a mouse.\(^{131}\) In fact, the archive was organized around the overarching idea of a library building, with the various ‘rooms’ housing different components of information. According to the site’s mission statement, the archive’s purpose is:

> To inspire a love of Shakespeare’s works [by] creat[ing] and publish[ing] works for the student, scholar, actor and general reader in a form native to the medium of the Internet: scholarly, fully annotated texts of Shakespeare’s plays, multimedia explorations of the context of Shakespeare’s life and works, and records of his plays in performance.\(^{132}\)

The site itself is then divided into four major components: the Foyer, the Library, the Theater, and the Annex. The Foyer provides all the materials that deal with the overall structure of the editions, such as the editorial board, its general aims, and extracts from the editorial guidelines. From this, we know that its general aim is to capitalize on hypertext capabilities by developing an archive of digitized images, sound and video as a resource for performance criticism (which quite aptly summarizes the definitions for a hypertext edition provided by Siemens and McGann). It also provides the site’s intention


\(^{131}\) The site actually used to begin with a very clever gimmick in which the welcome page contained a depiction of Hamlet contemplating a mouse and computer; it also provided the viewer with the opportunity to click or not to click and enter the site. Now, however, with the launch of the full site, we still have an image hanging on a tapestry of Hamlet contemplating the mouse and computer, but the interesting invitation to the viewer has been removed.

\(^{132}\) Best.
to give the browser choice of more than one modern text (which would be a particularly fruitful approach with plays such as *King Lear*) and to allow the browser the capability to compare these modern texts with a traditional Greg-Bowers type of conflated text, as well as with transcriptions of the Quarto and Folio. The Library is the intended house for these materials, allowing the browser to pluck any version they choose from the virtual shelves. Currently, the collection consists of old spelling transcriptions, graphic images of the First Folio, and modern text versions for at least a dozen of Shakespeare’s plays, with more forthcoming. While the site does not allow the reader to view the graphic images in contiguous space with the transcription, one can compare the modern text version of the play in a separately opened window with the folio transcription. This section will also eventually include accompanying theatrical performance archives for the plays. The Theater, however, is designated as the primary space in which a database of performance records, both historical collections and current productions, provide the reader with the ability to search among multiple productions for specific scenes, directors, and more. Currently, the site is working out issues with streaming of videos and various copyright issues with popular films and similar materials, but there are already a large number of performances referenced and materials provided in this intriguing ‘room’ of the site. The last component, the Annex, houses less formal materials such as drafts of transcriptions, discussions, and links to helpful internet resources. At the present time, it offers the ability to do word searches among the transcribed files of the First Folio and some of the Third Folio for instance. As this site continues to realize its goals for the presentation of Shakespeare’s works, this archive will provide a large database allowing the reader to create a complex understanding of
Shakespeare’s works, not just as a ‘single’ bound edition, but as the socialized text that scholars such as McGann envision – one in which the reader sees the different versions of the work as well as its performative nature on the stage.

The MIT Shakespeare Electronic Archive is also a brilliant exemplar for the ways in which hypertext archives can provide the reader with a multidimensional, interactive experience of the text. Unfortunately, only the section Hamlet on the Ramparts is open to the general public, but even this portion from the larger archive provides a fascinating wealth of creative possibilities. According to the general mission statement of the archive, the intent is to “create exemplary digital collections in all media[,]…design systems of access in which all materials are linked to the lines of text to which they are relevant and which are easily used at all levels[,]…and deliver a variety of archival resources to users.” When readers enter the site, they are immediately presented with a browser screen divided into multiple sections or windows. Throughout these different windows, readers can explore a wealth of information devoted entirely to Hamlet’s first encounter with the ghost of his father. They can choose to explore lesson plans, tutorials, early editions of the scene, adaptations and promptbooks, art, film, electronic texts, and the most fascinating part, the Reading Room. If one could imagine an ideal hypertext format in which to present Shakespeare, this Reading Room would certainly fit the bill. Still divided into the three different sections, the reader can happily compare simultaneously any one of the three electronic texts of major modern editions provided (the Arden, the Folger, and the Oxford) with facsimile images of the first three printed

editions of the play (the First Folio, the First Quarto, and the Second Quarto), as well as with the extensive collection of artwork and RSC production stills or with video sequences from three film versions (the Forbes-Robertson film of 1913, the Ragnar Lyth film of 1984, and the filmed record of the Richard Burton-John Gielgud production of 1964). In addition, the modern text editions provide embedded hyperlinks for certain problematic words and textual cruces. The permutations of comparison available for even this short exemplary scene could happily occupy any reader for numerous hours! Readers can also gain a better understanding of how to utilize these different resources by exploring the guides to the basic terms and issues involved with the Folio text, textual terminology, and film lexicon. My only quibble with these guides is that no lexicon for understanding the visual art is provided (which might show a slight bias towards the numerous textual and film versions). Overall, not only does this site more than adequately provide the reader with the multiple versions we have as evidence for Shakespeare’s Hamlet, but it provides numerous resources for performance through the video clips, as well as through photographs from stage productions. This particular usage of the electronic medium creates a vibrant, active, and fun interaction with Shakespeare’s texts, rather than a static reading. Viewing Shakespeare on this site is not merely a ‘reading’ but a performative act in itself as the user/viewer creates unique interpretations from the various combinations of text, image and critical apparatus.
4.6.1. Summary Observations

In my survey of the different electronic editions of Shakespeare, I questioned at first whether or not an electronic archive of the Bard could ever be constructed that would contain the ultimate Ur-Shakesepeare, that would represent Shakespeare in his entirety. According to McGann, “Shakespeare . . . undergo[es] repeated re-editing because we respond to the inadequacies and limits of previous editions. But electronic texts have a special virtue that paper-based texts do not have: They can be designed for complex interactive transformations.”

I think that our continued focus on Shakespeare through electronic media, while providing another exciting realm for editing his work, neglects the other possibilities inherent in the digital realm for Shakespeare – hyperlinks and interconnections with the texts of his fellow playwrights. Furthermore, I do worry that the scope of some of these archives may indeed prove a little too ambitious - if the MIT Shakespeare were expanded to include Shakespeare’s canon in its entirety, just image the daunting labyrinth it would pose to both editor and reader! The Internet Shakespeare Editions, while containing a wealth of information already, may be able to avoid completely losing the reader due to the partitioned ‘spaces’ which have been created to house the various materials. While I think electronic media have the capacity to better highlight the performative nature and problems with finding the ‘ideal’ text of Shakespeare, perhaps the vast quantities of information that would make a potential electronic editor squeak and hide (as might be the case with the Internet Shakespeare Editions if it ever reaches its full potential for performance material) might prompt us to

\[\text{\textsuperscript{134} McGann 81.}\]
question whether we have reached that ‘end in editing’ which Gary Taylor
prophesied.\textsuperscript{135} Of course, upon consideration the answer is certainly no, given the
continued demand for editions in print and electronic form, as well as the ever expanding
treatments on the web (including one potentially in the future by Gary Taylor himself!).

4.7. Shakespeare’s Contemporaries Digitized

Just as is the case with print editions of Renaissance drama, Shakespeare certainly
has a larger representation already in the realm of electronic editions and hypermedia
archives in comparison to his contemporaries (as to be expected); however, there are a
surprising number of projects available, or in the draft phase, if we turn to an examination
of his contemporaries as a whole. Even in my survey limited to hypertext editions
available on the World Wide Web (I did not include any CD-Roms in this portion of my
research and there are a number of electronic text and facsimile editions available, such
as GoogleBooks, Project Gutenberg and Renascence Editions which do not make notable
use of hypertext tools), I was happily surprised to find several promising electronic
editions and archives for playwrights including Beaumont & Fletcher – the Internet
Beaumont and Fletcher Editions, Marlowe – the Perseus Project’s Complete Works of
Christopher Marlowe, Jonson – the Luminarium Editions, as well as a planned for
electronic edition to complete the print Cambridge Jonson, and Middleton – both a series
of editions created by Chris Cleary, as well as potential expansion of the already useful
online Oxford Middleton site (a companion piece to the recently released print Oxford

\textsuperscript{135} Taylor, “Renaissance”.

87
Middleton), and finally an exciting multi-author archive – the Digital Renaissance Editions, still in the fledgeling stages but modeling itself on the impressive Internet Shakespeare Editions Project.

4.7.1. Beaumont & Fletcher

The Internet Beaumont and Fletcher Editions, produced by the Twilight Pictures Group and supported by the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland, Australia, states that the site “aims to provide texts of all the plays that can be attributed to the Beaumont and Fletcher canon in a format that best suits and exploits the electronic medium, along with supporting materials, elaborate background information, and textual apparatus for both the ordinary and the academic reader.” In the ‘General Introduction to the Site’, the site editors further elaborate on this intention, explaining that these editions are in fact geared with the non-scholarly reader in mind and were created to remedy the lack of non-scholarly friendly editions put forth in the past century. The Waller edition from the early portion of the twentieth century (1905-12) and of course the Bowers edition (1966 – 89) that arose out of the Golden Age of Editing are appropriately mentioned, with the caveat that these large critical editions of Beaumont & Fletcher were not exactly designed for the ordinary reading public. This focus on the lay-reader of Renaissance drama makes this hypertext archive a potentially interesting point of comparison to many of the Shakespeare electronic editions (as well as with many of his fellow playwrights) since it is one of the

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very few not obviously geared towards a scholarly critical reader. It is also interesting to
note that this site has had over 15,000 visitors since its creation (whether these are indeed
lay readers or mostly scholarly individuals, of course, remains a question).

Unlike *Hamlet on the Ramparts* or the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, this
particular hypertext archive has no clever gimmicks or design that would flirt with the
overall structure and presentation to the viewer/user. Instead, it is like the majority of the
Shakespeare individual hypertext editions – designed largely in the format of a basic
website with various page links to the site contents. Even though not as flashy as the two
Shakespeare hypermedia archives, the Beaumont & Fletcher Editions still offers readers a
number of ways to enter and explore the site; as the home page explains, readers can
certainly explore the site’s plays alphabetically or chronologically, or by particular
groupings based upon the print history of the plays. In the menu provided on the left-
hand side of the website, Fletcher is also interestingly separated out for readers – though
the site claims to treat both Beaumont and Fletcher, the site editor does note on the
homepage that:

considering the size of the canon of plays that can be attributed to John Fletcher
and his collaborators, it is arguable that they are the most ignored of all early
seventeenth century English drama, despite the fact that in their own century their
plays were often as popular as those by Shakespeare and Jonson. To this day no
complete and inexpensive collection of their works exists, either in print or on the
Internet. It is the hope of editors and contributors to this site to redress this
imbalance by offering searchable editions of the plays in the Beaumont and
Fletcher canon and much more.\(^{137}\)

I would speculate that, perhaps unintentially (though given the above statement I
certainly think one could argue the opposite), the electronic editor has already imposed an

\(^{137}\) Whitehead, “Homepage.”
interpretation upon any user/reader of the hypermedia archive by separating out and privileging information on Fletcher over Beaumont – this would be of interest to any scholarly visitor to the site, but potentially limiting the lay reader’s appreciation for Fletcher’s fellow represented playwright, Beaumont, as no additional information exists for him on the site.

The versions of the plays available in the archive are derived from three different groups: plays from the First Folio in 1647, plays from the Second Folio of 1679, and mostly quarto editions available outside of the two folios (there is also a collection of non-dramatic poetry). Currently, the only electronic editions available for readers are: *Bonduca, Henry VIII, or All is True, The Maid’s Tragedy, Mask of the Inner Temple and Grays Inn, Philaster: or Love Lies a Bleeding, Salmacius and Hermaphrodites, The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Woman’s Prize*. These editions also vary in their manner of viewing presentation: *Bonduca* has only one version available in a text-based format that, as noted by the editor, is not a finalized edition and is also lacking in any interesting hypertextual links or use of hypermedia. *The Maid’s Tragedy and Philaster* have multiple formats available – in particular, *The Maid’s Tragedy* has a nicely transcribed and visually pleasing reproduction based upon the copy of the play reproduced in the Early English Books series, along with some basic use of hypertext links scattered throughout the text; it also has several versions comparing the first and second quarto versions of the play, with one of these formats based directly upon Bernice Kliman’s *Enfolded Hamlet*, which was discussed earlier. *Henry VII, Mask, Salmacius, The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Woman’s Prize* have the most detailed notes on versions and text formats available, along with notations on the editorial choices for the presentation of these texts.
While very ambitious in scope, there appear to be several problems inherent in this design, especially if the site does indeed, as it claims, intend to appeal to the ordinary reader. First, there is no consistency throughout the various presentations and forms available for each of the plays available thus far – while it is understandable that creating each text in multiple formats takes times, especially when one is undertaking this project with multiple plays, each version should maintain some type of consistent editorial structure. While five of these plays have some editorial explanations prefacing the hypertext links to the texts, the others only have minor “Notes upon the Text” and the reader is often left to his or her own devices without any accompanying editorial apparatus or helpful commentary.

The visual presentation of several of these plays is also extremely disappointing, given the hypertextual possibilities of the medium used: some plays are presented in merely a transcribed text format, some in a facsimile reproduction type of presentation, and others with only one or two minor hypertext links (with no easy way to return to the point at which the reader left off in the actual text). The enfolded text does not even provide a link back to the rest of the hypermedia archive, unless one uses the browser back-button! These problems might prove potentially fatal for the site’s ability to appeal to an ordinary reader, who may become frustrated with the widely disparate availability of formats, the lack of consistency within each format, the frequent inability to easily return to one’s previous point of reading without resorting to the ugly ‘back-button’, and the largely missing hypertextual links to interesting notes, points of explanation for the lay reader, and any discussion of performance or staging for these plays. Even for the eager graduate student interested in reading these editions for her research, this archive
proves rather frustrating and cumbersome, especially given the very great potential for the site’s material. It is also unclear if these issues will be resolved with this hypermedia archive for Beaumont and Fletcher, as the site has not been updated since 2002.

4.7.2. Marlowe

_The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe: An Electronic Edition_, edited by Hilary Binda, is one of a number of works supported by the Perseus Project through Tufts University. Generally, the Perseus Project is a self-defined “evolving digital library, engineering interactions through time, space, and language. Our primary goal is to bring a wide range of source materials to as large an audience as possible. We anticipate that greater accessibility to the sources for the study of the humanities will strengthen the quality of questions, lead to new avenues of research, and connect more people through the connection of ideas.” The Perseus Library actually contains a wide range of primary and secondary source material for Greek, Roman, and English Renaissance works (including a large number of editions for Shakespeare). Binda’s _Christopher Marlowe Edition_, however, is the only other hypermedia archive version of Renaissance drama currently available through this digital site. The overall set-up of the hypermedia archive itself is very basic in appearance (at first glance, even more so than the _Beaumont and Fletcher_ edition already discussed). The main homepage has only


three possibilities – an Introduction Section, a Direct Link to the Texts’ Table of Contents page, or a link to contact the editor. According to the Introduction, Binda’s goal is to provide “an edition of Marlowe's works that begins to transcend the limits of print publication and exploit the flexibility of an electronic medium.”

While very basic in the overall archive appearance, the introduction to the archive provides a number of very useful hypertext features for the reader: a brief overview, “Viewing the Electronic Page,” provides a nice, concise summary for the reader in order to understand the various editorial elements and apparatus used (including color coding regular text versus stage directions and textual variations), as well as the hypertext linking system and an explanation for multiple versions that are available; any time a reader follows a hyperlink throughout the introduction material, further hyperlinks are provided to quickly return to the beginning of the introduction; and finally, Binda also provides a brief explanation regarding the program structure behind the site (utilizing standard SGML and TEI encoding guidelines). For any reader uneasy or unfamiliar with the hypertext format, this archive’s introduction provides a nice preface to help the reader better utilize and understand the unique features of the electronic edition.

The individual play texts themselves are also quite interesting, using several comparison features available through hypertext to demonstrate differences between multiple versions available for the plays. Most of the plays are supposed to be available for viewing in multiple versions (ranging from two to as many as twenty versions depending upon the particular play) according to Binda:

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140 Binda, Introduction page.
each of the texts attributed to Marlowe and collected in our site (with the exception of the more complex *Doctor Faustus*) is maintained as a single file, but each text's variants, accidental and emendations have been tagged according to the particular subset of SGML tags identified and standardized for texts by the guidelines known as the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) -- to the extent that these accommodate such a complex encoding scheme. As a result of this standardized tagging, a reader may select from a pop-up menu whichever version of the text he or she wants to read. For instance, one might choose the 1594 Octavo of *Edward the Second* or any of the later historical collations, such as Dodsley's 1744 edition. The selected version is then created on the fly, the product of a series of Tcl/Tk program executions. Each version displays textual variants in a different color with a link to the right that identifies and provides access to the versions that differ from the selected text.141

Each time, however, that I attempted to access the texts on the website and attempted to find multiple versions or access additional hypertext links on the left hand side of the play text, I encountered severe difficulties in getting pages to load correctly, or to load at all – this could either be attributed to this particular user, or it could potentially indicate a larger problem in the design of the site if it is not compatible with certain web-browsers, thus losing the potential richness of information for those individuals who do not have the right software or programs. No such program or software issues were noted in the introductory material; the Perseus Database at large, however, did appear to be undergoing changes, suggesting that there was a larger problem inherent in the back-end of the hypermedia archive.

Looking more closely at just *Dr. Faustus*, however, we can certainly see some of the great features in this archive that do work in spite of user and/or archive database errors. This play is a particularly interesting case to note in Marlowe’s repertoire for

editorial issues similar to those faced and dealt with by editors of *King Lear*. *Dr. Faustus* presents complex textual and editorial issues due to the existence of multiple versions for this play and their historical editorial usage – the 1604 A-text and the 1616 B-text.\(^{142}\)

Binda succinctly summarizes this complex editorial history as follows:

> In short, the play's earliest editors, Dilke in 1814 and Oxberry in 1818, for instance, use the longer and more comic and theatrical B-text as their copy text. Nineteenth and early twentieth century editors, however, prefer the A-text because it does not appear to contain the B-text's Birde-Rowley additions and revisions. The A-text is thus selected on the basis of its being less adulterated. As Bevington and Rasmussen further delineate this editorial history, the mid-twentieth century witnesses a return to favor of the B-Text, taken to be the original text rather than a poor memorial reconstruction, as was believed to be the case of the A-text. Most recently, and largely due to the tenacious scholarly sleuthing of Eric Rasmussen, the repressed A-text has returned to favor again. This time, no longer as a memorial reconstruction but as an authorial manuscript with scenes interleaved from two dramatists.\(^{143}\)

Because Binda, like Bevington and Rasmussen, believes that critics, editors, and readers should be keenly aware of the differences between these two texts, the electronic format for her play edition has been set up to allow a reader to view either the original spelling version or the modernized spelling, or (even more exciting) to view both texts simultaneously with differences color-coded for easy recognition on the part of the reader – allowing for, as Binda acknowledges, Leah Marcus’s ‘un-editing’ approach by not debasing one text in favor of the other.\(^{144}\) The reader can also quickly jump to any point in the text through several access points, including a progress bar included towards the

\(^{142}\) Binda, “Hell” 8.12. For more information on the textual history of this play’s multiple versions, see David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen’s critical introduction to Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, eds., The Revels Plays (Manchester and NY: Manchester UP, 1993).

\(^{143}\) Binda, “Hell” 8.12.

\(^{144}\) Binda, “Hell” 8.13.
top of the viewing screen. Notes on spelling modernizations and particular Latin word usages are available not merely in hyperlink form – when one clicks on highlighted text, such as the Latin word “probo” in the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2, a completely different little window pops up on the screen (while still allowing you to see the main text window) offering interesting tidbits on the meaning and origins of the word, as well as search functions for the frequency of its use in the text of other authors in the Perseus Database. According to Binda, the Marlowe archive “points to the capacity of the electronic text to expand textual boundaries, in a sense, through a redefinition of textuality as inclusive of a set of links between texts.”

While this hypermedia archive (at least in the case of Dr. Faustus) presents interesting possibilities for hypertext’s capabilities to uniquely demonstrate and present the issues of multi-versions in potentially a more unique format than even that of Michael Warren’s King Lear discussed earlier (getting to textual cruxes and physical representations of the text not as easily presented in the codex format) - this archive still lacks any critical apparatus or information that would deal make this a performance-friendly text for the reader, instead concentrating the unique hypertext capabilities solely on the intricacies of spelling and Latin and Greek word usage. While the interest in the ancient language search capabilities and learning features is certainly understandable given the larger goal of the Perseus website and Binda’s own concentration on issues of language and redefinitions of textuality at hand in theoretical discussion of the hypertext medium, the lack of attention paid to staging history, performance friendly notes on

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145 Binda, “Hell” 8.15.
stagings, stage directions or the lack thereof, and similar commentary certainly illustrates an editorial style and approach that does not take into account one of the other ‘hot topics’ for Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean Renaissance editors alike - performance-friendly texts and editing styles. This also illustrates an area in which this hypertext archive could become much more of a hypermedia archive, encouraging a more engaged type of critical reading on the part of the user; the current concern for spelling modernizations and different versions of the text, while interesting, still provide a heavy editorial interpretation upon the text for the user/reader. On the other hand, Binda might very well argue that the inclusion of such additional material would take away from her intentions to reveal the textual cruxes and issues at hand when dealing with multiple versions of a Renaissance play – a goal that she does meet quite nicely through this electronic edition.

4.7.3.Cleary’s Thomas Middleton

Inspired by his desire to have a readily accessible resource of edited texts for Thomas Middleton, Chris Cleary has collected and edited a number of electronic editions from Middleton’s canon – plays currently available include *The Phoenix, A Trick to Catch the Old One, The Puritan, The Revenger’s Tragedy, Your Five Gallants*, and several more.¹⁴⁶ Each text is accompanied by a brief notation on the publication history, a few general comments on the themes within the play, and subsequent explanatory notes

that are hypertextually linked through the play text. The texts themselves are merely electronic transcriptions, with one or two pictures to the right of the main text. The notes themselves are mainly explanations of particular terms, coins of phrase and connections to various other Renaissance plays (though when one clicks on any hyperlinks to other Middleton plays, you are not taken directly to the reference text, but rather the beginning of the next play. This involves the need to backpeddle to the previous reference in order to obtain the right reference to scroll through the new play – a rather inefficient usage of hypertext tools).

Cleary only provides a brief statement with regard to his editorial practices, emphasizing the fact that the plays are set up with the intent to be “enjoyed.” While there are obviously significant choices being made in each text to present an edited, modernized version, these choices are not flagged in any way to the reader, leaving one with the mistaken impression that the reader is freely consulting a text without many editorial encrustations. The readers of these texts are left also largely to their own devices, which may or may not be helpful depending on the knowledge of the individual reader regarding the time period and the lacking reasons for the marked divisions amongst Middleton’s work into sole authorship, collaboration and questionable attribution. It would also have been helpful if versions of different texts were more readily viewable side by side, as well as if one could compare cross-references between various plays in the canon through two different screens readily open and available. Finally, I am not surprised to see that an edited edition is not yet available for *A Game at Chess*, given that there are eight versions available for collation. While it is nice to have some texts of Middleton readily available and viewable online, even accessing the
website itself without some significant searching is not always easy. For an enthusiast of Thomas Middleton, this electronic collection of hypertext editions falls short of expectations.

4.7.4. Digital Companions to *Cambridge Jonson* and *Oxford Middleton*

Both the impressive *Oxford Thomas Middleton* Project and the *New Cambridge Ben Jonson* collection are expected to have corresponding digital editions developed and added to the current websites/projects available in the near future.147 While the *Oxford Middleton* site itself does not distinctly outline a program for developing an online edition (dynamic or hypertextual) based upon the already completed print version, John Lavagnino, who is one of the main editors for the project, did indeed indicate at least potential consideration of such a project in an early essay in a collection on hypertextual editions and electronic editing:

> One form of our edition will be an electronic version; but it will not follow the usual approach of electronic editions today. Most electronic editions are presented as archives of unedited documents, very often with digital images of those documents as well as transcriptions; but our electronic edition of Middleton will be an electronic version of a critically edited and modernized text, together with editorial and explanatory apparatus. It is our judgment that an edition that brings together all the works now acknowledged as Middleton’s, and makes them accessible to the broadest possible audience, is more valuable today than an original-spelling edition or an archive of original materials would be. Our primary interest is to give a comprehensive account of Middleton’s work as a

writer, incorporating the developments of scholarship since the last collected
edition of his work, in 1885; and unedited texts do that poorly in this case.\textsuperscript{148}

Based upon Lavagnino’s comments, it would appear that a potential electronic
edition would likely be formed from already existing ‘base texts’ in the print edition,
obviously necessitating electronic transcription. Whether or not these digital editions
would include any extensive hypertext program, however, is unclear. Lavagnino, though,
clearly points out the time and money involved in such a serious undertaking, often
overlooked by scholars and zealous hypertextual critics – “it is commonly believed that
electronic editions free us from all the constraints imposed by paper publications. But
they don’t automatically bring us the money needed to do everything we can imagine;
and in any case we may well choose as scholars to devote our own time to ends that seem
more important.”\textsuperscript{149} Considering the fact that it has taken over twenty years for the
\textit{Oxford Thomas Middleton} Project to finally release a print culmination of scholarly work
that finally does the playwright some justice, we may yet have to wait some time before a
similarly comprehensive hyper-textual treatment of Thomas Middleton becomes
available, though hope springs eternal.

A digital edition for the \textit{New Cambridge Ben Jonson}, however, is clearly planned
and outlined in the current scope of that project, even as one glances at the Introduction
to the project’s website – “the \textit{Cambridge Ben Jonson} takes account of recently
discovered works by Jonson, and offers the first complete edition of Jonson in electronic

\textsuperscript{148} Lavagnino, “Completeness” 72-73.

\textsuperscript{149} Lavagnino, “Completeness” 75.
form."\textsuperscript{150} According to the Rationale for the electronic edition in the “Detailed Project Description” portion of the website, this edition will be:

designed to accommodate textual and contextual information that can rapidly be searched, collated, and compared. By clicking on tagged icons or sections of the text, the reader will be able to view variant texts side-by-side, or move instantaneously to alternative versions of the same text or to detailed collations or facsimiles, or summon illustrative or explanatory materials, or search for particular words or phrases within a limited or extended field. The material contained in the Electronic Edition will be carefully selected and edited to ensure maximum convenience and flexibility of use, and complementarity with the Print Edition.\textsuperscript{151}

If this proposed design for the electronic edition holds true in the actual realization, this electronic edition will be an excellent example of hypertextual tools at work, allowing readers to simultaneously compare various texts onscreen at the click of the mouse and to seamlessly connect to various textual issues. The usage of “illustrative or explanatory materials” also suggests that the accompanying critical apparatus may also be developed in a performance-friendly format, possibly illustrating potential staging cruxes and ways in which performances have dealt with particularly problematic textual issues. In particular, the indication elsewhere that significant records of Jonson’s masques will be included, encompassing a range of visual and documentary material, might prove particularly exciting for highlighting the multi-media nature of Jonson’s work. The suggestion that the material selected will “ensure maximum convenience and flexibility of use” also indicates that, while there will indeed be careful editorial programs embedded in the hypertext edition, readers will also have room to ‘maneuver’ freely.

\textsuperscript{150} Gants, “Introduction.”

\textsuperscript{151} Gants, “Introduction.”
through the various manifestations of the text and accompanying material, allowing for a critical performance of reading that might delve more deeply into Jonson’s very marked concerns about control and power over the readers/viewers of his plays.

While the format for the electronic edition still appears to be up for debate (the website suggests that it may be published either as a CD-Rom or via the internet); the scope of the materials that will be available through the project could potentially rival the materials being added to the Internet Shakespeare Editions. Plans for the electronic edition content include:

- the entire contents of the print edition along with a range of early manuscripts and print texts - including the early quartos, 1616 and 1640/1 folios and 1640 duodecimo. The electronic edition will enable to search the entire canon for the first time, in original or modernised spelling. Additional archival material (including life records, stage history, masque records, and early allusions) will also be incorporated and fully searchable, together with a comprehensive Jonson bibliography. Importantly, the electronic original-spelling edition will be hypertextually cross-referenced with the modernized edition, allowing readers to make textual comparisons at the click of a button.¹⁵²

Like the original and modern spelling versions quickly available for comparison with Binda’s electronic edition of Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, the potential critical reading strategies and power imparted upon the reader of such a multi-version text would be immensely useful and utilize the potentials of hypertext media (though again Ben Jonson himself would have a fit over such power being given to the reader of his text).

Whether this electronic edition appears in CD-rom or Internet form, the ambitious scope of this hypermedia project will provide an excellent resource for considering

¹⁵² Gants, “Introduction.”
Jonson not just as a ‘playwright’ but also as a man immersed in the stagecraft of his time, despite his protests to the contrary.

4.7.5. *Digital Renaissance Editions* – Hypermedia Archive

Another exciting project still in the conceptual phase, the *Digital Renaissance Editions* is a proposed hypermedia archive planning to adopt the “already successful publishing platform” utilized by the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* project, which I have already discussed at length.153 This new project, like its Shakespearean inspiration, promises to “publish fully annotated, critical editions of early modern English drama….offer[ing] open-access electronic editions of non-Shakespearean drama, from Tudor interludes through to the works of Margaret Cavendish.”154 Like the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, each edition will be prepared by teams and will include a ‘base text’ and SGML encoding, along with annotations, collation and additional materials highlighting play reception. Most interestingly, there is also a planned performance database for the website which will offer searchable multimedia content; this particular section will prove highly useful to scholars, since such material collected in one place will make critical understandings grounded on performative evidence much easier than the current state of performance material availability for Shakespeare’s contemporaries. The first editions currently in progress include Thomas Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon*,


154 Hirsch, “About the Project.”
George Chapman’s *A Humorous Day’s Mirth*, William Haughton’s *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, and Philip Massinger’s *The Roman Actor*. These editions, as well as all subsequent proposals, will follow the guidelines set forth for editions in the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* Project (in the proposals section of the website, the link for proposal formatting takes one directly to the Shakespeare website edition guidelines).

While the particular design format for this hypermedia archive has not been publically detailed, if it is anything similar to the scope and breadth of the increasingly impressive *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, this website will become a fabulous hypermedia warehouse of information on Shakespeare’s contemporaries with direct parallels and potentially interesting and fruitful points of critical comparisons between the two archives. Whether it will take off as fast as the Shakespeare archive has begun to, however, will likely be determined on the potential ability to release print versions of the electronically prepared editions (a key element to the current success of the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*). If this indeed occurs, not only will the archive provide a wonderful collection of information for both scholars and ordinary readers; it will also stimulate even more critical thought and production of print editions for Shakespeare’s contemporaries, providing readers with more opportunities to read Shakespeare in closer connection with his contemporaries and collaborators.

4.7.6.Luminarium Editions – Hypermedia Archive

In the interim while we wait for the *Digital Renaissance Editions* archive to become fully functional, the only current large hypermedia archive of electronic editions and materials related to Renaissance drama is *Luminarium*, a collection of electronic
editions and hypertexts gathered and maintained by Anniina Jokinen, which she originally started in 1996 to “provide a starting point for students and enthusiasts of English Literature. Nothing replaces a quality library, but hopefully this site will help fill the needs of those who have not access to one.”\textsuperscript{155} The site was originally conceived out of her work for an undergraduate survey course, and she has continued to maintain and expand upon the site in subsequent years, with the help and advice of a number of prominent scholars (including, notably, Michael Best and Ian Lancashire). Jokinen’s goal for the site is fairly simple, yet it encapsulates many of the basic elements that make hypertext and hypermedia projects so interesting for the editor and critical reader:

I wanted the site to be a multimedia experience in the periods. I find it easier to visualize what I am reading when there is a small illustration or a tidbit about the background of the author or his work. The music and art of the period serve to complement one's rational experience of the site with the emotional. There are people who write to me who seem to think that if something has a beautiful wrapping, it cannot possibly have scholarly insides. But I do not see why something scholarly cannot at the same time be attractive. It is that marriage of form and function, so celebrated during the Renaissance, for which my site strives.\textsuperscript{156}

While Jokinen’s hypermedia archive may not include or provide links to many texts that take full advantage of the capabilities of hypertext, her archive pages even for Renaissance drama provide a wealth of easily accessible material for the ordinary reader and many students to peruse - her section on Renaissance Drama, newly added in 2006, while still in an incomplete stage (her goal is to fill out this section within the next three years), contains an impressive collection already of basic electronic texts and simple


\textsuperscript{156} Jokinen, “A Letter from the Editor.”
hypertext editions of both Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries (two dozen playwrights are represented thus far, spanning from the Tudor through the Jacobean period).  

Focusing on the English Renaissance Drama portion of the website, Jokinen provides several chapters in her introduction designed with the “student or cursory reader” in mind – these include: English Drama: From Medieval to Renaissance; The Sociopolitical Climate in Elizabethan England; Elizabethan World View; Elizabethan Playhouses; Elizabethan Staging Conventions; and a Timeline of Elizabethan Playhouses and Acting Companies. Throughout these introductions, hyperlinks are provided to additional information pages in the Encyclopedia Project section, Shakespeare’s Globe website, and other resources. Each page in the Luminarium also contains a wealth of visuals from engravings, frontispieces and other images related to and created during the period of Renaissance drama discussed.

The website pages devoted to each individual playwright contain a number of valuable different material sections, including: Quotes; Life; Works; Essays; More; and Books. Again, there is an emphasis on the visual, with a portrait provided of each playwright. Numerous hyperlinks with additional information and resources are also


158 Jokinen, “Introduction to English Renaissance Drama” Website Section – the majority of the chapters themselves are written by Dr. Wayne Narey, Professor at Arkansas State University.

159 Music is also apparently connected with the site, but I was never able to access this particular portion of the website – again, it is unclear if this issue is just on the part of the user, or if there is a larger issue with the archive itself.
available throughout these pages. The collections of hypertext and electronic play editions provided for each playwright, while convenient and impressive in appearance, are unfortunately a little basic in terms of the scope of my survey search parameters – most all of the electronic editions provided for playwrights were merely electronic text editions or transcribed facsimile editions available through GoogleBooks, Project Gutenberg, and Renasence Editions. A few, such as Chris Cleary’s Thomas Middleton collection and Dean Whitehead’s Beaumont and Fletcher editions already discussed in my survey, provided some hypertextual and/or hypermedia archive treatments of the plays. An individual edition of John Webster’s Duchess of Malfi, created by Dr. Larry Brown (also the creator of the previously discussed King Lear edition), provides a basic hypertext version of Webster’s play with minimal notes and nods towards a performance-friendly direction with production notations. I will not go into detail on this edition, however, as my same critique from Dr. Brown’s Lear project also applies to this play, since he uses the same editorial principles to create this hypertext edition. Jokinen herself has also edited several electronic text editions available for various authors, most notably Ben Jonson. Upon closer inspection of these texts, however, they appear largely to be merely electronic texts – transcribing already available print texts into HTML e-text for easy accessibility. No hyperlinks, parallel viewing screens or other similar tools are used.

While the Luminarium archive is to be commended for collecting the majority of hypertext and electronic editions available throughout the internet in one easily accessible

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160 See for example Jokinen’s electronic edition of Every Man in his Humour.
and reader (and viewer) friendly format, the collected editions themselves are not necessarily the best representation of the capabilities inherent in the hypermedia; it appears that we will have to wait for the subsequent phases in the *Digital Renaissance Editions*, the *New Cambridge Ben Jonson* electronic edition, and the *Oxford Middleton* Project (hopefully) to provide a more complete picture of the capabilities of hypertext in their treatment of Shakespeare’s contemporaries.

4.7.7. Suggestions for a Future Hypertext Edition

Generally, while there are not a lot of current examples available for electronic editions of non-Shakespearean Renaissance dramatists that make good use of the hypertext media (certainly none are comparable to the wealth of interpretive possibilities in the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*), I think that the multimedia possibilities inherent in hypertext editions could potentially provide us with a much better grasp of the ways in which Shakespeare’s contemporaries viewed themselves as playwrights. For instance, Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker are dramatists who exemplify playwrighting as a highly social activity (and are perhaps better examples of McGann’s theories about the ‘social’ text). For Dekker and Middleton, like most of their fellow playwrights, collaboration was the way of life. They also created texts imbued with the sense of London as it appeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. If I were to create an electronic archive of Renaissance dramatists, I think that a hypertextual edition of Dekker’s *Shoemaker’s Holiday* could contain a number of engravings, contemporary accounts, and historical information to create a larger picture of the city of London as it lives within his text. A reader could actually picture these characters as they might have
been while reading Dekker’s words. Readers could perhaps then link to a hypertext edition of Middleton’s *Women Beware Women* to gain an understanding of the commodification of women, and the interest in anatomizing them. I could see inclusions of marriage contracts between London citizens which might prove or actually disprove Middleton’s views, accounts of the prostitutes who hunted around the private theaters, or even the numerous medical texts which picked apart the inner workings of women.

A comparative archive that utilized these depictions of Middleton and Dekker against Ben Jonson might provide another fascinating way in which to broaden our understanding of Renaissance dramatists. Jonson was specifically known for his professed hatred of the theater and his quest to become an ‘author’ and a ‘poet’ rather than a dramatist who pandered to the needs of the masses. Thus, he would provide an interesting contrast to Middleton and Dekker who were avidly involved in the every day life of London. Jonson’s archive would also be a fascinating collection of the numerous forms in which dramatists worked (besides just plays for the public and private theaters). I would include sections on his numerous masques that he wrote for the Jacobean court. These masques in particular would utilize McGann’s theories on the performative nature of hypertext because the masques are certainly more concerned with the visual and enactments rather than any printed words. These masques could be hyperlinked to drawings of the costumes made by Inigo Jones (Jonson’s co-worker on the masques) and perhaps be tied into King James’ interest in this visual culture.

A comparative archive of Shaekspeare’s contemporaries would offer a competing, ‘social’ text displaying the realities of the dramatic profession and the numerous ways in which dramatists viewed themselves and their work. It would also
offer opportunities to understand drama itself as a performance containing both visual and linguistic elements. One could even include Shakespeare, using portions of his text that are echoed in other playwrights’ works to demonstrate the common concerns and themes they all had. For instance, you could build an archive with hyperlink comparisons abounding between Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and Thomas Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*. This archive could show the different ways in which they engage with the Senecan model of tragedy, revealing which playwright’s techniques and characters were actually most effective in performance. In the end, which revenger do you support? I could see film options and stage clips here which could be played side by side, providing the viewer with the chance to see the language that is most effective in performance. These archives could engage with Shakespeare’s contemporaries and provide a more provocative commentary upon his work in light of the larger profession. This would be a whole new dimension of McGann’s ‘social’ text!

Looking at the possible archive look and potential design at the level of an individual play, I would design an archive around Thomas Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* for instance, since there are at least eight different versions available for this text – imagine the number of hypertextual comparisons that could be generated within one screen or multiple simultaneous windows holding the variant texts available for ready comparison. Multiple factors would have to be taken into the consideration of this archive, though, in order to realize a hypertext edition at the fullest potential and possibility to address performance in a unique and pivotal manner. Generally, in the development of any hypertextual edition or archive project, several key elements need to
be in the forefront of an editor’s mind: computer electronic network projects will involve medium to large collections of data and a good deal of attention to record format, file design and access modes; the end user of this electronic edition may be unfamiliar with and unsympathetic to computers and so considerations for previous experience and amount of time a given user can be expected to spend learning to use the system (the scholar versus the savvy student depending upon the intended audience for the edition); this also brings up the question of the end user - who will be using the data and products – but in any instance, the access and analysis systems should be flexible and support an open ended range of perspectives; and, the project will have to link the efforts of a number of highly trained individuals from different areas.161

A number of choices are also involved in these types of projects, in addition to the question of the intended audience: the intended purpose of the document, the reason readers would have for reading the document, reading strategies that will be used and promoted, as well as the method of distribution.162 The appearance of the text is also a very important choice that greatly affects the control and understanding of the reader for the original print format of the work, providing a link back to the history of the codex form, as well as opening new doors for comparative techniques. Editors need to choose if they will do digital facsimile representations of the original manuscript, what if any ‘base’ text the editor would choose to use (i.e. would the text be captured in a machine-readable form or typed in so that HTML coding can be embedded), and how much of the

161 See for instance, the exquisite editorial board for the Internet Shakespeare Editions – such a collection would be the type needed for any undertaking of an early modern drama archive, especially if including more than one playwright into consideration.

162 O’Donnell and Thrush 208.
original manuscript and typefaces should be present. The ability to move and compare facsimile editions with the ‘base’ text would also be an important feature, especially useful to any scholars trying to do semi-serious editorial work of their own. As Susan Hockey counsels, editors need to consider ‘how to make those [electronic] representations available to the scholarly community in such a way that the potential of the electronic medium for new forms of publication and research is fully exploited while still maintaining the integrity and authority we associate with the traditional printed edition.’\textsuperscript{163}

Taking these elements into consideration for the design of my hypothetical edition, I would design an archive that would appeal to several levels of users, in my belief that Shakespeare’s contemporaries should be accessible not just to scholars and literature students, but also to the general public. To that end, I would have to create a number of different editions geared toward each level of understanding a user would bring to the plays (perhaps utilizing techniques in annotation currently exemplified in the print Oxford Thomas Middleton); however, I would want to make sure that each level of user is allowed useful and substantial interaction with the ‘work’ as presented, since any hypertext design “should incorporate the idea that interaction with the material is desirable. Display of materials to a passive observer is not the only goal. The user must have liberty to navigate the materials at will. The user should have the option of entering

\textsuperscript{163} Hockey 1. See also Shillingsburg 30-33 for a detailed discussion on an editor’s considerations for the usability of the electronic edition.
parts of the program that are “tutorial” and that prompt the user to react to challenges and suggestions.”

In order to direct users into the site at the appropriate level of understanding, my overall design scheme would be that of a playhouse – the stage area would be for the ‘work’ or performance itself and getting at that through various available textual versions replete with performance information and performance friendly annotation; the backstage would be accessed on its own or through various hyperlinks available in the ‘work’ on stage; and the audience area would be stand-alone and also hyperlinked through the text, offering cultural commentary and historical background to round out the performance available on stage. At each level of the theater (at the level of the main entrance to the electronic edition), various representational characters would be in place demarcating the different levels of understanding with which the user is approaching the work. For instance, onstage, there would be the lead actor (scholar); the supporting cast (advanced students); and understudies (first-time contact with the work). Backstage and Audience levels would have a similar format. This could become more complicated if we took a different approach and allowed users to come in on a different premise of levels: those who only want to see the play and the story, those who want to see variations between quartos and folios, different orders of scenes, words, stage directions, text missing, or even higher level of foul papers, memorial reconstruction, compositor identification, and even further details on the performance – “this speech as remembered by this actor, that

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164 Shillingsburg 33
scene as set by that compositor, this speech as reconstructed by this editor.”
Either way, since part of the challenge (and benefit) to the electronic medium is shaping the
presentation of the ‘work’ into a visual metaphor understandable and relatable to the user, the theater seems most appropriate for the treatment of dramatic texts.

The actual look of the hypertext itself, however, is a completely different problem, especially if I am attempting to break out of looking at plays in codex form and if I want to emphasize the performance through the presentation of the electronic text as well. In any case, I would prefer to utilize a hybrid approach to hypertext annotation suggested by O’Donnell and Thrush, which would provide ‘hot words’ (indicating hyperlinks) in the main level summary notes and allow the text of the play to remain completely clean, while still clearly suggesting what annotation is available in the text and reducing guesswork on the part of the user. The ‘base’ text or modern edited version could then serve as a pathway to two potential collections of information (visually, this could be represented by exit stage door left and exit stage door right): on one side, there could be the accurate searchable, digital transcriptions of significant early versions of the text and also digital images of the manuscripts, early folios etc. The other stage door would provide hypermedia explanatory notes. There could also be a third level hanging from the ‘heavens’ of the stage, which could provide ready access to images and productions. All of these elements would be provided in multiple windows available on-screen at the same time, allowing easy comparison for the reader, as well as the ability to readily re-enter the ‘base’ performance version at any time. Another potential way to approach the

165 Robinson 106.

166 O’Donnell and Thrush 198.
performance issue versus textual readings could be through the ‘base’ text annotations: multiple layers of annotations and different types of annotations could be available for user selection, depending on whether they were specifically interested in the “bibliographic codes” of the early versions of the work and textual cruxes, or if they wanted to approach the text on the performance level and receive notes on possible stagings, variations in stage directions available in the early texts, productions, and more. As Susan Hockey has pointed out, “annotation is another process that the electronic environment can facilitate. It is technically possible to have a text on the network that can be accessed and annotated by many different people…multiple and possibly conflicting annotations could be associated with the same section of text.”167

In particular, I think a treatment of the *Game at Chess* could prove a worthy example for hypertextual treatment, in large part because of the numerous editorial issues abounding in the text, especially concerning the extremely large number of variant texts available. Such a problematic play textually would actually force the hypertext editor to utilize the digital media to a fuller extent than currently seen in already existing hypertext archives of Shakespeare’s contemporaries; it would also provide a very active exercise on the part of the reader, imparting a great deal of control in terms of interpretation and possible ‘readings’ that could be created based on the material given.

167 Hockey 16.
4.8. Summary

While I have attempted to engage with existing electronic editions and archives as well as my own suggestions for future hypertext editions in terms of their ability to address the major issues plaguing the theoretical approaches to editing early modern drama as I went along, these electronic media also demonstrate some of the advantages (and disadvantages) inherent in broader editorial theories encompassing the electronic text. Many critics of the new technology have objected that electronic texts “introduce a new medium that was never intended by the author and that they add new intentions to the work.”¹⁶⁸ In the case of Shakespeare or Marlowe, discussing their intentions is highly problematic and creating a ‘single’ edition that privileges one text over another invariably illustrates the intentions of the editor, not the author. Both of the electronic archives for Shakespeare, as well as individual hypertext editions such as Kliman’s ‘enfolded’ text or Binda’s *Doctor Faustus* instead illustrate the fact that we do not know which text these playwrights ‘intended’ for us to follow, allowing us instead to see the multiple versions they *did* create. As Shillingsburg observes, “in electronic form, it is possible to make a work of art accessible in all its versions.”¹⁶⁹ Second, many of the current print editions do not always adequately address what we do know that these dramatists intended for their work – that they be considered as dramatic, performative works to be developed on the stage. At least the electronic archives attempt to provide the ‘reader’ of Renaissance playwrights with a renewed sense of this performance aspect. Moreover, when an editor


¹⁶⁹ Shillingsburg, “Polymorphic” 35.
starts snipping about ‘authorial intentions,’ does it not rather demonstrate his own need to control the text presented to the reader? Is it really the editor’s job to “pin down, master, control, or limit the work?”

Hypertexts are often seen not as a control on the part of the editor, but as critical performances on the part of the reader. The more these critical performances can be nurtured and encouraged by the savvy usage of hypermedia tools on the part of the editor, the greater power the reader has to create interpretations based not just on textual, but also visual and aural elements. According to McGann, “hypermedia editions that incorporate audial and/or visual elements are preferable since literary works are themselves always more or less elaborate multimedia forms…[because] texts are language visible, auditional, and intellectual.” He theorizes that electronic editing can provide the fullest depiction of a text as it should be engaged with by a reader-actively, not statically. As another scholar has observed of our culture in general, “we see that the genuine spirit of our culture is not in applying small pieces of cello tape to hold together the structure we received, but in pitching in joyously to its ongoing reconstruction.”

Editing thus should not be seen as an attempt to ‘fix’ a playwright’s work as it was, but to recognize its continually evolving nature, as a performance always in progress. In McGann’s view, electronic editions are more appropriate for works such as Shakespeare and Middleton because they catch this ephemeral, evolving conception of the early modern playwright through subsequent performance and reader reception. While I

170 Shillingsburg 41.
171 McGann 58.
172 O’Donnell 91.
certainly agree with McGann in spirit, the current state of electronic editions on Shakespeare and especially those of his contemporaries does not yet reflect this spirit of adaptability. All of the individual hypertext editions surveyed (both Shakespeare and non) largely occluded performance, image, and sound, as well as any sense of ‘instability’ or of possible adaptability within their electronic works. Of the electronic archives, the MIT site and the Internet Shakespeare Editions site were the best examples which not only conveyed the sense of performance inherent in Renaissance drama, but also provided a wide range of potential performative acts of critical reading, allowing each reader a distinct and separate text that could shift or change at any moment depending upon the hyperlinks the reader chose to follow.

Other proponents of electronic editing view McGann’s performative theory as a danger threatening to obliterate the written, textual side of the work. Siemens provides such a cautionary message:

One should consider the role of the text in a world where text and dramatic representations (‘page’ and ‘stage’) are stored in the same medium, accessed in the same manners, and displayed on the same screen; there is the potential that the dramatic performance – that is, the enactment of what is captured in the textual record – will be privileged over the textual record itself.\(^{173}\)

Is Siemens’ fear legitimate? According to his statement, a playwright’s text has the potential to become lost amidst the competing photographs, art, video clips, and facsimiles of promptbooks, adaptations and early versions in a project like the MIT Shakespeare. If Siemens means that we will perhaps lose focus upon Shakespeare’s play and miss the deeper understanding which a close examination of his language provides, I

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\(^{173}\) Siemens Endnote 43.
think this is certainly a danger with the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* project as it has been conceived. There will eventually be so many links for that site that take the reader away from the critical text itself that a reader may become lost in the vast quantities of secondary information and options before his or her eyes. Seimens’ language, however, seems to indicate that he is concerned that the printed text itself will be dethroned from its place of privilege in favor of performance. In this case, I think that his anxiety displays his own bias inculcated by print culture, which tells us that we should ‘read’ Shakespeare, not ‘see’ Shakespeare. We should look more closely at the last line in his message – “the *enactment* of what is *captured in the textual record* will be privileged over the text itself.” This particular statement demonstrates one of the most problematic aspects about our conception of Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists – are they men of the stage or men of the page? I would argue that Shakespeare, Middleton and fellow playwrights conceived of their work as inherently performative. We then received the recollected memory of Shakespeare – the ‘performance that haunts our studies’ to go back to M.J. Kidnie – in the textual record. Siemens posits that performance enacts what is ‘captured’ in print, when in fact the print is an enactment of the captured memory of performance. I think that the intricate format of sites like MIT Shakespeare allow the reader to more readily see this tension. When they view the text at the same time they view an image or film clip, neither print nor performance is privileged. Instead, the reader understands these dramatists for what they are – men of page *and* stage.

One item which particularly worries me after surveying all of the individual hypertext editions and archives is the lack of consistent guidelines for creating hyperlinked information (the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* and its companion site for
non-shakespearean drama, *Digital Renaissance Editions*, are the exception, providing specific guidelines for the creation of hypertext editions that are not to overwhelm readers with annotations and other information – showing due caution against an overzealous editor ready to exploit the medium to its fullest and beyond). Because there are no set rules for hypertext editing, texts tend to stray more towards McLeod’s ‘un-editing,’ and leave the reader without any sense of history, commentary, or original context with which the text is imbued (if we view it as McGann’s ‘socialized text.’) Although Charles Ross advocates that “we need, in short, hypertexts that turn readers into writers who collaborate in the production of the texts they read,”

174 editors should not shift so much burden upon the reader that they cause the reader, not just the text, to become lost in the dramatic production of meaning. In an observation related to print editions of Shakespeare, Alan Dessen observed that “the danger is that in seeking to clarify a situation for a first-time reader that editor may in fact be closing down an equally valid option, especially for a potential user in the theater.”

175 While this remark criticizes the print editor who provides too much of his own textual interpretation and stunts the reader’s horizon of possible interpretations, it could also be changed to caution against the electronic editor. If a hypertextual editor provides too little in the way of tools for interpreting the text’s meaning, a first-time reader may be left flailing in the dark without, for instance, the understanding of the unique engagement an ‘enfolded’ *Hamlet* creates with its historical editorial tradition. Or the reader might peruse a Middleton

174 Ross 148.

work and view images without considering the manifold meanings in particular words themselves. As Suarez aptly observes, “hypertext archives unaccompanied by critical editions do not maximize freedom, because – even with their commentaries on individual documents – they do not equip the reader to choose wisely and well.”

176 Suarez 174.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Certainly, Shakespeare’s prominent presence as the easily recognizable, most prolifically edited playwright of the early modern era will not soon or easily be displaced (if ever). For one thing, his works have become such a key focus both in the large machine of print publication and as a standard of discussion in editorial theories and debates; based upon his well-entrenched situation within the publishing and editorial realms, there will always be a market for editions of Shakespeare – print, scholarly, definitive, popular, electronic, hypermedia, and future as yet un-discovered forms. His texts continually present editors, critics, and readers of all levels with new surprises and various interpretations.

If, however, we could shift our editorial debates and creations of editions for Shakespeare to a route that intersects more readily with the works of his contemporaries, whether through print editions highlighting the collaborative process, editorial series like Arden that publish plays from Shakespeare and non-Shakespeare through similar editorial guidelines for ease in comparison, or through exciting hypermedia archives that highlight and link Shakespeare with his fellow playwrights and creative collaborators, I think our understanding, both as readers in the form of ‘interpretive performers’ and as codex and hypertext editors, would be greatly enriched as a whole, and even more avenues for editorial innovation and reader involvement could be stimulated through a variety of
editorial projects. In order to move towards such exciting intersections, however, editorial theory and editions themselves may need to focus on the often neglected discussion of Shakespeare with his contemporaries, rather than separately or in opposition. I have tried to make such continued intersections throughout the course of this argument, though I acknowledge perhaps not always successfully.

Such continued intersections for critical discussion and reading might most easily be facilitated through a combination of print and electronic editions (such as the future products of the Cambridge Ben Jonson Project and even the Oxford Thomas Middleton), given the fact that attention to the new electronic medium does not always take flight until the monetary potential of companion print texts comes in to play – Internet Shakespeare Editions serves as an excellent point in case. Additionally, a discussion of Shakespeare with rather than versus his contemporaries could very well be developed through increased usage of the vast potential inherent in digital technology such as hypertexts and hypermedia archives.

Of course, I still think there are several valid reasons, some alluded to in my survey of the current electronic editions available, for seeking out non-Shakespearean drama as a better focus for future work on hypermedia archives and exciting hypertextual electronic editions. On a practical level for the editor’s task, creating electronic editions of non-Shakespeare could potentially be an easier task given the lesser availability of material (rather than the hyperabundance on Shakespeare). On a theoretical level, non-Shakespearean drama is not so embedded in the history of the codex publication and print editorial tradition, and works like the Cambridge Ben Jonson and Oxford Thomas Middleton are begging for even more critical editions and editorial considerations to be
developed and distributed in both print and electronic form. These dramatists could become a more prominent part of the discussion of new editorial techniques related to hypertext editing, the development of the reader’s power over the text, and interpretation influenced by the editorial choices embedded in text or hypertext. Shakespeare could then become the ‘poster child’ for print editorial theory, and his fellow playwrights could become the ‘poster children’ for the leap into the digital age and electronic editing – but prominent discussions and intersections between the print and digital world could still be easily facilitated.

The works of playwrights such as Middleton and Dekker might also benefit from the ability of an electronic editor to gather all of the varying materials – manuscripts, quartos, folios, editions, images, performance descriptions and video – together in an electronic archive precisely because they are often harder materials to obtain. On the other hand, I acknowledge that these reasons I have just outlined are far outweighed and will continue to be outweighed by a crucial element inherent in the machine that is Shakespearean editing – monetary value. Shakespeare has such a wide audience and continued demand for new critical editions that it would be naïve of me to advocate solely for a turn towards his contemporaries in the electronic and future print editions. Advocating only for the editing of Shakespeare’s contemporaries also misses a key element I think readers will continue to appreciate if we increase our efforts to create editions sensitive to both Shakespeare and his contemporaries – the perpetual spirit of collaboration.

None of my argument here is in any way intended to disparage or suggest that we discard the print tradition or history of the book and leap madly into the digital age –
these plays are historical and cultural artifacts and speak to us with the memories of the past, and we are always attempting to reach that original performance; however, perhaps we can increase the role of the reader as ‘interpretive performer’ of the text by increased usage of the multimedia aspects available in digital editions of Renaissance drama, and we can also turn our discussions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries even more increasingly toward aspects of multiple versions, performance-friendly editorial practices and reading texts, and rich links easily visible amongst the various Renaissance dramatists.

We should also continue to focus on the interaction of power and control at play between reader, editor and text, especially if editors do indeed start projects that make even fuller use of the capabilities of hypertext. How much control should be imparted to the reader, and how far is too far if we are to expand the notion of readers as ‘interpretive performers’? As I mentioned earlier, some editorial theorists such as Randall McLeod have looked to the electronic edition as the realm for allowing unadultered “un-editing” to occur, not as an edition at all but an electronic ‘archive,’ or a resource, or an accumulation of materials without any editorial interpretation at all and without the privileging of any one text. As evident in my own thoughts on building a hypertext archive, I do not think this is a wise decision on the part of editors when they consider the question, “what is the best way to read this work?” in their editing practices. In fact, I would argue that this complete lack of editing is not even possible because there is still some level of editorial interpretation going on behind the scenes in how you link various aspects of the work, what material is included, what text you provide, if you provide a critical apparatus, if you provide an edited edition, what quality of image and video you
choose for the edition, and so on. All of these elements are still editorial choices and interpretations put forth by the editor on the work.

The question at hand for editors of Renaissance drama in particular should be: how can these choices available to the electronic editor develop an equally valid but unique experience of reading that may not be possible through the traditional print edition? I would argue that electronic editing lends itself to a performance theory style of editing and a new way of looking at the facilitation of interaction with the work at hand that is eminently suitable to renaissance drama. In fact, editors of these non-Shakespearean electronic editions should not encourage ‘reading’ the text per se but treat the experience with the edition as a performance in itself, by opening up choice to the reader rather than proclaiming “this is the definitive edition of the play” – reading should be allowed to evolve as a performative act in itself. Users of electronic editions of drama could then be considered ‘interpretive performers’ rather than Tanselle’s outdated “critical editors,” to suit the new possibilities of the digital medium. There would still need to be guidance and markers provided for these interpretive performers throughout the labyrinth of the edition or archive, or risk losing the user completely within the potentially immense wealth of information that could be contained within the edition, but a healthy balance can and should be struck between the traditional editorial apparatus found in the print editions and the new opportunities available to the digital editor and the relationship built between the reader and the work at hand.
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