

Editing Shakespeare: Some Key Terms and Dates

Seventeenth-Century Editions of Shakespeare's works:

[“foul papers,” prompt books, none preserved]

Quartos (“good quartos”, “bad quartos”, “doubtful quartos”, single plays, since 1594; *Othello* 1622; Shakespeare mentioned as author, but not involved in publication)

Folio [collected works, 1623, ed. Heminge and Condell; division into Acts; Shakespeare celebrated as author, but not involved in publication] (reprinted 1632, 1663, 1685).

The Eighteenth Century: A contest between editors.

The most important editions include:

1709 Nicholas Rowe

1725 Alexander Pope [introduces classicist division into scenes],

1733 Lewis Theobald [contemporary usage as criterion for textual questions]

1744 Thomas Hanmer

1747 William Warburton

1765 Samuel Johnson

1768-1783 Edward Capell

1773 George Steevens

1790 Edward Malone

The Nineteenth Century:

First Variorum edition (1803), Second Variorum edition (1813), Third Variorum edition (1821) [recording all known variants of the texts]

1863-1866: (Old) Cambridge Shakespeare: new departure, ‘back to the roots’; since then: Return to Quartos and Folio as only textual authorities.

1899-1924: First play by play critical edition: The Arden Shakespeare (= “Arden 1”)

1950s to 1980s: “Arden 2”

1990s to present (ongoing): “Arden 3”

Shakespeare's Personality and Biography

A (largely fictitious) biographical account had been prefixed to many editions of Shakespeare's work since Nicholas Rowe's edition (1709).

Edward Malone, in the late eighteenth century, was the first to offer a biographical account based on the few historical documents involving Shakespeare.

Controversies over the authorship of Shakespeare's plays date from 1857.

The most famous among 57 candidates are

- Francis Bacon (partly stylistic evidence)
- William Stanley, 6th Earl of DERBY (1560 oder 1561-1642)
- Roger Manners, 5th Earl of RUTLAND (1576-1612)
- Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of OXFORD