REVIEW
Shakespeare in Print

Cyndia Susan Clegg

Marta Straznicky, editor
Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography
PHILADELPHIA: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2013
374 pages; ISBN: 9780812244540

Lukas Erne
Shakespeare and the Book Trade
CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011
XVI + 302 pages; ISBN: 9780521765664

James J. Marino
*Owning William Shakespeare: The King's Men and
Their Intellectual Property*
PHILADELPHIA: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2011
204 pages; ISBN: 9780812242966

   ❧ *SHAKESPEARE'S STATIONERS: Studies in Cultural Biography*, *Shakespeare and
the Book Trade*, and *Owning William Shakespeare* testify to an abiding desire to see
Shakespeare as a writer who exercised authority over the printing of his plays—even
though the evidence gleaned from play texts and London publishing practices is disparate and sometimes contradictory. In *Shakespeare's Stationers'* first essay, Alexandra Halasz usefully identifies those "clusters of activity" that are symptomatic of the
interest in Shakespeare in print shared by the works under review—the "outing" of
Shakespeare's name in literary miscellanies; individual stationers' investment in the
"intellectual property" of Shakespearean poems and playbooks; the "Pavier moment";
and the 1623 folio published as an "authorially coded expensive volume" (27).

     Seven of the nine essays edited by Marta Straznicky consider individual stationers who trafficked in Shakespeare. The others address trade practices. Halasz's "The

Stationers' Shakespeare" locates Shakespearean publication in relation to the London book trade's regular interest in protecting and capitalizing on its properties, and William Proctor William's "'Vnder the Handes of . . .': Zachariah Pasfield and the Licensing of Playbooks" describes Pasfield's licensing activities (including the first quarto of *Hamlet*). Holger Schott Syme's "Thomas Creede, William Barley, and the Venture of Printing Plays" describes Creede and Barley as part of a group of "young and necessarily enterprising publishers" who sought to capitalize on the commercial theaters' stunning successes by creating a market for playbooks. Their profiles—Barley's as a publisher with "bad luck at picking plays that would adapt well to their new format" (37) and Creede's as a printer of Shakespeare who would later benefit more from producing "big" books—indicate that "playbooks may have been the hallmark of the beginner and the small-timer in the publishing business" (44) who took small risks and had little rewards. In this he sides with Peter Blayney in the dispute with Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser about whether publishing playbooks was lucrative (see *Shakespeare Quarterly* [2005]). Interest in playbook popularity also drives "Wise Ventures: Shakespeare and Thomas Playfere at the Sign of the Angel," in which Adam G. Hooks argues that Andrew Wise succeeded through a publishing strategy that "first turned [Thomas] Playfere from a celebrated orator into a popular author in print" and later "developed and extended Shakespeare's reputation" through "a handful of blockbuster plays"—*Richard II, Richard III*, and *1 Henry IV* (60). In "Nicholas Ling's Republican *Hamlet* (1603)," Kirk Melnikoff finds an ideological rather than a commercial motive for publishing. Like Syme and Hooks, Melnikoff speaks to an ongoing critical debate about popularity, relying on Zachary Lesser's view that late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century publishers developed specialized lists related to their interests (*Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication* [2004]). This premise also informs Lesser's essay here on the Watersons' (*père et fils*) publishing strategies: "Shakespeare's Flop: John Waterson and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*." Simon, John's father and one of London's most successful stationers, served as the London agent for the university printers at Oxford and Cambridge and cultivated a list with an Oxbridge aura directed at readers with intellectual aspirations. When John inherited the business, his decision to turn to publishing professional plays performed at court and in the elite indoor theaters (including Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) cost him customers and led to the business's demise. In a similar vein, Alan B. Farmer's "John Norton and the Politics of Shakespeare's History Plays in Caroline England" regards Norton's publication of *Richard II, Richard III*, and *1 Henry IV* as akin to the anti-Puritan works he produced. Norton hoped that his religious publications together with the history plays' demonization of rebellion would resonate with Caroline religious and political anxieties.

The remaining essays on publishers turn from popularity and publishing lists to reflect recent interest in Shakespeare as a "literary" author, following Lukas Erne's well-received *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (2003). Sonia Massai's "Edward Blount, the Herberts, and the First Folio" finds in the dedications of Blount publications evidence

of a Sidney–Herbert–Montgomery literary patronage network. According to Massai, "The choice of dedicatees not only bolstered Blount's reputation as a 'manufacturer' of literary 'credit' but also justified the publication of Shakespeare's plays in folio by connecting this publishing venture to the strategies of textual reproduction and authorization first deployed by Mary Sidney as 'executor' of Philip's work" (139). In "Shakespeare the Stationer," after giving a nod to popularity ("In the year 1600 Shakespeare was the best-published writer in London" [113]), Douglas Bruster turns to his real concern: Shakespeare-the-author's interest in book sales as a motive for stylistic changes. Considering the failure of plays with substantial prose to reach second editions and the successful republication of verse dramas, Bruster concludes that print audiences preferred verse drama. Shakespeare's return to verse in his later plays recognized this.

In *Shakespeare's Stationers,* Marta Straznicky has brought together an impressive group of scholars with distinguished reputations in early modern studies in print culture and book history. This collection of their essays—though somewhat surprising in veering away from the comprehensive look at publication the title suggests—makes a solid contribution to our knowledge about trade practices and publishing trends. The essays, however, do demand familiarity with earlier scholarship upon which they are based, even as they leave little room to question the bibliometric practices, publishers' interest-driven "portfolios," or the markers of literariness used to measure Shakespeare.

<p style="text-align:center">❁</p>

A more inclusive treatment of Shakespeare and early modern print culture may be found in Lukas Erne's *Shakespeare and the Book Trade,* although it too references earlier work. *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Erne says, argued that "Shakespeare had the ambition of becoming a successful 'literary dramatist,'" and this book "demonstrates that the ambition was 'fulfilled'" (8). The demonstration is made in four ways: statistically assessing Shakespearean publication to 1660, bibliographically analyzing his playbooks, surveying his chief publishers, and investigating his reception. Like Farmer and Lesser, Lukas uses reprints as a measure of popularity, but rather than compare playbooks with sermons, Lukas contextualizes Shakespearean publication (both poems and playbooks) in the world of London literary publishing that includes fellow playwrights and best-selling authors like Robert Greene. The bibliographical analysis of Shakespeare playbooks sees them as conventional, with any paucity of "mediating" textual "factors" following his contemporaries' lead. Erne, though, finds for Shakespeare an authorial logic for this: "He did not find anything inappropriate about the appearance of his plays in a form which enacts the immediacy and directness of the theatrical experience" (123). Erne next surveys the major publishers of Shakespeare's poems and plays to demonstrate that many in the trade invested in the "making" of William Shakespeare's authorial success. Erne's particular focus here is on publishers' literary publication, and he rather unusually regards any bookseller whose

name appears on a Shakespeare title page as having a publisher's fiduciary interest in the text. This swells the number of Shakespeare's publishers (forty-one, according to the appendix) without fully clarifying the book trade's sometimes complicated ownership relationships. In evaluating Shakespeare's literary success through the reception of his printed works (playbook ownership, library surveys, book survival rates, and reading practices, including marginal comments and commonplacing), Erne provides a compendium of the compelling scholarship that has emerged in recent studies of book history. This is more persuasive than the quantitative arguments with which Erne begins this study; even so, his comparison of apples and pears (the fruits of literary labor) makes a sounder argument for literary popularity than comparing playbooks and sermons. (Neither, however, gives as accurate a picture of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century publishing and reading practices as a comparison of "literature" with "religious texts" might.)

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The contributors to *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Biography* and *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* subscribe to readerly texts and a literary author, and they envision ownership as subsequent to a reading customer's purchase—they admit stationers' rights in texts, for example, but do not dwell on them. *Owning Shakespeare* understands ownership quite differently. James Marino begins with the observation that from Nicholas Rowe onward, "Shakespeare" as intellectual property has belonged to editors, and as such, each published edition "must be demonstrably new, and demonstrably the editor's own, but persuasively authentic and archaic, imagined as entirely Shakespeare's" (6). This, however, was not always so; before the English Civil War, the players "were those plays' owners and masters" (10). Marino proposes to set aside the impossible editorial task of recovering the ("imagined") pristine dramatic canon as Shakespeare the author intended prior to performers' and printers' corruptions. He proposes, instead, that we accept Shakespeare's plays as they were revised by the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men, "Shakespeare's partners and collaborators," his "fellow authors" (12). This argues unequivocally for the 1623 folio not only as authoritative, but also as a "monument" to Shakespeare, to the King's Men, to their theater (the Globe, for which Shakespeare never actually wrote), and to the King's Men's ownership of plays by Shakespeare, who to a great measure represented an author function the players created to protect their rights in these plays. "The words 'William Shakespeare,'" Marino maintains, "can be taken as a figure for the interest of the King's Men" (128).

Shakespearean "authorship," as Marino understands it, is protean. Sometimes author-Shakespeare adapts earlier plays (*Leir*); other times he revises his own poorer, earlier versions (*Taming of a Shrew,* a Shakespearean pre-1600 *Hamlet* referred to by Thomas Lodge). "Shakespeare" later becomes the players who "own" and on their "authority" revise their Shakespearean properties "in many ways, and for many rea-

sons," including upgrading, updating, and adding topical references (106). Another "Shakespeare" is identified as the author on printed texts when the Lord Chamberlain's Men want to clearly establish their company's ownership interest in the play: "Shakespeare's name functions . . . to cement the company's claims upon plays which they inherited in 1594 or which dealt with an easily duplicated historical subject (thus *Richard II* and *Richard III* come in for two of the first three Shakespeare ascriptions)" (42). What "Shakespeare" is not in Marino's view is a literary author: "Shakespeare forgoes his independent literary career in favor of a public association with the Chamberlain's Men" (43).

Marino's argument depends upon pre–New Bibliography editing orthodoxy, which accepted that "order of publication reflected order of composition unless positive evidence suggested otherwise" (54). To legitimate this reversion, Marino logically dismantles the New Bibliographers' arguments for "ideal" copytext, good and bad quartos, memorial reconstruction, foul papers, and ur-sources. Most of this occurs in two of the book's five chapters (one treating the anachronistic reference to an actor's name and role, Sinklo as Soto, in the first folio's *Taming of the Shrew*; the other finding the first quarto of *Hamlet* to be a legitimate product of players' revisions). Marino's third substantive chapter, which argues the King's Men's ownership of "Shakespeare" based on the first folio, ironically relies on New Bibliographical assumptions about players' rights in plays—even as it attacks this approach's proponents. This chapter, which argues that the 1623 *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* folio is a testament to the King's Men's intellectual property rights in Shakespeare's plays, perpetuates the New Bibliographer's notion of the antipathy between players and printers. "Early modern players and stationers," Marino says, "had competing, and often incompatible notions of what constituted an intellectual property and what claims might be made upon it" (108). Marino cites as evidence of this the "notorious" Pavier quartos, whose dates were seen as falsified after the Lord Chamberlain in May 1619 banned the printing of King's Men's plays without the players' consent. Marino contends that the stay (he calls it an "edict") effectually constituted a patent that "must have been understood as applying to the players' entire repertory," effectively nullifying any stationer's right to King's Men's plays that had formerly been printed (117). From this, Marino deduces two competing notions of ownership: that of the Stationers, who retained ownership of a title through subsequent printing; and that of the players, whose "revised scripts," assembled in the Blount and Isaac Jaggard edition, were intended to compete with and displace older texts" (128). Only the players, according to Marino, actually "owned" Shakespeare.

In the 1980s, research by Robert Darnton, Roger Chartier, and D. F. McKenzie on the materiality of texts and the social formation of reading revolutionized "book" scholarship. The three books considered here reveal this transformation's impact on Shakespeare studies. Studying Shakespeare's publishers and owners once was the purview of a bibliographical elite but, as Straznicky reminds us, has now "become integral to historicist criticism, implicating as it does the physical form of print in every act

of interpretation, past and present, whether this engages with the minutiae of orthography and punctuation, ideological work performed at the level of discourse, or the formation of Shakespearean canon" (3). The democratization of textual studies, as Marino, Erne, and the contributors to Straznicky's volume reveal, has produced innovative and compelling scholarship. Yet the new regime has not entirely cut its ties to old, elite bibliography—we dispute its arguments but rely on some of its assumptions. A case in point is our problem with the notions of authority and property that the founding father of Shakespeare bibliography, Alfred W. Pollard, drew upon for his arguments about pirated Shakespearean texts and that are implicit in many of the studies considered here. Marino insists that the players exercised authority over Shakespeare's plays. Massai insists that "'authorization' was a process that was understood as projecting forward from the author, to the patron, to the reader, as well as backward, from the printed text to the author" (145). Both Erne and Hooks believe that Andrew Wise's trouble with the Stationers' company came from publishing "unauthorized" editions of a Playfere sermon—that is, publishing without the author's permission. Marino understands the Lord Chamberlain's prohibition on printing Shakespeare plays as a royal monopoly recognizing the players' authority over Shakespeare. Authority and property are closely connected, but sixteenth- and seventeenth-century stationers' understanding of them was quite different from our own.

From feudal times in England, real property was held "in fee" (*feudum*) from the king and was understood to be held "*of* the Crown." Royal charters, letters patent, placards, and privileges conveyed property from monarch to subject and were recorded in various official rolls, including the patent rolls under the privy seal. In 1557 a royal charter formed the London Company of Stationers and gave them the (king's) authority to govern their members, labor in their craft, and control the products (property) their labors produced. Company members enjoyed their "liberties" and "privileges" under the company's authority, which their governors, the master and two wardens, exercised. If a book (or anything else) was printed either outside of the Company or without the consent of the master or wardens, it was "unauthorized." To print or publish a particular title, stationers obtained the company's permission (license), and notice of this "allowance" to print, for a fee, was entered in a roll book (here, the Stationers' Register), as patents and charters were. Also, like charters and patents, this allowance conveyed a right in material property, and the right that it conveyed could be conditional. Besides an entry fee, the company imposed other conditions. It could require that the work to be printed receive approval ("authority") from someone outside the company—usually an ecclesiastical authorizer appointed by the archbishop of Canterbury or the bishop of London—although this apparently was not always required by the wardens. From 1595 to 1596 eighty-seven books were entered in the Stationers' Register by consent of the wardens only, while twenty-five received ecclesiastical "authorization." From 1619 to 1620, however, 118 books were authorized by ecclesiastical authorities and seven by the wardens alone. Only on a few occasions between 1558 and 1640 was a writer's "authority" mentioned. With regard to Shake-

speare's stationers, this means that Wise's problem with the Company had nothing to do with Playfere "authorizing" the sermon Wise printed; Wise printed the first two editions of the sermon without the *company*'s authority and so was fined. When the Lord Chamberlain requested that the company refrain from printing Shakespeare's plays without the King's Men's "consent" (not "authority"), he was not extending the equivalent of the king's monopolistic authority over Shakespeare's plays to the King's Men. (There were no letters patent under the privy seal in the patent rolls associated with the Lord Chamberlain's request.) Nor was he giving the players authority over all previously printed plays—for it was not his to give.

In "Printers of the Mind," D. F. McKenzie observed that "our ignorance about printing-house conditions in the 17th and 18th centuries has left us disastrously free to devise them according to need; and we have at times compounded our errors by giving a spurious air of "scientific" definitiveness to our conclusions" (*Studies in Bibliography* [1969]). The essays in *Shakespeare's Stationers, Shakespeare and the Book Trade,* and *Owning Shakespeare* are at their best when they increase our knowledge about printing house conditions, trade practices, material books, and their readers and owners. When these conditions and practices are assumed or devised—out of need or based on mis-understandings fostered by the New Bibliography—the result is less than satisfactory. In the absence of "new facts," McKenzie counseled that we should "confess outright the partial and theoretic nature of bibliographical knowledge, proceed deductively, and at the same time practise a new and rigorous scepticism"(6). This is apt advice to those of us who practice book history, and, I think, to readers of these studies of Shakespeare's stationers.

∿ CYNDIA SUSAN CLEGG is a Distinguished Professor of English at Pepperdine University. She is the author of *Press Censorship in Caroline England* (2008), *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (2001), and *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (1997), and she is the editor of *The Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment of Blessed Queene Elisabeth: A Facsimile from Holinshed's Chronicles* (2005).