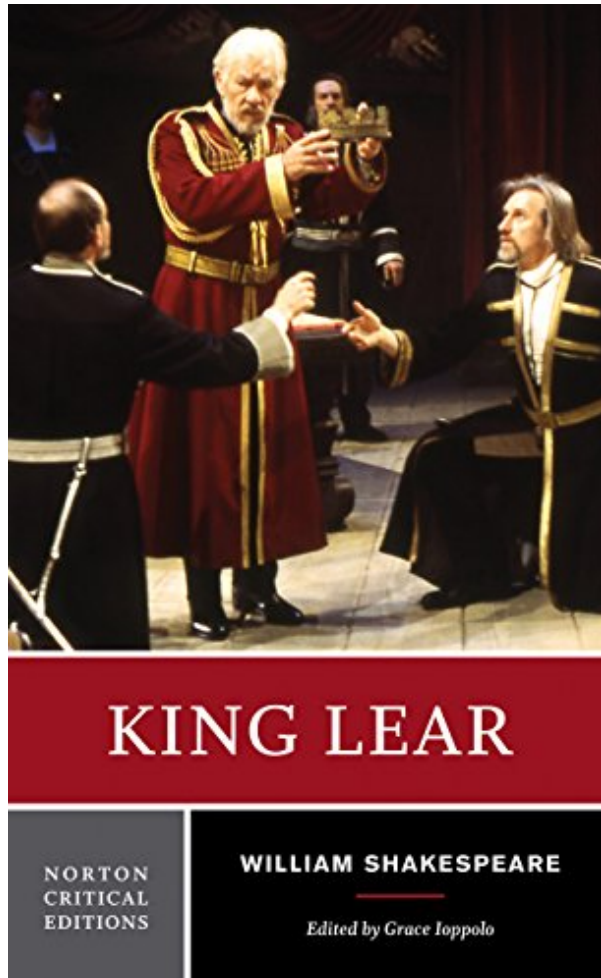


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KING LEAR

NORTON
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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Edited by Grace Ioppolo

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About the Author

Grace Ioppolo is the founder and director of the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project and is Professor of Shakespearean and Early Modern Drama in the Department of English and American Literature at the University of Reading, England. She is the author of *Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Heywood: Authorship, Authority, and the Playhouse* (2006) and *Revising Shakespeare* (1991). She has edited Shakespeare's *King Lear* for Norton and has published widely on textual transmission, the history of the book and literary and historical manuscripts, most recently as the co-editor of *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (2007). She is the General Editor of *The Collected Works of Thomas Heywood*, forthcoming 2012–15.

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This Norton Critical Edition is based on the Folio text of King Lear (carefully corrected prior to its printing in 1623). The editor has interpolated the best-known and most-often discussed passages from Quarto I (including the “mock-trial” scene) as is fully explained in both “A Note on the Text” and the annotations that accompany the play.

“Sources” helps readers navigate King Lear’s rich history and includes the nine essential primary sources from which Shakespeare borrowed significantly in creating his play, along with two additional likely sources.

“Criticism” provides thirteen major critical interpretations and three provocative adaptations and responses to King Lear. Critical interpretation is provided by Samuel Johnson, Charles Lamb, Peter Brook, Michael Warren, Lynda E. Boose, Janet Adelman, and R. A. Foakes, among others. The adaptations and responses are by Nahum Tate, John Keats, and Edward Bond.

A Selected Bibliography is also included.

- Sales Rank: #32661 in Books
- Brand: Shakespeare, William/ Ioppolo, Grace (EDT)
- Published on: 2007-12-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.40" h x .70" w x 5.20" l, .61 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 480 pages

About the Author

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AS EVER THE ONE-STOP SOURCE FOR PRIMARY RESEARCH, BUT I LIKE THE OXFORD
By Love Thy Enemy

Right off the bat, please let me share my preference for the The Oxford Shakespeare: The History of King Lear. Above any other presentation for reading and direct research, nothing for me can top good old Yale Professor Tucker Brooke's conflated edition The Tragedy Of King Lear (The Yale Shakespeare), the best thing ever to emerge from Yale, even considering some recent presidents. I find Brooke's a joy to read and the Oxford wonderful to study, retaining as it does the old format of text at top half of page, a middle strand of variorum and then a bottom third of notes, with the great associated articles and essays, etc.

That said, let us turn to this recent Norton Critical Edition. While the creative, artistic Oxford may resemble driving a Porsche (I do not know as I never have), the Norton is more a utilitarian vehicle: gets the job done and has all of the works. Go to Norton for one stop research.

Please permit one brief return. Professor Tucker Brooke did what nearly every editor has since done, and did it very well, in conflating the Quarto with the Folio editions of Lear, and being straightforward and honest about this, and indicating very well through punctuation and footnotes which section came from which edition.

Lear first emerged early in its writing in a Quarto edition, probably before many performances. The Folio emerged much later, losing 300 lines of the Q. while gaining another one hundred. In the eighteenth century another edition was prepared for performance by Nahum Tate, changing much of the play (Cordelia marries Edgar; France is out!) and tacking on a happy ending. This happier version remained in performance for well over a century, until someone dared play Lear as originally written once again.

Since then the debate has been: which version of Lear to play, Quarto or Folio. The Folio is often supposed to have been altered to honor new censorship laws and to please the new King, who might find offense in Edgar mocking astrology (although Edmund does so quite thoroughly), etc. The sight of a mad King presiding over legal proceedings might also give offense, and so we lose the wonderful "mock trial" scene in the Folio. For a variety of reasons the Quarto was therefore dismissed by scholars as somehow inferior (while containing some of the of the best jokes and lines!) and the Folio preferred.

Professor Brooke did us a great favor therefore in resurrecting the Quarto to its deserved respectability, and conflating it with the Folio, as nearly all editors have since done. Unfortunately for a recent brief spell, the Folio re-emerged as the ONLY authentic version, and so the late recordings done with the great Lear's Paul Scofield and Sir Gielgud were Folio only, most likely to their own great frustration. To miss these wonderful voices in the abbreviated Folio version, and lose their renditions of the mock trial and other Quarto only scenes, is a great loss to the language and to each one of us. In fact, amazon refuses to correct its product page of the Gielgud recording, and insists upon calling it the "abridged" edition. Hear him roar at King Lear (BBC Radio Presents); he is magnificent, if abridged by the Folio.

In any case our editor here at the Norton, Grace Ioppolo of the University of Reading (a most auspicious name), claims strongly for the Folio version, and yet conflates the Quarto, as she explains, in condescension to the public, to us groundlings, as we expect it. Nevertheless, her notes do not explain in every instance when we are seeing Folio only and when we are seeing what only appears in the Quarto. The text page does not list the variorum in a thin band across the lower half, as we come to expect in the Arden or Oxford, but saves all such notes for one incredibly thick and jumbled few pages at the end of the play, impossible to read, as all italic with some bold faced headings included. We see very few footnotes explaining the text, and I have already loaded my margins with marginalia in which I dispute her reading (not her university, her interpretation), although I do find her to come the closest of any editor in interpreting nearly courageously the true implications of "If I had thee in Lipsbury pifold" although immediately she misreads in the same line "care for me." Courageous in the first, she loses heart in the latter.

In brief, we often find it useful to turn to the Norton for primary sources, and indeed we find here several presented in abridged form. We receive just enough for inclusion in term papers, etc., but not the full source. We read very brief snippets from the Mirror for Magistrates, of course, Holinshed, certainly, Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, James VI of Scotland and James the First of England, Samuel Harsnett's A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, and Camden. We are also given a sniff of original documents from the case of Bryan Annesley, but again each of these is so brief as to incite desire to read elsewhere. Such snippets may be of use to the undergraduate desperate for citations (who in any case has the Internet), but not the more leisurely armchair scholar.

The whole history of Lear criticism is seen also in brief glimpses of snippets, from Nahum Tate's preface through Samuel Johnson's Notes, and Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt to more modern criticism, including director Peter Brooks, who filmed and directed Scofield as Lear. Also included are abridgements from Lynda Boose's "Father and Bride in Shakespeare," Janet Adelman's "Suffocating Mothers," Margot Heinemann's "King Lear and the World Upside Down," Foakes's "Hamlet vs. Lear," and Stanley Cavell's "The Avoidance of Love."

A few scenes from adaptations are included, including the Tate version which supplanted for so long Shakespeare's Lear. We find in this section the UNABRIDGED sonnet by John Keats entitled "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again (a title nearly as long as the Sonnet in the spirit of Deadline Poet Calvin Trillin), whose relationship to the play itself is tenuous at best. Even less related is the few scenes extracted from Edward Bond's 1972 play Lear, from which we, dwelling in the shadow of the international wall imposed against Mexico, may nevertheless read with interest these lines on page 264 of this edition:

"LEAR - I started this wall when I was young. I stopped my enemies in the field, but there was always more of them. How could we ever be free? So I built this wall to keep my enemies out. My people will live behind this wall when I'm dead. You may be governed by fools but you'll always live in peace. My wall will make you free. (. . .)"

In any case, an interesting introduction, some interesting essays no one may ever read, and all in abridgement, an uninformative lay-out of the play, but a useful text to supplement your Lear shelf in your home library. For main reading, get the Oxford; for reading of the play itself, get the enduring, endearing Professor Tucker Brookes. And on your amazon Wish List be sure to place: King Lear: New Critical Essays (Shakespeare Criticism) and Critical Essays on Shakespeare's King Lear (Critical Essays on British Literature) among the others available here upon the great and mighty amazon.

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Mediocre Critical Essays

By LB

The critical essays included in this edition are mediocre and dull. Better and more recently scholarly work should have been included. This is simply poorly edited.

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