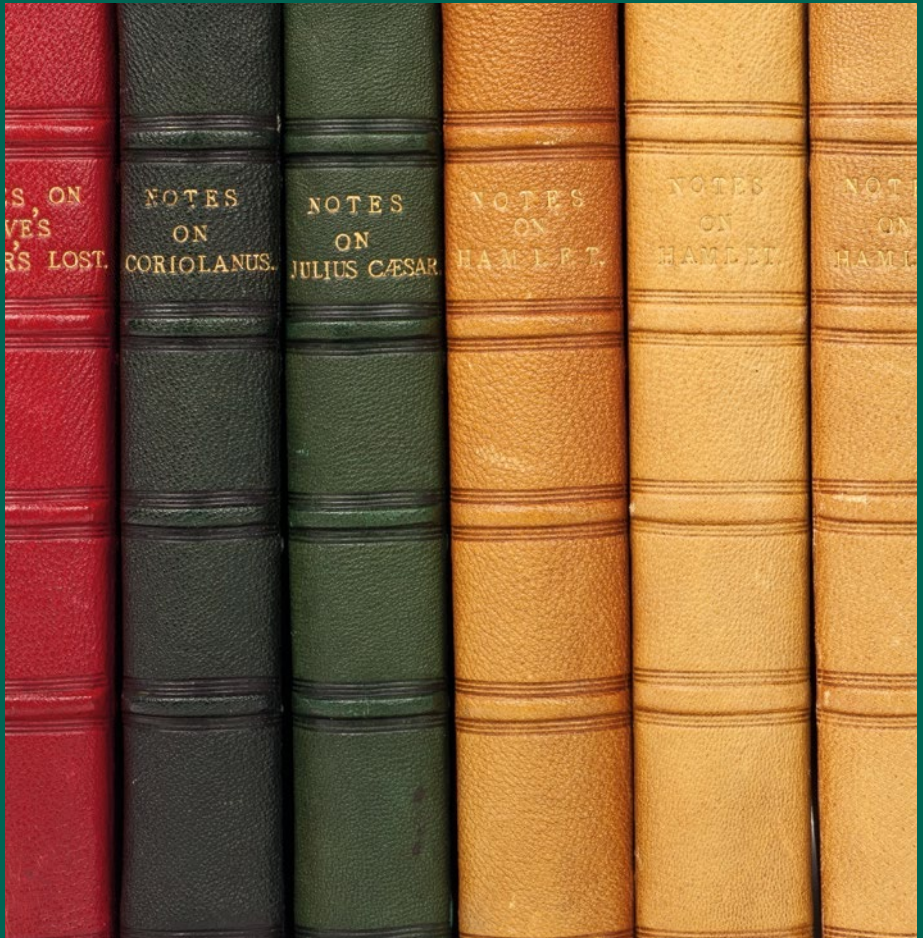


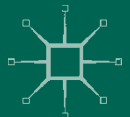
# EDITORS CONSTRUCT THE RENAISSANCE CANON, 1825–1915

Paul Salzman



EARLY MODERN LITERATURE IN HISTORY

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: Redeeming the Editorial Tradition

## 1 REDEEMING

In 1825, at the age of twenty-seven, Alexander Dyce edited an anthology of women's poetry, beginning with the medieval writer Juliana Berners and ending with Dyce's contemporary, Laetitia Landon. Dyce would go on to edit a considerable quantity of what we might now see as the heart of English Renaissance literature: Marlowe, Shakespeare, Middleton, Ford, Webster, Skelton, Beaumont and Fletcher, Peele, Shirley. And yet by the early twentieth century, Dyce and his editorial labours were almost invisible, made so by the purportedly more scientific editing which dominated the period from about 1920 to 1980 (as discussed in detail in my final chapter). For the small number of people who pore over the fine print of scholarly editions, including the lists of previous emendations that are confined to tiny print at the foot of the page or the back of the volume, Dyce's name will appear on occasion, like a faint ghost whose intermittent bright idea is barely registered. Within the dominant field of Shakespeare editing, names like Dyce, Halliwell-Phillipps, Collier, Wright, pop up from time to time because Shakespeare scholars have in recent years developed a more acute sense of the history of their approaches to editing as well as to criticism. However, the detailed endeavours that marked nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editing have been largely

ignored.<sup>1</sup> This book is intended to remedy that neglect. I contend not only that these editorial endeavours are an important yet neglected aspect of literary and intellectual history, but that they played a significant role in shaping modern conceptions of the literary and cultural field of Renaissance literature.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive history of editing, as my focus is on some especially interesting and representative case studies. But my overall approach is intended to avoid the teleological error that seems to shape most accounts of the transmission of Renaissance writing. It is perhaps understandable that working editors need to justify their (extensive) labours by arguing that their editions supersede those of their predecessors. But editing is driven by ideology and fashion as much as any other endeavour within the humanities, and while there may be technical advances, it is far from the case that each edition is ‘better’ or more reliable than its predecessor. At the same time, the editing examined in this book shifted the very notion of what a suitable editorial subject might be, and the eliding of this process means that a key historical context for the transmission of early modern writing has been ignored. Editing changed radically from 1825 to 1915, but one significant factor that holds for much of the work done during this period is a generosity, and accompanying perseverance, that led to a massive expansion of access to Renaissance writing, from the sustained Complete Works editions undertaken by editors like Dyce, through to the collections and individual editions of pamphlets, jest-books, and other material once considered to be ephemeral and not worthy of notice. The result was an expanded notion of what could be known about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Britain.

<sup>1</sup> Some notable examples for Shakespeare are Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Christopher Decker, ‘Shakespeare editions’, in Gail Marshall, ed., *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16–38; for a good summary of the current self-reflective state of Shakespeare editing, see Paul Werstine’s introduction to the special issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* in honour of Barbara Mowat, and also essays in that edition by David Bevington, Alan Galey, Sonia Massai, Stephen Orgel, and Eric M Johnson, *SQ* 68.1 (2017), and see my detailed discussion below in Chap. 3.

## 2 CANONISING

Only in recent years have we caught up with the expansive notion of Renaissance literature explored and presented to readers by the editors discussed in this book. In his groundbreaking and influential analysis of the concept of the canon, John Guillory argued that the issue at stake in disputes over a literary canon is not the individual items/authors/works that might be slotted in and out of lists that constitute syllabuses, but rather the social forces at work in the very idea of a canon.<sup>2</sup> Guillory's subtle and detailed analysis underlines the nexus between systems of education and canon formation following the Enlightenment. In Guillory's argument, the eighteenth century saw the category of 'literature' harnessed to a pedagogical imperative, and Guillory maintains that the social as well as cultural effects of repositioning the canon have to be viewed as part of a totality, rather than simply a shifting of individual items on a scale of evaluation:

It is always a mistake, then, to read the history of canon formation as though individual acts of revaluation had specific and determinable ideological effects simply determined by the choice of authors revalued, as though the revaluation, say, of Donne, could somehow infuse literary culture with attitudes, beliefs, or values peculiar to Donne or his milieu. The question before us is rather how the revaluation of particular authors alters the set of terms by which literature as a whole, or what we now like to call the canon, is represented to its constituency, to literary culture, at a particular historical moment.<sup>3</sup>

I have set out to show, in this book, how the activity of editing in the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth shifted what might perhaps be more accurately called a field, rather than a canon, of Renaissance literature. The nineteenth-century's eclectic and wide-ranging representation of the Renaissance through a comprehensive, or at least vastly more comprehensive, editing process was reversed as the twentieth century turned away from nineteenth-century achievements to produce a restricted canon. This is the narrowing that has been analysed in relation to the teaching of Renaissance drama by Jeremy Lopez, who argues that the

<sup>2</sup> John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

generous anthologies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave way in the twentieth century to a narrow series of collections of plays aimed at the tertiary student market.<sup>4</sup> This process of bringing into being a Renaissance field, I argue here, is replicated across the creation of Complete Text Editions in the nineteenth century, as well as in the editing of more ephemeral works and authors. At the same time, the history of this process has been skewed by the unrelenting focus on Shakespeare. I have placed the editing of Shakespeare during this period in a much broader context, because it occurred within a general move to uncover what might be seen as the historically informed idea of early modern or Renaissance writing.

In part because of the work that has been done on the history of Shakespeare editing, the nineteenth century has been seen as a continuation of the eighteenth century focus on how ‘Shakespeare’ might be constituted as the exceptional Renaissance author, and how his works might properly be assembled and edited. As I will discuss in more detail in Chaps. 2 and 3, the trajectory of this Shakespearean focus has been explored most cogently by Margreta de Grazia in her study of how the Malone edition of Shakespeare worked towards a stabilisation of the Shakespeare text, and a focus on the singular author and his developing ‘career’ over time.<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is not that there was no focus at all in the eighteenth century on Renaissance authors other than Shakespeare. Indeed, Jonathan Kramnick has argued that the notion of a select group of early authors (Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton) as a canon was a product of eighteenth-century critics’ anxieties over the encroachment of modernity, seeing a parallel in the fierce discussions over a literary tradition with the 1990s ‘crisis’ over the canon and its place in society.<sup>6</sup> I would add to this that what one can see, generally, in the eighteenth century in terms of access, if not critical commentary, is an increasing focus on Shakespeare. It is not that this diminished in the nineteenth century,

<sup>4</sup>Jeremy Lopez, *Constructing the Canon of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup>Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); and for Shakespeare ‘editing’ and publication in the seventeenth century, see Sonia Massai’s illuminating study: *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup>Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); see also Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725–1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

but, as the following chapters will show, the idea of what should be accessible moved from ‘just’ Shakespeare to the notion of a literary or even a writing culture that encompassed a large body of writers and works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Editing, in the broadest sense of ‘curated transmission’, placed in readers’ hands an idea of a valued and ever expanding amount of material that could characterise Renaissance culture in Britain.

### 3 RECOVERING

Accordingly, this book traces a new history of the transmission of Renaissance writing through a rich and heterogeneous editorial tradition. While, as I have noted, this is not an exhaustive account of all the editors and their editions in this period, it is a representative and chronological history of how editing brought into being a concept of the Renaissance as a literary/cultural field. At the same time, my research has revealed a considerably more impressive achievement than the received view of these editors has established in the minds of many scholars. Understanding this history also, I will argue, casts a useful light on recent developments in editing and editorial theory.

In Chap. 2, my focus is on the career of Alexander Dyce, which exemplifies the stock image of the indefatigable labours of a nineteenth-century bachelor-amateur-scholar. As I have already noted, Dyce’s editing began with a remarkable anthology of women’s poetry, and the originality of that publication is reflected in his later endeavours to edit a range of Renaissance writers with the clear aim of restoring them to a firm position within literary and cultural history. My second chapter is focussed on perhaps the most eccentric editor in a pantheon of often fairly eccentric individuals. James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps’s career spanned almost the entire nineteenth century, and his output was prodigious. In the early stages of his career, Halliwell-Phillipps edited an enormous range of Renaissance material, much of it considered to be ephemeral or of little interest until he made it accessible, a good example being his interest in the jest-book genre. His first wife, Henrietta Phillipps, was an invaluable contributor to her husband’s output, as she was a skilled copyist and copy-editor, trained by her father, the rapacious book collector Sir Thomas Phillipps. Halliwell-Phillipps’s later devotion to Shakespeare offers me the opportunity to discuss the editing of Shakespeare in relation to the overall editorial approach to Renaissance writing in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 4 brings the account up to the end of the nineteenth century with a discussion of Alexander Grosart, an even more prodigious editor than Dyce, and a much maligned one, who nevertheless had an ongoing influence on scholarship into the twentieth century. In this chapter I also locate the editing of Renaissance texts in relation to the editorial approach to medieval literature, and continue to examine the intersection between the editing of Shakespeare, and the editing of other early modern material. In Chap. 5 I analyse the shift from ‘amateur’ to ‘professional’ editing from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century, and I examine the beginning of new bibliography with the publication in 1915 of McKerrow’s edition of Thomas Nashe, and also Montague Summers’s edition of Aphra Behn. This chapter also includes a discussion of the engagement of publishers with editorial projects, which feature in earlier parts of the book through accounts of the activities of private presses, commercial presses, and university presses. In Chap. 6, I offer a brief account of how editing developed from 1915 through to the present, positing some fruitful connections between recent editions and the history of editing analysed in the course of the book. Editing, editorial theory, and book history have seen a resurgence of interest in recent years, and this study is intended to bring to light a largely hidden history that offers a more sophisticated context for recent developments, and a window into some neglected earlier achievements.



## CHAPTER 2

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# Alexander Dyce

Alexander Dyce is in many ways the most interesting of the editors I have focussed on in this study, not simply for the range of his projects, nor the volume (he was far surpassed in numbers by Halliwell-Phillipps), but by the imaginative scholarship he brought to each edition. I stress that ‘imaginative’ is a key word for Dyce, as he forged his editorial path at a key moment in the history of editing Renaissance literature and through a series of unusual editorial choices before editing Shakespeare. In his Shakespeare editions, Dyce made a highly significance leap from the conservative and (in his later view) under-edited first edition of 1857 to his much more interventionist edition of 1866. While this shift in editorial principles is in part a reflection of a general change in approaches to editing in the first half of the nineteenth century, Dyce, as I will discuss in detail below, reached his own conclusions about how in the end he wanted to approach Shakespeare after he had edited a massive amount of Renaissance drama, and also after he had participated in the controversy over J.P. Collier’s purported seventeenth-century ‘emender’ of the 1632 folio. This shift is reflected in some of Dyce’s other editing, in cases where he revises an earlier edition and institutes a more interventionist emendation policy. This movement in Dyce’s (long) editorial career can be traced through the re-editing of Peele (1828 and 1861); Webster (1830 and 1857); and Greene (1831 and 1861). Dyce is in so many

respects an original and under-appreciated editor, as evidenced by how he began his editorial career with a particularly unusual choice of subject for the time.

## 1 STARTING OUT WITH WOMEN UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: *SPECIMENS OF BRITISH POETESSES*

In 1825 Dyce edited an anthology of poetry entitled *Specimens of British Poetesses*. This was his second publication; Dyce was twenty-seven years old, and a reluctant clergyman, having been more or less compelled to take orders by his father. By 1825 he was ready to move on from a couple of curacies to settle in London and spend the rest of his life as a man of letters. Dyce edited what was an exceptional amount of Renaissance literature, even for an obsessive Victorian, but the publication of *Specimens of British Poetesses* at the very beginning of his career is intriguing, and in this chapter I want to tease out some issues surrounding its creation, its impact, its anticipation of much later approaches to early modern women's poetry, and its influence on Dyce's later editing practices.

*Specimens* contains poetry by eighty-nine writers, beginning with Juliana Berners and ending with Dyce's contemporaries Felicia Hemans and Laetitia Landon (see Appendix 1 for the complete list of authors). Margaret Ezell, in her pioneering account of nineteenth-century editions of early modern women's writing, notes not only the continuing value of Dyce's edition, but also the positive reception it got from writers like Leigh Hunt and William Wordsworth.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth had an intermittent correspondence with Dyce, initially noting his own interest in preparing a volume like *Specimens*: 'By accident, I learned lately that you had made a Book of Extracts, which I had long wished for opportunity and industry to execute myself.'<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth went so far as to explain to Dyce that he was a special fan of the Countess of Winchelsea, and would be happy to be consulted about any choice of her poems, were Dyce to plan for another edition of *Specimens*. Wordsworth followed this up in a second letter in which he outlined how Dyce's volume was superior to the popular eighteenth-century anthology *Poems By Eminent Ladies*, edited by

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth to Dyce 19 October 1829, *Collected Letters* Electronic Edition, vol. 5, letter 474.

George Colman and Bonnell Thornton.<sup>3</sup> Dyce's response to this praise was to protest that *Specimens* was 'altogether so juvenile a production that I dare not ask you to accept a copy'.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Wordsworth decries the prominence of Aphra Behn in Colman and Thornton's collection, in his words 'from whose attempts they are miserably copious'.<sup>5</sup> As Margaret Ezell has again noted, Behn's poetry was both reduced in scope and de-eroticised between the 1755 edition of *Poems By Eminent Ladies* and the 1785 fourth edition.<sup>6</sup> Dyce, however, does have eight poems by Behn in his collection, though seven of them are brief songs. In contrast, in 1755 Colman and Thornton offered sixteen of Behn's poems, plus sixty pages of poetry from the erotic *A Voyage to the Isle of Love*. In the 1780 volume Behn is represented by a mere four poems, which implies that Wordsworth had been taking the first edition as his point of comparison. Wordsworth also offered Dyce detailed advice about his favourite Countess of Winchelsea, including, should Dyce be interested in some more aggressive editing for a follow-up edition of *Specimens*, suggestions for extracting and emending her poems to improve them. Wordsworth advocates changes to the selection from Mrs. Pilkington, and praises Jane Warton's *Elegy on the death of her father*. Wordsworth also expresses considerable admiration for Margaret Cavendish: 'The Mirth and melancholy has so many fine strokes of imagination that I cannot but think there must be merit in many parts of her writings.'<sup>7</sup> Wordsworth expresses a desire to 'get at the original works of the elder Poetesses—such as the Duchess of Newcastle Mrs Behn'.<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth exemplifies the response we have taken for granted during the last fifty years of the supposed reclamation of early modern women's writing: he is moved by the discovery of writers previously unknown to someone who had considered himself to be well informed about the literary history that preceded his own achievements.

Like Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt was an admirer of Dyce's anthology; he annotated his copy of *Specimens*, or at least annotated a few of the poets

<sup>3</sup> George Colman and Bonnell Thornton, *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, first published in 1755, with revised editions in 1773 and 1785.

<sup>4</sup> Dyce to Wordsworth 10 April 1830; Correspondence of Alexander Dyce, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, MSL/1869/65.

<sup>5</sup> Wordsworth to Dyce 20 April 1830, letter 521.

<sup>6</sup> Ezell, pp. 112–16; I think by the 1780 edition Ezell means the 1785 edition.

<sup>7</sup> Wordsworth letter 521.

<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth to Dyce, 1830.