
Shakespeare and Print

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A belief in the longevity of literature is deeply embedded in Western culture. It is enshrined in familiar tags like *ars longa, vita brevis* and *littera scripta manent*. In the fifth century BC Thucydides declares that his history of the Peloponnesian War is not meant just for current readers, but 'as a possession for all time'. Horace rejoices that his Odes are 'a monument more lasting than brass'. At the end of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid says: 'And now my work is done, which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo.'

Shakespeare makes an interesting case study within the history of this idea. In his time, as recent commentators have argued, there was a crisis in attitudes to mortality: a new importance was accorded to the individual, while at the same time the unquestioning belief in a Christian life after death was in decline. This brought a particular urgency to the notion of the secular immortality of poetry. Then there is the special problem that Shakespeare articulates the ideal of literary survival with supreme eloquence in the *Sonnets*, yet seems in his practice of publication largely to have ignored publication in print, the obvious means to achieve it.

In a number of the *Sonnets* it is argued that the persistence of poetry is the only chance for human immortality. There seems to be nothing else in creation, whether in stone or metal, still less in flesh and blood, which can prevail against 'sad mortality':

O fearful meditation! Where, alack,
 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid,
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright. (Sonnet 65)

A 'powerful rhyme' will outlive 'marble' and 'gilded monuments'. It enshrines a 'living memory' which will defy death, 'shin[ing]' until the Day of Judgement (Sonnet 55). A number of other sonnets (16–19, 60, 63, 81, 107) take up the theme of immortality through verse.

This is not an unqualified assertion of eternal life for poetry. For one thing, the survival of poetry is asserted within the context of doomsday: not quite eternity, but the span of human history. Literature survives, not as a transcendent entity, but as part of a stable continuing culture. Moreover, the final couplet of Sonnet 65 is conditional rather than declarative, as much a quixotic challenge as a triumphant peroration. In *Love's Labour's Lost* the idea of devotion to posterity is given an ironic twist. The group of courtiers who dedicate themselves to enduring scholarly fame at the cost of present physical satisfactions soon yield to the demands of the flesh. Even within the *Sonnets*, there remains the problem of how future generations will interpret whatever survives. Sonnet 17 foresees a future generation which will scorn what will seem to them 'the stretched metre of an antique song' as well as the 'yellowed' paper it is written on. Language and style date, damaging poetry's power to communicate.

In the *Sonnets* Shakespeare himself is conscious of classical forebears like Ovid and Horace and their well-worn formulations of the idea that writing has powers of survival which defy the forces leading to oblivion. The sources of the classical writers' confidence is a little obscure. Was it the apparent permanence of the Roman Empire, the

fact that metrical verse was memorisable, or because writing on papyrus or stone was permanent? In Shakespeare's time the context had become still more complicated. The Latin poets were available for general perusal because some manuscripts survived to be recovered and copied in the early Renaissance, and then to be distributed much more widely in Latin and in translation after the invention and spread of printing. The Ovid or Horace Shakespeare held in his hands at school or later had passed through the bottleneck of the Dark Ages to participate in the new textual abundance of the sixteenth century. The survival of classical texts must have seemed living proof of the power of poetry to live on. By contrast, signs of the transience of material civilisation were scattered across England. The antiquarian John Weever, in his *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631), refers to the 'walls, towers, castles, crosses, forts, rampires, towns, cities, and such like monuments, here in Great Britain, which by age, wars, or the malignity of the times, are defaced, ruined, or utterly subverted.' Weever's first chapter is on the superiority of 'books, or writings' to physical structures as ways of preserving memory, and he quotes Horace, Martial and Ovid, as well as Spenser's translation of Du Bellay's *Les Antiquités de Rome* on this topic. Shakespeare borrowed many phrases from *The Ruins of Rome* (as Spenser called it) for the *Sonnets*; the earlier poem inspires much of the *Sonnets*' meditation on the ravages of time.

In the Renaissance classical archaeology was involved in complex crosscurrents with Christian doctrine over the idea of individual immortality. The picture grew bleaker through the seventeenth century. Writing in 1658, the learned physician Sir Thomas Browne meditated on the foolishness of human aspirations to the preservation of memory through physical monuments without even citing the consolation of textual permanence. Burial urns were a key example: such relics survived, and attracted increasing antiquarian interest in the period, but often all traces of the individuals who had left them had been erased. In *Hydriotaphia, Urn-Burial, Or, A Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns Lately Found in Norfolk*, printed in 1658, Browne commented that 'to subsist in bones', like those in the urns, 'and be but pyramidally extant', may in the end be only to serve as 'emblems of mortal vanities'.

The fall of the Roman Empire and the ruins of its civilisation

still visible in Rome itself and in its outer reaches were melancholy instances of the predations of time on material civilisation. The Dissolution of the Monasteries was another, famously present in the 'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang' of Sonnet 73. The line evokes the abbey chapels which were abandoned after their institutions were dissolved as part of Henry VIII's reformation of the English Church. Weever's *Funeral Monuments* is written out of horror at the destruction of church funeral monuments and thus of memory brought about in this reformation. The Reformers were impatient with the tradition of intercession for the dead and with visual representations of the spiritual. The result, according to Weever, was a catastrophic, wholesale obliteration of the past. Masses for the dead were no longer said, and pious memorials in windows, paintings and especially funerary sculpture were destroyed. Once again there is a comparison with the permanence of text. There is some irony in the contrast Weever makes between the laboriously engraved but ephemeral stone epitaph and casual but enduring writing on paper. He begs the tomb-makers of London to 'be so careful of posterity, as to preserve in writing the inscriptions or epitaphs which they daily engrave upon funeral monuments.' The most vulnerable and apparently ephemeral form – language written on paper – proves to be the most lasting. These writings Weever will 'publish to the view of the world', if only to encourage others to extend and correct his own work.

Clearly Weever is thinking here of the fixity and wide distribution of print. What he says fits well with the revolution in cumulative knowledge associated with print. Before print, knowledge acquired in one generation could easily be forgotten by the next, and certainly could not be easily disseminated from one centre of learning to another. After print, one set of scientific or archaeological observations – recording the progression of the stars, or the inscriptions on a group of monuments – could be preserved and disseminated in a printed book and used by others, even if only to be corrected or added to.

Shakespeare lived through an age of rapid expansion in print. The new technology provided a vast range of material for recycling in dramatic form, and was one of the things that made the Shakespearean drama possible. Often more or less verbatim borrowings can be traced.

Some of Poor Tom's ravings in *King Lear* come straight from a contemporary pamphlet on exorcism, and much of Gonzalo's description of a utopian state in *The Tempest* is taken directly from the published translation of an essay by Montaigne.

Print was a technology that gave text an unprecedented fixity and, through ready multiplication of copies, superior odds of physical survival. It has sometimes been suggested that the print revolution lies behind attitudes to literary survival like those in the *Sonnets*. In *Gutenberg's Elegies*, a book celebrating the kind of immersion in reading which is facilitated by the printed book (and may well be disappearing in an age of digital text and multimedia), Sven Birkerts treats the topos of literary permanence as a side effect of print. In oral culture, 'the process, the transmission, had precedence over the thing transmitted.' The fixity of print changed this.

Verbal perfectability, style and the idea of ownership followed. The words on the page, chiselled and refined by a single author, aspired to permanence. The more perfect, the more inevitable an expression seemed, the greater the claim that the author could lay on posterity. Think of the bold boasting in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*...Everything hinged upon the artistic power of the work itself.

Elizabeth Eisenstein, in her pioneering study of the effects of print, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, speculates about a different attitude to the permanence of personal literary achievement after printing:

The 'drive for fame' itself may have been affected by print-made immortality ...The wish to see one's work in print (fixed forever in card files and anthologies) is different from the desire to pen lines that could never get fixed in a permanent form, might be lost forever, altered by copying, or – if truly memorable – be carried by oral transmission and assigned ultimately to 'anon'.

Print must have changed perceptions about posterity at a deep level. Michael Clanchy, in his study of the transition from oral to written record-keeping in medieval England, offers examples of the medieval practice of dating documents in relation to recent famous events. In the absence of any commonly accepted dating system, scribes referred to

what were to them obvious milestones, such as a visit by the king or the death of a bishop. The thought that these might mean little even a generation hence does not seem to have occurred to them. 'Despite their appeals to posterity,' Clanchy says, 'medieval writers seem to have found it difficult to imagine that their work might survive for centuries and that a time would come when only a professional historian knew when "the king took the allegiance of the barons of Scotland at York".'

It is clear, then, that the notion of the survival of some essence of the writer through his or her writing – *non omnis moriar*, 'I shall not wholly die,' as Horace puts it – means something different after the invention of print. Yet whatever the underlying cultural changes brought about by print, Shakespeare chose not to take advantage of this medium to ensure the survival of his work, and it was not the textual mode uppermost in his mind when he composed the plays. He seems to have taken no steps to have any of his plays printed. It was only because after his death two of the actors in his own stage company chose to gather manuscripts of the plays to be published in the Folio edition of 1623 that we have thirty-eight Shakespeare plays rather than twenty-two. Without the Folio, we would know there was a play called *Macbeth*, but have only the vaguest idea what was in it.

The association of print with permanence is obvious to us, as it was to many in Shakespeare's own time. The mechanical regularity of the printed page has an official, archival quality; and the ready multiplication of copies through print offers insurance against accidental or even systematic destruction. This was not lost on a writer like Shakespeare's contemporary and rival Ben Jonson, who published his plays and poems in printed folio with a grand pictorial frontispiece, and was clearly investing in his posterity by this means. Jonson's volume, which came out in 1616, may well have served as a model for the Folio printing of Shakespeare's works after the latter's death. In describing his masque *Hymenaei*, Jonson associates the printed form with the soul of the masque, fit to survive indefinitely, while its body, the performance, rendered in flesh and blood and the material appurtenances of staging, is destined to perish. In his tribute to Shakespeare at the beginning of the Folio, Jonson explicitly prefers the book itself to any physical funeral monument for preserving the memory of the writer.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, seems to have thought the performance of his plays the proper mode of publication. He relied on the playhouse to disseminate his work; those playgoers who gathered at the Globe (the home theatre of his company) were the only audience he considered important. Some of his plays were printed in his day, probably without his approval, and some playwrights like Jonson were making sure their plays were printed in good editions so they could reach a wider audience in their own time and have a better chance of being read by future generations. Yet Shakespeare chose to rely on live, oral presentation to theatre audiences. Originally there was a hand-written batch of papers with dialogue and some directions for staging, which was copied for the use of the prompter in the theatre and was probably copied again into separate parts for the actors to learn their lines. 'Publication' took place when the play, no doubt changed along the way as the company rehearsed it with the playwright, was performed. If there is an original text of *King Lear*, for instance, it is a set of performances in the Globe theatre and at court in 1605–06, based on a manuscript prompt book, brought to life by a set of real people and acted according to their skills, their inherited ways of doing things, the particular facilities of the stage, and the instructions of the playwright who also filled the role of director. An analogy from recent times is the golden age of British television comedy in the 1980s and early 1990s, the era of *Fawlty Towers* and *Dad's Army*: little thought was given to preserving the shows in an archive for posterity, indeed such an idea might have seemed pretentious, an absurd confusion between high culture and ephemeral popular entertainment. The programmes had their life in immediate consumption by a large weekly audience.

Shakespeare's attitude to print remains a matter of speculation, of course. Katherine Duncan-Jones has suggested that he did authorise the publication of the *Sonnets*, and that he is the 'W.S.' of the note on the title page of *Loocrine* – a tragedy, published in 1595, and sometimes attributed to him – stating that this book was 'Newly set forth, overseen and corrected, By W.S.' (There is little to go on beyond the initials.) Then there is the possibility that his bequests of money for mourning rings to his fellow actors Richard Burbage, John Heminge and Henry Condell were to encourage them to publish his plays in folio.

Nevertheless, most scholars think that the two long poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are the only cases where Shakespeare authorised and supervised the printing of his work. The *Sonnets* were printed in 1609, probably some time after their composition. The dedication (to a mysterious 'Mr. W.H.') is signed with the printer's initials (T.T., for Thomas Thorpe), not by Shakespeare. This seems to indicate that they were printed without the latter's supervision. The text of the *Sonnets* is corrupt; the more than average number of misspellings suggests haste and a lack of careful proofreading. The press-work is not of a high standard, with poor inking. Doubts have been raised as to whether *The Lover's Complaint*, printed in the same volume, is in fact by Shakespeare. The 1609 quarto volume of the *Sonnets* was issued unbound, probably not stitched but roughly stabbed with string or thread, as befitted something like a poetical pamphlet.

Within the *Sonnets*, references to their own textuality are to a manuscript form. Sonnet 71 has 'if you read this line, remember not/ The hand that writ it.' Sonnets 77 and 122 refer to blank manuscript books or 'table-books'. Other evidence points to the chief intended form of publication being manuscript circulation among a very limited circle. The scholar Francis Meres, in his collection of jottings called *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598), reports that sonnets by Shakespeare were circulating among his 'private friends'. Altogether there are few surviving seventeenth-century versions of the *Sonnets* in manuscript which do not derive from the 1609 and 1640 printings, fewer than for Raleigh, Jonson or Donne. It may be significant that the two sonnets printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), a volume of love lyrics by various authors, which has Shakespeare's name on its title page, are from the Dark Lady sequence and not from the first group of the *Sonnets*, the Young Man ones, which refer to a more aristocratic social world.

Manuscript transmission, as Arthur F. Marotti shows, was the dominant tradition for Renaissance lyric verse in England. He stresses its 'occasional' characteristics: 'authors professed a literary amateurism and claimed to care little about the textual stability or historical durability of their socially contingent productions.' By convention, he says, manuscript transmission was open to 'reader emendation, supplementation, response, and parody', as well as being subject to copying errors. A

contemporary commentator like George Puttenham treats the poems, in Marotti's words, as 'social ephemera' inflected by a 'social textuality'.

Authors had few rights in their texts. Before 1709, property rights for printed texts were vested in printers; in effect, property rights for manuscript works belonged to the owners of the manuscripts. As well as straightforward copying slips there was the possibility of those introduced by transcription from memory, and from deliberate rearrangement and blending with other texts. A mid-seventeenth-century manuscript excerpts six lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet 65 in Benson's edition, changing line 3 from 'How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea' to 'O how shall beauty with this rage hold plea'. Whether or not it makes sense to relate the highly rhetorical promises that the speaker of the *Sonnets* makes about literary immortality to the practices of manuscript transmission for lyric poetry at the time, it is clear that these mechanisms militated against survival intact.

If we turn to references within Shakespeare's plays and poems to gauge his interest in the printed book we find little to go on. I count three passages showing an awareness of the world of print. The rebel peasant leader Jack Cade in *Henry VI, Part 1* accuses Lord Say of having had books printed and having founded a paper mill – as if literacy had become a crime against the people. As well as 'kill[ing] all the lawyers', the leaders of Cade's mob plan to eradicate all traces of a clerkly bureaucracy. The scene from which Cade's speech comes contains many disparaging references to books and writing. The only other literal use of 'print' in the plays and poems is in *The Winter's Tale* where a shepherdess exclaims, 'I love a ballad in print, alife, for then we are sure they are true.'

Beyond this there are only scattered examples in the canon where 'print' or 'printing' is associated with typography and used in a metaphorical sense. The most elaborate instance is in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Mistress Page is indignant when she finds that she and Mistress Ford have near-identical love letters from Falstaff. The two documents, says Mistress Page, resemble each other '[l]etter for letter':

but that the name of Page and Ford differs: to thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy Letter: but let thine inherit first, for I protest mine never shall: I warrant he hath a thousand of

these Letters, writ with blank space for different names – sure, more, and these are of the second edition. He will print them, out of doubt – for he cares not what he puts into the press when he would put us two: I had rather be a giantess, and lie under Mount Pelion.

A concordance reveals that this is Shakespeare's only use of 'edition', and his only use of 'press' in this sense.

In general, forms of the verb 'print' in Shakespeare are more often associated with the impression made by a seal or a foot. In the couplet of Sonnet 11, Nature is declared to have 'carved' the young man 'for her seal, and meant thereby/ Thou shouldst print more, and not let that copy die'. There are the horses 'printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving Earth' in *Henry V* and the 'printless foot' of the elves in *The Tempest*. The underlying metaphorical force is of printing as the making of exact copies, which typography does, of course, but the immediate material vehicle for the metaphor Shakespeare has in mind seems to be a single object such as a seal. Faces often bear marks conceived of as print, as in the 'print' of Venus' hand on Adonis' cheek, and the 'false prints' to which the softness of women's complexions make them vulnerable, according to Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, but the material indicated seems to be wax rather than paper.

In *Much Ado* Hero according to her father cannot deny '[t]he story that is printed in her blood', i.e. in her blush. Biological reproduction is an important tenor – as with the Sonnet 11 already quoted and in *The Winter's Tale*, where Leontes sees his friend's grown-up son for the first time (this is a case where it is hard to decide between seal and printing press as the underlying vehicle of the metaphor – the note in *The Norton Shakespeare* refers to typography):

Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince,
For she did print your royal father off,
Conceiving you. Were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
(His very air) that I should call you brother,
As I did him, and speak of something wildly
By us performed before.

Looking more generally at references to books in the plays and poems, we find a striking series of associations in the plays between books and a divinely maintained record – as in ‘the book of heaven’ or ‘the book of trespasses’. The fact that names (or trespasses) are often to be ‘razed’ or ‘blotted’ from these books suggests that they are envisaged as manuscript, like an account book, rather than printed. In *Richard II*, Mowbray, on the brink of exile, swears solemnly that he is innocent of treason: ‘if ever I were traitor,/ My name be blotted from the book of life,/ And I from heaven banished as from hence.’

There are, then, indications of an awareness of a world of print – especially in terms of popular and ephemeral items – but, judging from the way he wrote in his plays and poems, Shakespeare generally thought of ‘printing’ in terms of physical impressions like those a seal makes in wax, and of books in terms of manuscript volumes and imaginatively potent divine books of account rather than the printed form. He appears backward-looking, averting his attention from print, as a highly specific material domain, prosaic, commercial, mundane, even bureaucratic (as it seems to Cade and his men in *Henry VI, Part 1*). Shakespeare’s interest is more in the mythopoeic and the metaphysical. There is perhaps a time-lag operating. For Shakespeare, print had not yet established itself as worthy of representation in poetic drama or indeed in poetry, and older technologies, such as quill pen, ink and paper, served his imaginative purposes better.

An extreme contrast is a play like Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News*. The background for the action is a project to monopolise printed news in broadsheets and pamphlets. The commercial realities of printers and printing are prominent in the dialogue. Admittedly, Jonson’s play is in a form – satirical city comedy – Shakespeare avoided, and it dates from the 1630s, long after Shakespeare’s death, but it does help mark the degree to which Shakespeare’s drama eschews contemporary technologies of communication.

The faith in the survival of the literary in the examples examined here does not derive in any direct sense from any technology or institution of the text – not from the fixed form or wide distribution of the printed page, nor from the trans-generational permanence of the deposit library. Rather it seems to be rooted in the immaterial aspect

of language, which (unlike funeral monuments, which may be marble but are nonetheless material and so destructible) survives copying into other forms and transfer into memory. Shakespeare's faith in textual survival, judging from references in his writings, was based on an ideal text free of material support, a book only in a metaphorical sense, like the Book of Life. From a modern perspective it is clear that the survival of his writing has in fact depended on a gigantic investment in textual institutions and technologies: an entire profession of editors sprang up in the eighteenth century, for instance, and shows no sign of diminishing. Together the individuals working in Shakespeare editing and publishing, with their various and changing modes of publication, made possible an increasingly mobile yet linguistically stable textuality. The generations that followed Shakespeare acquired resources for the preservation and communication of text beyond his wildest dreams. This process has gone through a further intensification in our own time with digital text and the world wide web.

The curious circumstances of Shakespeare's relation to print offer an interesting perspective on the proper model for the editing of Shakespeare's works. Editors from the eighteenth to the late twentieth century aimed to recover by scholarly labours a single text which might vary from all existing versions, but was believed to be their origin. Most now think that this aspiration to achieve a single ideal text for each item in the canon was misguided. The 1997 *Norton Shakespeare* has a section in the introduction on 'The Dream of the Master Text'. The ideal text now seems a poor fit with the actual materials an editor has to work with. Marotti points out that 'no text of the *Sonnets*, in either manuscript or print...can be shown to represent the ideal of old-fashioned textual critics, the "author's final intentions".' Editors now want us to concentrate instead on individual material witnesses to a text, on a given Quarto or Folio edition of a play, for example, rather than on any hypothetically reconstructed original version. Historians of the book say we have neglected the modified textuality which comes with each change to the technology of the text. There is much that is constant between *The Canterbury Tales* in an illuminated manuscript, created when memory or hand copying were the only forms of reproduction, in a modern scholarly edition in a large print run, and in a

version on a Chaucer website, but some essential aspects in the reader's experience have changed through these different realisations, and these differences are now the focus of a new interest in the relations between text and technology. Jerome McGann has argued that the linguistic text cannot offer the full range of meaning of any piece of writing, and that what he calls the 'bibliographic' as opposed to the 'linguistic' codes have irrefutable claims to a share in full textuality.

Nevertheless, the example of Shakespeare reminds us that a certain kind of ideal text, with a textuality closer to the Book of Life than to a printed quarto on the booksellers' stalls in St Paul's Cathedral in 1609, was, and remains, a powerful cultural imperative. It is not precisely transcendental, nor eternal, but coterminous with the human culture needed to sustain it. This is human culture viewed as a cross-generational continuity, rather than in terms of individual material products like a single manuscript or instance of a printed edition. The Divine Book is the right metaphor, but only a metaphor. The faith involved is neither material nor metaphysical but in the continuity of a literary community.

The ideal text of the older editors is not precisely the same as the Shakespearean textuality that I have been sketching, drawing on the fragmentary evidence of his publication practice and on tropes and attitudes within his writing. The existence of his ideal text is not in a critical edition but in performance and in 'lovers' eyes'. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's anti-materialistic and humanistic view of literary text has something in common with the older editing ideology of the ideal original version. Unlike statues and monuments text in this view is immaterial and so permanent: writing begins with a particular technology, but in the right circumstances something can float free of its material form and gain an independent existence. In our own time electronic text makes newly apparent the transferability of the linguistic text from one medium to another, and the fact that an entirely new form of textuality can subsume this transferable text, just as print did with manuscript forms. Shakespeare's own conception of textuality lies to one side of the watershed constituted by print; the digital text lies to the other; paradoxically, these two extremes share a good deal in their sense of a dematerialised and perdurable writing.

We are part of the distant posterity dreamed of in the *Sonnets*, and there is a fascinating contradiction in the idea that we are living in a time Shakespeare could not possibly have imagined, yet are still responding intensely to his work. From one perspective it is the ever developing technical and institutional supports for text that have justified his faith in a posterity, so that the ideal text is no more than a convenient figure of speech to represent a network of human activities across individuals, institutions, technologies and generations; from another there is something mysterious, an excess even after such things have been accounted for, in the paradoxical survival and indeed vigorous flourishing of works whose future their creator, it seems, took few practical steps to ensure.

Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997). Classical quotations are from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I.xxii.4, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV.871, and Horace, *Odes*, III.xxx.1–16. Translations are from Loeb editions, sometimes modified slightly. L.D. Reynolds's collection *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Clarendon, 1983) offers a useful account of the survival of classical texts.

On Renaissance attitudes to mortality, see Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1994) and Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Clarendon, 1997). The connections between Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and Du Bellay's *Ruins of Rome* were established by A. Kent Hieatt in 'The Genesis of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*: Spenser's *Ruines of Rome*: by Bellay', in *PMLA* 98 (1983).

The full title of Sven Birkerts's book is *Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (Faber, 1996). I refer also to Elizabeth Eisenstein's two-volume work *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge UP, 1979) and to Michael Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (Harvard UP, 1979). There is an excellent discussion of the importance of print to the theatre of Shakespeare's time in Julie Peters, *The Theatre of the Book 1480–1880: Print, Text and Performance in Early Modern Europe* (OUP, 2000). For a sampling of views on the status of the Shakespearean text by reference to the conditions of the playhouse of the time, see G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton University Press, 1971); Randall McLeod, 'Unediting Shakespeare', *Sub-stance* 33/4 (1982): 26–55; Stephen Orgel, 'The Authentic Shakespeare', *Representations* 21 (1988): 1–25; and Margaret de Grazia, 'The Essential Shakespeare and the Material Book', *Textual Practice* 2 (1988): 68–96.

For the publication and circulation history of the *Sonnets* I rely on Arthur F.

Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cornell University Press, 1995), his article 'Shakespeare's *Sonnets* as Literary Property' in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (University of Chicago Press, 1990), and the anonymous introduction to the Scolar Press facsimile of the *Sonnets* (1968). The case that Shakespeare did interest himself in print is put in Katherine Duncan-Jones in 'Was the 1609 Shakespeare's *Sonnets* really unauthorized?', *Review of English Studies* 34 (1983), and in *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from his Life* (Thomson Learning, 2001).

A convenient place to find McGann's ideas is his 'The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies on the Interpretation of Literary Works', in his *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation* (University of Chicago Press, 1985). My thanks go to Hugh Lindsay for directions to classical sources, and to the students in my Text and Technology class in 2001, who helped me work out many of the ideas in this essay.