



Giddens, Eugene. How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text

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Volume 34, Number 1-2, Winter–Spring 2011

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1106418ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v34i1-2.16182>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Lawrence, S. (2011). Review of [Giddens, Eugene. How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 34(1-2), 269–271. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v34i1-2.16182>

Persuasively interweaving verbal and visual textualities, Frye's elegantly wrought work enriches our understanding of women's subjectivities and rhetorical practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries even as it makes a timely contribution to discussions of early modern English material culture.

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Giddens, Eugene.

How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. ix, 187. ISBN 978-0-521-71397-9 (paperback) \$28.95.

Eugene Giddens has written a very useful book and assigned it a misleading title. From the title, one would expect his book to concern itself with major thematic concerns like gender or religion, or major generic categories like comedy or tragedy. Giddens notes near the beginning of the third chapter (of four) that "As it would be impossible to contain all of the approaches to 'reading' a play text within a single book chapter, this section will outline some of the techniques available to scholars to help with encountering the originals" (106). This note could describe the book as a whole, which restricts itself to bibliography. Only the fourth and final chapter concerns itself with "Reading modern editions," and this largely shows "how editorial policy affects the text" (147). While *How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text* omits much of what affects the reading process outside bibliography, it by no means limits itself to Shakespeare. Chapter two, "The Features of a Play Text," includes sections on features found seldom or never in Shakespearean texts. Most of the third chapter works through a practical guide to editing, but mainly by reference to the works of James Shirley, of which Giddens is general editor. Much of this material possesses considerable interest, and it is certainly relevant to reading Renaissance play texts, but not to reading Shakespeare's in particular.

This observation is not meant to criticize the book as a whole, only the title. *How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text* succeeds as a survey of and introduction to the bibliographical investigation and editing of early modern play texts in general. At the bottom of his first page, Giddens defers to earlier

guides to bibliography, particularly Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* and D. C. Greetham's *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*. Giddens's own work might be regarded as an introduction to the introductions for students of early modern drama. It is therefore unique, valuable and timely. As Giddens correctly notes, an increasing range of scholars are called upon to edit Shakespearean texts, and no real introduction exists for them (117). A large part of the third chapter works through the tasks an editor has to perform, and the elements of the early texts that she or he has to examine. Much of the last chapter recapitulates the controversy between proponents of modern and original spelling, and the first chapter reviews several other controversies. *How to Read a Shakespearean Play Text* combines the best features of a handbook and a survey of criticism.

Graduate programs in literature increasingly neglect bibliography, while facsimiles of early printed texts are becoming ubiquitous. In this context, Giddens's book serves as both a guide and a warning. As a guide, it explains such mechanics as how quarto pages are folded, where chain-lines run, and the difference between publisher and printer. As a warning, it draws attention to the limited amount we can know, quoting the Oxford editors in particular as unjustifiably certain of the provenance of their copy texts (101). Giddens cautions that a facsimile usually represents only one exemplar, and that the process of reproduction effaces important information, such as changes in the stock of paper. One hopes that this book enjoys an extensive readership among students of Renaissance literature, since interest in early texts continues to rise even while English departments are cancelling their courses in bibliography.

Giddens discusses electronic texts only briefly and at the very end of his book. Neither "Internet" nor "electronic" appear in his index. He does not refer to the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* until his second to last page, though it may eventually correct many of the shortcomings he identifies in modern editions. By giving so little attention to electronic texts, Giddens neglects an opportunity to address just the sorts of first-time editors of Shakespeare to whom he directs his advice.

A work of this length inevitably omits a great deal, but I found it startling to discover the only reference to George Peele as a collaborator on *Titus Andronicus* raised parenthetically more than half-way through the book, and over a hundred pages after the (brief) reference to Brian Vickers and Macdonald P. Jackson's work on Shakespeare's collaborations. The index lists Titus under

Shakespeare's name, but lists *Timon of Athens* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* under the names of Shakespeare and his presumed co-authors (Thomas Middleton and John Fletcher, respectively). Another slip occurs when Giddens declares that "the ESTC is not a hundred percent complete" then adds helpfully in brackets "May 2001." Either this represents a typographical error for May 2010, or Giddens is publishing information ten years out of date.

Giddens' text is admirably brief, and handsomely illustrated. Few scholars in the field would not find this book useful and every library ought to hold a copy. However, it is printed in a wide format and bound in paper. This is the sort of book that one would wish to handle frequently, but it is too large to carry in a pocket. My own copy is already scuffed and the corners are beginning to curl.

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Grendler, Paul F.

The University of Mantua, the Gonzaga & the Jesuits, 1584–1630.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. Pp. xx, 287. ISBN 978-0-8018-9171-7 (hardcover) \$62.

Paul Grendler is a distinguished scholar in the study of Italian universities in the Renaissance / Reformation period. His most comprehensive study is *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 2002. His new book on the university at Mantua is a detailed study of a school which was begun by the Gonzaga Dukes of Mantua to enhance the prestige of their family and Mantua, and by the Jesuits to foster education and the Catholic faith. In his preface Grendler asks, "Why study a university that lasted only a few years?" He gives several answers. Here one can trace the whole history of the university from start to finish — 1624–1629. There are unusually detailed documents showing how the Jesuits and the ducal family worked together to organize and finance the Jesuit college. The relationships of the Gonzaga, the Jesuits, and the lay faculty in the later schools of law and medicine were generally smooth. The initial Jesuit college concentrated on the humanities.