

# **THE CASE FOR THE FOLIO**

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‘The First Folio remains, as a matter of fact, the text nearest to Shakespeare’s stage, to  
Shakespeare’s ownership, to Shakespeare’s authority’

(Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke, preface to their Pembroke Edition, 1903)

**THIS ESSAY OFFERS A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE  
EDITORIAL PROBLEM IN SHAKESPEARE THAN THAT  
PROVIDED ON pp. l-lvii/50-57 OF THE  
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO  
THE RSC SHAKESPEARE: COMPLETE WORKS**

**THE QUARTOS**

The original manuscripts of Shakespeare's works do not survive: the sole extant composition in his hand is a single scene from *Sir Thomas More*, a multi-authored play that cannot really be described as 'his'. Shakespeare only survives because his works were printed.

In his lifetime there appeared the following works (all spellings of titles modernized here, numbering inserted for convenience only, sequence of publication within same year not readily established). They were nearly all printed in the compact and relatively low-priced format, which may be thought of as the equivalent of the modern paperback, known as quarto (the term is derived from the fact that each sheet of paper that came off the press was folded to make four leaves):

- 1] *Venus and Adonis* (1593) – poem.
- 2] *Lucrece* (1594) – poem.
- 3] *The most lamentable Roman tragedy of Titus Andronicus, as it was played by the right honourable the Earl of Derby, Earl of Pembroke and Earl of Sussex their servants* (1594) – without the fly-killing scene that appears in the 1623 First Folio.
- 4] *The first part of the contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey, and the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolk, and the tragical end of the proud Cardinal of Winchester, with the notable rebellion of Jack Cade, and the Duke of York's first claim unto the crown* (1594) – a variant version of the play that in the 1623 First Folio was called *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth*.

5] *The true tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the death of good King Henry the sixth, with the whole contention between the two houses Lancaster and York, as it was sundry times acted by the right honourable the Earl of Pembroke his servants* (1595, in octavo as opposed to quarto format) – a variant version of the play that in the 1623 First Folio was called *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth*.

6] *The tragedy of Richard the Second, as it hath been publicly acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1597) – without the deposition scene that appears in some later quarto printings and the Folio.

7] *The tragedy of Richard the Third, containing his treacherous plots against his brother Clarence, the pitiful murder of his innocent nephews, his tyrannical usurpation, with the whole course of his detested life and most deserved death. As it hath been lately acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1597) – hundreds of variants in comparison with the Folio text.

8] *An excellent conceited tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, as it hath been often (with great applause) played publicly by the right honourable Lord of Hunsdon his servants* (1597) – a short and often flawed text that was replaced by a new quarto of 1599 (*‘Newly corrected, augmented and amended’*) that sought to establish a more authoritative text from which that in the Folio ultimately derives.

9] *A pleasant conceited comedy called Love’s Labours Lost, as it was presented before her highness this last Christmas. Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespeare* (1598) – good quality text from which that in the Folio derives (*‘newly corrected and augmented’* may imply that there was an earlier, less good quality text, now lost, which this was intended to replace).

10] *The History of Henry the fourth, with the battle at Shrewsbury between the King and Lord Henry Percy surnamed Henry Hotspur of the north, with the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaff* (1598) – good quality text of the play that, with minor variations, appears in the Folio as *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* (a fragment of a single sheet of four leaves survives from an edition that was apparently printed earlier).

11] *The Second Part of Henry the fourth, continuing to his death and coronation of Henry the fifth, with the humours of Sir John Falstaff and swaggering Pistol, as it hath been sundry times publicly acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1600) – good quality text of the play that, with minor variations, appears in the Folio as *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*.

12] *The chronicle history of Henry the fifth, with his battle fought at Agincourt in France, together with Ancient Pistol, as it hath been sundry times played by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1600) – a short and often flawed text, highly variant in comparison with that in the Folio.

13] *The most excellent history of the merchant of Venice, with the extreme cruelty of Shylock the Jew towards the said merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh, and the obtaining of Portia by the choice of three chests. As it hath been diverse times acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1600) – good quality text from which that in the Folio derives.

14] *A Midsummer Night's Dream, as it hath been sundry times publicly acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1600) – good quality text from which that in the Folio derives, though with small but significant variations.

15] *Much Ado about Nothing, as it hath been sundry times publicly acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain his servants* (1600) – good quality text from which that in the Folio derives.

16] *A most pleasant and excellent conceited comedy of Sir John Falstaff and the merry wives of Windsor, intermixed with sundry variable and pleasing humours of Sir Hugh the Welsh knight, Justice Shallow and his wise cousin Master Slender, with the swaggering vein of Ancient Pistol and Corporal Nym. By William Shakespeare. As it hath been diverse times acted by the right honourable my Lord Chamberlain's servants, both before her majesty and elsewhere* (1602) – a short and often flawed text, highly variant in comparison with that in the Folio.

17] *The tragical history of Hamlet Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare, as it hath been diverse times publicly acted by his highness' servants in the city of London, as also in the two universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere* (1603) – a short and often flawed text that was replaced by a new quarto of 1604/5 ('*Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy*') that sought to establish a more authoritative text, though one that remains highly variant in comparison with that in the Folio.

18] *Mr William Shakespeare his true chronicle history of the life and death of King Lear and his three daughters, with the unfortunate life of Edgar, son and heir to the Earl of Gloucester, and his sullen and assumed humour of Tom of Bedlam. As it was played before the King's majesty at Whitehall upon St Stephen's night in Christmas holidays, by his majesty's servants playing usually at the Globe on Bankside* (1608) – an often flawed text, highly variant in comparison with that in the Folio.

19] *The late and much admired play called Pericles, Prince of Tyre. With the true relation of the whole history, adventures and fortunes of the said prince, as also, the no less strange and worthy accidents in the birth and life of his daughter Mariana. As it hath been diverse and sundry times acted by his majesty's servants at the Globe on the Bankside. By William Shakespeare* (1609) – an often flawed text that was not included in the First Folio, perhaps for licensing reasons.

20] *The history of Troilus and Cressida, as it was acted by the King's majesty's servants at the Globe* (1609), some copies bearing a prefatory address to the reader and a variant title page reading *The famous history of Troilus and Cressid, excellently expressing the beginning of their loves and the conceited wooing of Pandarus Prince of Licia, written by William Shakespeare* – hundreds of variants in comparison with the Folio text.

21] *Shakespeare's Sonnets, never before imprinted* (1609) – the volume also included the poem 'A Lover's Complaint by William Shakespeare', though the title-page makes no mention of the fact.

No new Shakespearean works went into print between 1610 and 1616, the year of his death. Only one further work appeared in quarto prior to the collected Folio of 1623:

22] *The tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice, as it hath been diverse times acted at the Globe and at the Blackfriars by his majesty's servants, written by William Shakespeare* (1622) – hundreds of variants in comparison with the Folio text.

Several of the works printed in Shakespeare's lifetime were reprinted one or more times prior to the First Folio of 1623 (see table in **The Case for the Folio (1): Theatrical Copy Text**, below). Several other works printed in Shakespeare's lifetime were also attributed to him, among them the short collection of sonnets and songs *The Passionate Pilgrim* (first published late 1598 or 1599, containing a mixture of poems by Shakespeare, by others and of uncertain authorship), a number of plays that were definitely not by him (e.g. *The first part of the life of Sir John Oldcastle*) and some with which he had a connection insofar as they were performed by his acting company (e.g. *The London Prodigal* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*).

A clear pattern is discernible from the title-pages of the quartos:

- The title-pages serve as advertisements, giving tasters of the content, with particular emphasis in the histories on plotting and battle and in a range of plays on the ‘humours’ (verbal conceits) of certain characters (Falstaff, Pistol, Evans, Edgar as Tom o’Bedlam in *Lear*).
- From the late 1590s onwards, but not before, Shakespeare’s name is a selling-point.
- Most title-pages emphasise the success that the plays have achieved on stage, some the fact that they have been played at court.
- In a few cases, a later edition is intended to replace a defective earlier one (e.g. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, probably *Love’s Labours Lost*).
- The publication pattern of the plays suggests bursts of demand and periods where there was little demand, with clusters of newly-printed works appearing in 1594-95, 1597-1600, 1602-04/5 and 1608-09.
- 7 histories, 6 comedies and 5 tragedies were published in Shakespeare’s lifetime, revealing that he was admired in all three genres, though, to judge from numbers of reprints, it was the histories and tragedies that found more readers.
- In sum, the quartos are variable in quality of printing, degree of authorization and nature of underlying copy: some of them, such as the long Second Quarto (Q2) *Hamlet* and *Romeo*, are perhaps best seen as ‘literary’ or ‘reading’ texts, while others, such as the short First Quarto (Q1) *Hamlet* and *Romeo*, offer fascinating approximations to the possible structure and extensive cutting of early performance.
- The quartos are ‘raw’ or ‘of the moment’ Shakespeare as opposed to ‘edited’ or ‘collected’ Shakespeare.

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## THE FOLIO

In 1619, the publisher Thomas Pavier printed editions of *Henry V*, the two *Henry VI* plays (with the joint title *The whole contention between the two famous houses, Lancaster and York*), *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pericles* and two plays that had been attributed to Shakespeare (*The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*). An element of through-pagination suggests that this was intended as some kind of 'collected Shakespeare'. There was precedent for such a collection: three years earlier, in 1616, Ben Jonson had become the first English playwright to collect his works for the public stage together in a single volume, though he had also included the more elevated and respectable matter of his poems and court masques.

With the assistance of their patron, the Earl of Pembroke, the leading players of the King's Men (Richard Burbage, John Hemings and Henry Condell) obtained an order preventing Pavier, or anyone else, from going any further with such an enterprise. It was probably at this time that the actors began considering the possibility of a collected Shakespeare of their own. Burbage died later in 1619, so Hemings and Condell carried forward the project. Materials were gathered and printing began in 1621. The First Folio (so named for the large size and single fold of its paper) eventually appeared in 1623. It included 36 plays, but not the poems and sonnets. The plays were

- 17 of the 18 published in Shakespeare's lifetime (*Pericles* was omitted – and *Troilus and Cressida* nearly was, with licence to include it only being obtained at the last minute, after the whole book had been printed off, which accounts for the absence of the play from the contents list).
- *Othello* (which had appeared in an independent quarto while the Folio was under preparation).
- and a further 18 plays that had never appeared in print (though a couple of them had been licensed for earlier publication that did not materialize). Were it not for the Folio, these 18 plays would have been lost to posterity:

*The Tempest*

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

*Measure for Measure*

*The Comedy of Errors*  
*As You Like It*  
*The Taming of the Shrew*  
*All's Well that ends Well*  
*Twelfth Night*  
*The Winter's Tale*  
*King John*  
*The First Part of Henry the Sixth*  
*Henry the Eighth*  
*Coriolanus*  
*Timon of Athens*  
*Julius Caesar*  
*Macbeth*  
*Antony and Cleopatra*  
*Cymbeline*

Though the Folio printing is of variable quality, the Folio text has to be the basis for the modernization and correction of these 18 plays. The huge textual problem in the editing of Shakespeare stems from the 18 Folio plays that also exist in quarto texts, especially since, as indicated in the list of those plays above, in many of them there are substantial differences between quarto and Folio.

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### **THE PROBLEM: HAMLET'S SALLIED, SULLIED OR SOLID FLESH?**

The early printed texts contain many certain and many more possible errors. Hence the industry known as Shakespearean editing. Hundreds of editions have been published over the past three hundred years, all different from each other in numerous particulars. If we start looking at some famous lines in the early printed texts, the problem of textual variants quickly becomes apparent. Consider the opening lines of Hamlet's two most famous soliloquies. (Note that in the early modern printing-house 'v'/'u' and 'i'/'j' are interchangeable.)



First Quarto (Q1): ‘O that this too much grieu’d and sallied flesh / Would melt to nothing,’

Second Quarto (Q2): ‘O that this too too sallied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolute it selfe into a dewe,’

First Folio (F): ‘Oh that this too too solid Flesh, would melt, / Thaw, and resolute it selfe into a Dew:’

First Quarto (Q1): ‘To be, or not to be, I there’s the point,’ [‘P’ = ‘Ay’ = yes]. Located earlier in the action than in Q2 and F.

Second Quarto (Q2): ‘To be, or not to be, that is the question,’

First Folio (F): ‘To be, or not to be, that is the Question:’

Now look at the opening of the first soliloquy in some of the most authoritative modern scholarly editions:

The 1974 Riverside edition: ‘O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,’

The 1980 British Penguin edition, the 1982 second series Arden edition and the 2001 American Penguin (aka Pelican) edition: ‘O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,’

The 1985 Cambridge edition: ‘O that this too too solid flesh would melt,’

The 1986 Oxford edition and its spin-off, the 1997 Norton edition: ‘O that this too too solid flesh would melt,’

The 2006 third series Arden edition: ‘O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,’

All authoritative modern editors assume that Q1 is some sort of inferior text (corrupt? derivative? memorially reconstructed? pirated?), so they base their work primarily on Q2 and/or F. Nobody dares to print ‘To be or not to be, ay, there’s the point’ as the start of the later soliloquy. For the first one, Riverside and third series Arden choose Q2, while Cambridge, Oxford and Norton choose F. Second series Arden, however, follows a long line of interventionists going back to an earlier Cambridge edition and alters ‘sallied’ to ‘sullied’ (a correction originally proposed by several commentators, including Alfred Lord

Tennyson, in Victorian times). Both Penguin editions, which by no means always agree with each other, also emend.

Riverside, second series Arden, and both British and American Penguins use Q2 as their base text. But they frequently emend from F. Thus within the next few lines of the first soliloquy, they all follow F's 'Selfe-slaughter' rather than Q2's 'seale slaughter', F's 'weary' rather than Q2's 'wary', F's 'That it should come to this' rather than Q2's 'that it should come thus' and F's 'why she would hang on him' rather than Q2's 'why she should hang on him'. The most recent text, third series Arden, is more conservative about importing Folio readings: it sticks by Q2's 'that it should come thus' and 'why[,] she should hang on him', but still emends 'seale slaughter' to 'self-slaughter' and 'weary' to 'wary'.

Cambridge and Oxford, by contrast, use F as their base text. But Cambridge emends F's 'O God, O God' to Q2's 'o God, God', F's 'Oh fie, fie' to Q2's 'ah fie', F's 'O Heauen! A beast' to Q2's 'O God, a beast', F's 'the flushing of her gauled [gallèd] eyes' to Q2's 'the flushing in her gauled [gallèd] eyes'. Oxford (which also provides the text for Norton) is more conservative about importing quarto readings: it sticks by Folio's 'O God, O God' and 'the flushing of her gauled [gallèd] eyes', but still emends 'Oh fie' to 'ah fie' and 'O Heauen! A beast' to 'O God, a beast'.

Why is it that even the more rigorously quarto-based editions reject 'seale slaughter' for Folio's 'selfe-slaughter' and 'wary' for 'weary'? In the first case, it is because 'seale slaughter' is manifestly a printer's error. The 'canon' of the Almighty – which is to say, ecclesiastical law as shaped by the Bible – says nothing about the clubbing of baby seals. It is self-slaughter, suicide, that is condemned. No occurrence of 'seale slaughter' is to be found anywhere in the printed writing of the age of Shakespeare. The emendation can be made with confidence.

'Weary' for 'wary' is not perhaps so clear cut. No editor has defended the Q2 reading, but it is striking that in *The London Prodigal*, a play published the same year as the Second Quarto of *Hamlet* with a title-page proclaiming that it was acted by the King's Men and attributing it (admittedly almost certainly falsely) to William Shakespeare, there is a line 'I knewe your father, he was a wary husband', where the context clearly implies that 'wary' means 'thrifty', a sense which easily shades into 'parsimonious'. Now Hamlet

is about to go on to talk about ‘Thrift, thrift, Horatio’ and, what is more, the sequence of adjectives beginning with ‘wary’ ends in ‘unprofitable’, suggesting that Hamlet’s reflections on the value of life (or lack of it) are infected by the language of commercial exchange. The disjunction between moral worth and material wealth is a common Shakespearean theme. Furthermore, dictionaries of the period place ‘wary’ in the same penumbra of meaning as ‘subtle’, ‘crafty’, ‘sly’ and ‘cunning’, which are all rather apt terms for Hamlet’s attitude to the marital manoeuvring of Claudius and Gertrude. If I were a Second Quarto editor, I think I’d at least give ‘wary’ a run for its money.

I would, however, be less sanguine about ‘sallied’, the reading in the first line favoured by Riverside and third series Arden. Arden glosses ‘**sallied** assailed, besieged’. Yet it does not offer a shred of evidence in support of this reading. A search of *Early English Books Online*, the amazing electronic database of printed works from the age of Shakespeare, throws up 827 usages of the word ‘sallied’, all of which suggest that the meaning is almost the exact opposite of what the Arden editors propose. A sally is a response to being besieged; it is active, not passive. It is an excursion: ‘they sallied out upon the besiegers’, ‘they sallied out bravely’, and so forth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records no adjectival form ‘sallied’. In this instance, a printing error, caused by the fact (revealed by the *Thomas More* manuscript) that Shakespeare’s handwritten ‘a’ was pretty well indistinguishable from his ‘u’, is the almost certain explanation. The emending 1982 Arden editor mounts a stronger case than his non-emending 2006 successors, pointing to the simile in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* ‘pure / As the vnsallied Lilly’, where the context clearly means (and a Second Folio emendation introduces) ‘unsullied’. If I were a Quarto editor, I would certainly emend Hamlet’s line to ‘O that this too too sullied flesh would melt’ and I would write a supporting commentary note suggesting a link in Shakespeare’s mind via ‘melt’ and ‘thaw’ to snow, a traditional image of purity that is all too quickly stained, soiled or sullied, as in some of Ben Jonson’s most beautiful lines of verse, ‘Have you marked but the fall o’the snow, / Before the soil hath smutched it?’ (‘A Celebration of Charis in ten lyric pieces, IV. Her Triumph’).

But then the ‘soil’ in Jonson’s image should make the Folio editor hesitate. ‘Solid flesh’ seems right in the context of melting and dissolving into a dew, but Shakespeare’s poetic mind was so inventive that sometimes an easy reading of this sort will not do: could

it be that Folio's 'solid' is a mistake for the manuscript's 'soild', a word which Hamlet uses on other occasions? Should the Folio editor emend to 'soiled flesh'? In this case, I think probably not, because the more likely manuscript spelling would have been 'soyld' – or, more probable still, for the sake of the metre, 'soyled' – which is harder to mistake for 'solid'. The Folio reading is defensible and should be retained, whereas I see no defence for Quarto's 'sallied'.

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## **MODERNIZATION AND EMENDATION**

To have spent so long reflecting upon a single speech, even a single word, and not even to have begun talking about the question of whether to punctuate at a number of key moments with a Quarto comma or a Folio colon, gives a sense of the scale of the task of editing Shakespeare. So how do editors set about deciding which text to work from and when to change it? Before proceeding, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of change: those that involve *modernization* and those that involve *emendation*. Changing 'Self-slaughter' to self-slaughter is modernization. In Shakespeare's time it was common for nouns (and sometimes adjectives) to have an initial capital letter even when they occurred in the middle of sentences. In the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this typographical custom gradually fell out of favour, so editions of Shakespeare since that time modernize to lower-case. And in Shakespeare's time, spelling was extremely variable and inconsistent. An extra 'e' on the end of a word was very, very common – hence the folk notion of 'olde worlde' spelling. Since the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, spelling has been gradually standardized (a number of dictionaries, especially that of Dr Johnson, played a key role in this process), so most editions of Shakespeare since that time have standardized spellings. 'Old spelling' editions of early modern texts are still sometimes created for scholarly purposes, but now that digital facsimiles of early modern books are so readily available, they are becoming less frequent and less useful. There is unlikely ever again to be an old-spelling edition of Shakespeare, as opposed to a facsimile or 'diplomatic' (i.e. *literatim*) transcription of the early texts.

Modernization of various kinds has been going on ever since the texts first appeared in print. The First Folio of 1623 sometimes modernized quarto conventions, but it also retained many customary sixteenth-century lexical forms, for instance in the printing of i/j and u/v. The Second Folio of 1632 modernized these on many occasions, with First Folio ‘ioy’, ‘iniunction’, ‘loue’ and ‘vse’ frequently becoming ‘joy’, ‘injunction’, ‘love’ and ‘use’.

The principles of modernization are by no means straightforward. So, for example, it was very common in Shakespearean English to use the singular verb form with a plural noun-phrase. Thus ‘seems’ in Folio’s ‘How weary, stale, flat and vnprofitable / Seemes to me all the vses of this world’ sounds to us like a grammatical solecism, but to Shakespeare’s original auditors and readers it would have been perfectly acceptable. In this context, the alteration of ‘Seemes’ to ‘Seem’ could legitimately be described as either a modernization or a modernization combined with an emendation to Quarto’s ‘Seeme’ (minus the redundant terminal ‘e’). Although modernization can be contentious, and examples such as this create an overlap between modernization and emendation, for the purpose of this discussion I shall set modernization aside and focus on the even more knotty problem of emendation. The choice of ‘weary’ or ‘wary’ matters more than that of ‘seems’ or ‘seem’, because in the former case there is variation in sense, a choice between two distinct meanings, while in the latter there is only a difference in sound (often the choice of singular or plural verb forms seems to have been made – and the decision whether or not to modernize is best resolved – on the basis of euphony in an actor’s voice).

There is evidence that Ben Jonson took a close interest in the printing and proof-reading of the edition of his *Works* that was published in 1616. Though there are errors and press variants in that edition, the degree of authorial involvement and control means that the editorial problem in Jonson is much less severe than that in Shakespeare. The problem with Shakespeare is that we have no firm evidence of authorial involvement and control in the production of the quartos and absolutely firm evidence that there was no authorial involvement and control in the production of the Folio – there could not have been, since Shakespeare had been dead for several years when it was produced. So on what basis do editors decide whether to use quartos or Folio as their base text?

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## THE EDITORIAL TRADITION

The scholarly editing of Shakespeare began in the eighteenth century, when the model for such activity was the treatment of the classic literary and historical texts of ancient Greece and Rome. The recovery of those texts had been at the core of the humanist Renaissance. The classical procedure was to establish which surviving manuscript was the oldest, the aim being to get as close as possible to the lost original, weeding out the errors of transcription which had been introduced by successive scribes in the centuries before the advent of print. As Shakespeare began to be treated like a classic, the same procedure was applied to his texts. The eighteenth century also witnessed his rise to the status of national genius, icon of pure inspiration. That image required the imagining of a single perfect original for each play. Shakespeare couldn't be allowed second thoughts – that would imply some deficiency in his first thoughts. So it was that over time, there emerged a preference for early texts over later ones and a belief that the editor's job was to restore a single lost original, something approximating to the text as it came 'pure' from the hand of Shakespeare.

Obviously the 18 Folio-only plays have to be edited from the Folio. For the 18 dual-text plays, generations of editors since the eighteenth century have followed the classical principle that the earliest surviving text must be the one closest to the original authorial manuscript, so they have preferred the quarto texts from Shakespeare's lifetime to the posthumously-produced Folio – save in the small number of cases where the quarto text was so full of errors and inconsistencies that they had to rely on the Folio. For this reason, all edited texts of the complete works published in the past three centuries have been hybrids of quartos and Folio, scholarly reconstructions that merge together different moments in the original life of many of the plays. So, for example, *Richard II* is always edited from its 1597 Quarto, but with the pivotal dethroning scene imported from the 1623 Folio (the scene was 'dangerous matter' politically, so its absence from the Quarto was almost certainly the result of censorship).

The first modern editor – the man who began the process of modernizing the spellings, rationalizing the scene and speech headings, providing a list of the *dramatis personae* and so forth – was Nicholas Rowe, in his edition of 1709. By and large, what Rowe provided was a tidied-up modern spelling version of the 1685 Fourth Folio. The only significant occasion on which he hybridized the folio and quarto traditions was in the fourth act of *Hamlet*, where he noted from the so-called ‘players’ quarto’ of 1676 that the Folio offers a much abbreviated version of the scene where Fortinbras’ army marches across the stage. Only in the quarto tradition does Hamlet make an appearance in this scene and deliver his last major soliloquy, ‘How all occasions do inform against me’. Rowe accordingly imported the relevant dialogue and soliloquy from the quarto tradition. In the case of *King Lear*, by contrast, he did not include in his text such quarto-only sequences as the mock arraignment of Goneril in the hovel and Gloucester’s servants’ dialogue about their intention to apply first aid to their mutilated master.

The Second (1632), Third (1663-64) and Fourth (1685) Folios had corrected and modernized local details in the First Folio, whilst also introducing printing errors of their own, but they had not edited the text in a systematic way. So Rowe in 1709 was the first who may be said to have edited the Folio in the full sense of the term. He was also the last.

Beginning with Alexander Pope in his edition of 1725 and Lewis Theobald in his of 1733, more and more quarto readings began to be preferred. With the two great editors of the later eighteenth century, Edward Capell (1768) and Edmond Malone (1790), there began to be a systematic investigation of the bibliographic relationship between the early texts. This reached its apogee with the so-called ‘new bibliography’ of the early twentieth century, in which such scholars as Sir Walter Greg, John Dover Wilson and R. B. McKerrow put Shakespearean editing onto a quasi-scientific footing.

So it was that for about two centuries, from Capell to the successors of Greg, the quartos held sway (save where they were deemed to be ‘bad’ or ‘pirated’), initially because of the classical principle that the earlier text is always to be preferred to the later one and subsequently because of a certain preference for the writer over the players: that is to say, in many cases it was proved to the satisfaction of most scholars that the quarto text was printed (directly or indirectly) from Shakespeare’s working manuscript, whereas the

corresponding Folio text was printed (directed or indirectly) from the book-keeper's copy (the so-called 'promptbook') in the playhouse. During these two centuries, there was something of an anti-theatrical prejudice in Shakespearean editing, initially because playhouse texts were contaminated by association with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' supposedly bad habits of heavily cutting, adapting and rewriting the plays for the theatre, and subsequently because the 'new bibliography' in textual theory coincided with the 'new criticism' in literary studies, whereby Shakespeare was valued above all as a poet. Getting as near as possible to his original words was the aspiration of both editors and close readers.

Only in the later twentieth century was there a swing towards theatrically-focused reading or 'performance studies' in criticism. This coincided with a new desire among editors to get back to the *original performance* as opposed to the *original authorial manuscript*. Thus the Oxford edition of 1986 adopted the Folio as base-text for a number of plays where quartos had traditionally been adopted. The aspiration was to restore the putative first performance as opposed to the putative state of the text when Shakespeare consigned his manuscript to the players.

The Oxford attempt to provide modernized versions of the original performance texts was not, however, wholly consistent. For example, the editors speculated that the character of Sir John Falstaff was named Sir John Oldcastle when *Henry IV Part 1* was first performed, so in their edition they called him Oldcastle (though he becomes Falstaff in *Part 2*). It is a reasonable bet, however, that the play was not originally called *Part 1* – it surely only became that after the writing of *Part 2* – but the Oxford editors did not restore a putative original title. Curiously, though, in the case of *Henry VIII* and two of the *Henry VI* plays, they adopted the titles that the plays seem to have originally been staged under, but the texts of the Folio. Equally, their text of *Titus Andronicus* followed the quarto of 1594 but inserted a scene that only appears in the Folio, and that appears to have been written after 1600. So, despite protestations that these texts were as close as we could get to the original performances, hybridization continued apace.

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## **‘BAD QUARTOS’, ‘FOUL PAPERS’ AND ‘PROMPTBOOKS’**

The work of editing depends on an array of theoretical assumptions and practical decisions. Theoretical assumptions are premised on stories. In the twentieth century, Shakespearean editing was based on a story about there being three distinct kinds of copy behind the early printed editions. *Hamlet* is the classic example. Faced with the striking variants between the three early texts of the play, editors began by attempting to determine what kind of copy the printer was setting in each version.

Certain key phrases from documents of the period were invoked: ‘stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them’; ‘the foul papers of the author’s’; ‘the book’ or ‘play book’ (usually called ‘promptbook’, though that term is not actually to be found until the nineteenth century).

These terms could conveniently be mapped on to three hypothetical kinds of copy. ‘Stolen and surreptitious’ became ‘pirated’, ‘unauthorized’, ‘memorially reconstructed’ or just plain ‘bad’: the term was used to account for the brevity and the severe deficiencies of sense in such quartos as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* and Q1 *Hamlet*. ‘Foul papers’, meaning the author’s working manuscript as opposed to the fair copy held in the playhouse, was applied to texts that seemed to bear the marks of literary composition as opposed to theatrical practice (e.g. a location described in terms of the imaginary world of the play rather than the interior geography of the playhouse or a permissive stage direction along the lines of ‘*enter X and Y with others as many as may be*’). And the ‘book’ or promptbook was identified as the source for texts that revealed a manifestly theatrical origin (e.g. with fuller or more practical stage-directions than were often found in ‘foul paper’ texts).

It was easily demonstrated that in a number of Shakespeare plays, the Folio text was copied from a well-printed quarto text of the play, but that before the quarto was handed over to the compositor who set it in type, it was compared with the ‘promptbook’, allowing stage-directions such as music cues to be added in. A consensus emerged that many quarto texts were set from Shakespeare’s ‘foul papers’, many Folio texts from either scribal transcripts of theatre playbooks or quartos marked up with reference to theatre

playbooks. Very crudely speaking, quartos offered a ‘literary’ Shakespeare and Folio a ‘theatrical’ one.

In the case of *Hamlet*, the most prestigious of all the plays, as if by magic, the three early texts were mapped on to the three kinds of copy:

Q1: ‘stolen and surreptitious’ (bad, maybe deriving from a pair of rogue actors reciting the text, and in so doing garbling it, for a piratical publisher)

Q2: ‘foul papers’ (good, the play as Shakespeare wrote it)

F: ‘promptbook’ (signs of cutting and an element of playhouse revision).

All this sounds a little too convenient. Late twentieth- and early twenty-first century scholars have begun to question the whole edifice. The key phrase for the theory of ‘bad quartos’ is Hemings and Condell’s reference in their address ‘To the great Variety of Readers’ at the beginning of the First Folio. Setting aside the fact that the producers of the Folio needed to damn the quartos in order to market the originality and authority of the new volume in which they had invested a huge amount of time and money, there is no particular reason to suppose that the ‘stolen and surreptitious copies’ to which Hemings and Condell were referring were the error-strewn quartos of *Merry Wives*, *Romeo* and *Hamlet* published over twenty years before. It is much more likely that their thunderous denunciation was directed at the unapproved Thomas Pavier quartos of 1619. Some of these were based on what later editors called ‘bad’ quartos and some on ‘good’. Hemings and Condell’s point was that they were all unauthorized by Shakespeare’s players.

Some form of reconstruction from memory remains the most plausible hypothesis for the textual origin of a small number of early modern printed plays: there can be no other way of explaining Thomas Heywood’s remark in the preface to his *Rape of Lucrece* (1608) that ‘some of my plays have (unknown to me, and without any of my direction) accidentally come into the printers’ hands, and therefore so corrupt and mangled (copied only by the ear) that I have been as unable to know them as ashamed to challenge them.’ But the theory that a large number of Shakespearean quartos originated in the practice of bit-part actors secretly reciting garbled texts from memory for the benefit of ‘pirate’ publishers is beginning to look very shaky.

The cherished notion of Shakespeare's 'foul papers' as copy for many of the quartos and some of the Folio texts is also coming under increasing attack. A particularly powerful case against the old assumptions was mounted by the scholar Paul Werstine in his 1990 article, 'Narratives about printed Shakespeare texts: "Foul Papers" and "Bad" Quartos' (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 41, pp. 65-86).

In the 'new bibliography' of Sir Walter Greg 'foul papers' were regarded as a normative source of printing-house copy. And yet in the entire period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the phrase only occurs once with reference to a completed play, in a context that is the very opposite of normative. There is a surviving manuscript of John Fletcher's play about Boadicea, *Bonduca*, transcribed in the hand of Edward Knight, book-keeper to the King's Men. At one point a scene was missing from the theatre book, so Knight added a note to the effect that 'the book whereby it was first acted from is lost, and this hath been transcribed from the foul papers of the author's which were found'. The fact that Knight made a note about this and the implication of unusual good fortune in the finding of the author's draft suggest that the use of 'foul papers' was highly unusual. Yet Greg and his successors made the exception into the rule, conjuring up a story about Shakespeare's 'foul papers' as printing-house copy on the basis of this note, together with a reference to a 'foul sheet' as opposed to 'sheets more fair written' made by the minor dramatist Robert Daborne in correspondence about work in progress with theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe. It is also telling that Knight's note was made in the context of a private manuscript copy for reading, not copy being prepared for the printing-house: as far as I am aware, no reference has been found to printers in the period typesetting plays from playwrights' 'foul papers'.

Increasingly, scholars are beginning to recognize that many of the Shakespearean texts purportedly printed from his working manuscript could equally well – perhaps, indeed, more plausibly – have been printed from scribal transcripts of his papers. It has to be acknowledged that many different agencies are involved in the journey from writer's hand to printed copy in the period, and the prospect of ever getting back to some pure Shakespearean original is now looking very slim.

Doubts are also overshadowing the theory of copy set from theatre playbooks. There is evidence that the King's Men's house 'book' containing *The Winter's Tale* was lost

for a time around the period when the First Folio was printed. Pleasing as it is to suppose it being carted off to the printing-shop and then inadvertently left in a mound of tossed aside typesetter's copy, there is strong evidence (on the basis of habits of spelling, punctuation and the presentation of copy, habits especially manifest in a lavish taste for parentheses) that *The Winter's Tale* was set not from the 'book' itself, but from a transcription of it by Ralph Crane, a professional copyist employed by the King's Men. The original playhouse book was entrusted to Crane, but was too precious to be allowed into the actual printing-shop.

Though Hemings and Condell authorized the publication of the Folio, and no doubt played a major role in obtaining copy, deciding on which texts to follow and which plays to include or exclude, they were too busy acting and running the theatre company to be involved in the minute and time-consuming work of actually preparing the copy. The Folio's 'editors', in the sense of the people who produced the texts which the composers were required to set, may well have been Ralph Crane, whose task was to copy previously unpublished plays from their playhouse promptbooks, and (perhaps) Edward Knight, book-holder for the King's Men, whose task would have been to collate previously published plays against the theatre's manuscript book, inserting corrections, revisions and especially stage-directions.

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## **THE IMPASSE?**

Theories of 'bad' or 'stolen' quartos and 'good' or 'foul paper' ones do not stand up.

Surviving play manuscripts from the period do not conform to the twentieth-century model of 'foul papers' and 'promptbooks'.

We are very unlikely ever to recover the manuscripts of the plays as Shakespeare originally wrote them (the ambition of the 'new bibliographers').

In the absence of surviving promptbooks, let alone dictographic or video records, we will never recover the plays as they were first performed (the ambition of the 'Oxford revisionists').

All plays change in time, metamorphosing as they go from writing to rehearsal to performance to revival.

Many agencies (the playwright and his collaborators, the actors, the book-keepers and scribes, the composers and proof-readers) were involved in the creation of what we call a Shakespearean text.

Despite a hundred years of advanced bibliographic investigation, there is still a remarkable lack of scholarly consensus about the nature of the copy for many of Shakespeare's plays: even in such a textually uncomplicated case as that of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, reputable editors are more or less equally divided as to whether the printer's copy was derived from authorial or playhouse manuscript, while in a severely complicated case such as *Troilus and Cressida*, where there are about five thousand differences between the Quarto and Folio texts, some editors have argued that Q derives from foul papers and F from the playhouse book and others that F derives from foul papers and Q from the playhouse book.

Perhaps it would therefore be best to abandon the rigorous distinction between the two kinds of copy, especially as surviving play manuscripts from the period conform to neither. Scribal copies, with accordant variations upon the original authorial or playhouse texts, were probably more commonly used in the printing of Shakespeare's plays than most twentieth-century editors supposed.

Again, in a case such as *Othello*, reputable editors are divided as to whether the Folio text offers later additions to the Quarto text or the Quarto text offers cut to the Folio text.

Perhaps it would be best to abandon the idea that any one text represents the 'definitive' version of a Shakespeare play. After all, the quest for a 'definitive' text, based on a 'single lost original', was premised on the principles of classical and Biblical textual criticism. It is not necessarily appropriate for more modern literary and especially dramatic texts.

'Version-based editing' now seems a more fitting way of approaching authors who self-consciously revised their work: we have become accustomed to discrete editions of the 1799, 1805, 1818 and 1850 versions of Wordsworth's *Prelude* and to the need not to conflate the original texts of Henry James's novels with those carefully revised by the

author for the New York Edition of 1909. By the same account, since theatre is a supremely mobile art-form, as plays subtly change from performance to performance, we need a version-based approach to Shakespeare. We cannot be confident about the degree of authorial control or the balance between the systematic and the haphazard in the revision of Shakespeare's plays, but we can be confident that many (though by no means all) of the thousands of differences between the Quarto and Folio texts of *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida* are best explained by accepting that those texts embody different moments in the theatrical life of those plays.

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### **CHANGING THE SCRIPT: THE MOBILE TEXTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES**

What do the differences between quartos and Folio tell us about Shakespeare's habits of revision? The variations are most striking in the tragedies, so I shall focus on them. In the following analysis, I will use such phrases as 'Shakespeare revises' for the sake of economy. Strictly speaking, we do not know that Shakespeare himself was responsible for all (indeed any) of the revisions. What we should really say is that in the transmission from playwright's pen through book-keeper's copy through updatings of the theatre book in the light of changes made in production through scribal copy prepared for the printing house, a wide range of alterations are apparent, some seemingly haphazard and others more systematic, suggestive of a conscious attempt by the playwright and/or his company's actors to alter certain emphases in the drama. But since that is something of a mouthful, I shall stick to the shorthand 'Shakespeare revises' and rely on you to interpret 'Shakespeare' in this context to mean 'Shakespeare and company'.

*Titus Andronicus: killing the fly*

*Titus Andronicus* was a very popular play, a key work in the establishment of Shakespeare's reputation. The good quality First Quarto text of it published in 1594 was one of the first,

perhaps *the* first, of the plays to reach print. That text, which has clear signs of having been printed from Shakespeare's holograph or a good scribal transcript thereof, does not include the scene in which Titus has dinner with his family, struggles to eat with one hand and then kills a black fly, onto which he projects his anger towards Aaron the Moor. The scene is also missing from the quarto reprints of 1600 and 1611. The Folio editors worked from the Third Quarto, but imported stage-directions and a number of local alterations from the theatre book. In comparing their quarto with the theatre book, they noted the additional scene and ensured that it was printed in the correct place. All modern editions of *Titus* are based on the First Quarto, but with the additional scene back-projected into the 1594 version (though the Arden third series edition prints the scene in a different typeface, to indicate its peculiar status).

The new scene introduces a certain awkwardness, in that it leads to a breach of the so-called 'law of re-entry' (actually a convention, not a law), whereby it was customary for playwrights to avoid scene breaks where a group of characters leave the stage and the same group then re-enters immediately. It is, however, one of the best scenes in the play, offering some of Shakespeare's most wicked black humour. The wit and flexibility of the poetic writing strongly suggest that this is a more mature Shakespeare (circa 1600, I would guess – but that is only a guess), reflecting on his own earlier achievement and self-consciously re-dramatizing some of its central concerns. In particular, Titus plays explicitly on the question of how the tragic actor expresses strong emotion. Traditionally, the actor uses a combination of voice and verse, bodily gesture and facial expression. Lopped limbs forestall full expression and create a deliberate indecorum that serves to draw attention to the artificiality of the stylized norm for rhetorical articulation:

Marcus, unknot that sorrow-wreathen knot:  
Thy niece and I, poor creatures, want our hands  
And cannot passionate our tenfold grief  
With folded arms. This poor right hand of mine  
Is left to tyrannize upon my breast,  
Who, when my heart, all mad with misery,  
Beats in this hollow prison of my flesh,  
Then thus I thump it down.—  
Thou map of woe, that thus dost talk in signs,       *To Lavinia*  
When thy poor heart beats with outrageous beating,  
Thou canst not strike it thus to make it still.  
Wound it with sighing, girl, kill it with groans,

Or get some little knife between thy teeth  
And just against thy heart make thou a hole,  
That all the tears that thy poor eyes let fall  
May run into that sink, and soaking in  
Drown the lamenting fool in sea-salt tears.

The comparison of tears and sighing to water and wind picks up on the expressive idiom of the previous scene, when Titus sees his raped and mutilated daughter for the first time, but the fluidity of the metre and the effortless elaboration of the metaphor have a maturity beyond anything else in the play. You can almost feel Shakespeare saying to himself, 'I know I was good, but I can be even better'. You can see him smiling with satisfaction as he writes 'This poor right hand of mine / is left'. The same is true for the bold action at the climax of the scene, when the seemingly trivial action of killing a fly becomes the occasion for an extraordinary outburst that veers in an instant from bizarre but humane empathy ('How if that fly had a father and mother?') to violent hatred ('There's for thyself, and that's for Tamora'), and in so doing brilliantly miniaturizes the emotional rollercoaster journey that is the play.

### *King Lear: who rules Britain?*

Who is left in charge at the end of *King Lear*? According to the conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy, the senior remaining character speaks the final speech. That is the mark of his assumption of power. Thus Fortinbras rules Denmark at the end of *Hamlet*, Lodovico speaks for Venice at the end of *Othello*, Malcolm rules Scotland at the end of *Macbeth*, and Octavius rules the world at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

So who rules Britain? The answer used to be something like this. As the husband of the king's eldest daughter, Albany is the obvious candidate, but he seems reluctant to take on the role and, with astonishing stupidity given the chaos brought about by Lear's division of the kingdom at the beginning of the play, he proposes to divide the kingdom at the end of the play, suggesting that Kent and Edgar should share power between them. Kent, wise as ever, sees the foolishness of this and gracefully withdraws, presumably to commit suicide or will on the heart attack that he is already sensing. By implication, Edgar, who was the king's godson and is now Duke of Gloucester, is left in charge. So it is



that in the Folio text, which is the most authoritative that we have, Edgar speaks the final speech:

The weight of this sad time we must obey:  
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.  
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young  
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

If we were being very scrupulous, we would have added that there is some uncertainty over the matter, since in the Quarto text it is Albany who speaks the final speech, an ascription which has been followed by many editors since Alexander Pope.

Thanks to the textual scholarship of the late twentieth century, the new answer is something like this. Ah: that's a question over which Shakespeare himself seems to have had some uncertainty. In his original version of the play Albany speaks the final speech and thus rules the realm. But then Shakespeare changed his mind. In his revised version of the play Edgar speaks the final speech and thus rules the realm. We must posit two very different stagings. In the first one, Kent's words of refusal of his half-share in the kingdom would have been accompanied by some gesture of refusal, such as a turning away, on Edgar's part. In the second one, Edgar's speaking of the final speech would have been staged so as to betoken acceptance of Albany's offer. This alteration to the ending marks the climax of Shakespeare's subtle but thoroughgoing revision of the roles of Albany and Edgar in his two versions of *King Lear*. We do not know exactly when the revision took place, but it is a fair assumption that it was as a result of experience in the playhouse and with the collaboration of the company. Presumably there was dissatisfaction on the part of dramatist and/or performers with the way in which the two roles had turned out, so various adjustments were made. Shakespeare's plays were not polished for publication; they were designed as scripts to be worked upon in the theatre. To be cut, added to, and altered.

Until recently, editors were remarkably reluctant to admit this. From the eighteenth century until the 1980s, editions attempted to recover an ideal unitary text, to get as close as they could to 'what Shakespeare wrote'. There was a curious resistance to the idea that Shakespeare wrote one thing, tested it in the theatre, and then wrote another. Editors assumed that there was a single *King Lear* and they did their best to reconstruct it.

How, then, did they deal with the following awkward fact? *King Lear* exists in two

different texts, the Quarto and the Folio. The Quarto has nearly 300 lines that are not in the Folio; the Folio has over 100 lines that are not in the Quarto; there are more than 800 verbal variants in the parts of the play that the two texts share. The standard editorial response to this difficulty was the claim that the Quarto was some kind of ‘bad quarto’, that is to say a text based on memorial reconstruction by actors, not on Shakespeare’s own script (his ‘foul papers’) or the playhouse script (the ‘promptbook’). It was, however, a difficult position to maintain because the Quarto text of *Lear*, although corrupt in many places, does not have the usual characteristics of memorial reconstruction, the kind of features so apparent in the bad quarto of *Hamlet*, such as the actor remembering ‘The first verse of the godly ballad / Will tell you all’ where Shakespeare wrote ‘the first row of the pious chanson will show you more’ (*Hamlet*, 2.2.371). Getting the structure of a line just about right but the actual words nearly all wrong is typical of texts based on memory, but not typical of the textual anomalies in Q1 *Lear*.

In the 1970s the scholar Peter Blayney proved decisively by means of meticulous and highly technical bibliographic investigation that Quarto *King Lear* was not a bad text based on actors’ memories but an authoritative one, almost certainly deriving from Shakespeare’s own holograph (*The Texts of ‘King Lear’ and their Origins: vol.1 Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto*, published 1982). The poor quality of the text was the result of the personnel in the printing shop being unused to setting drama. Thus the fact that much of Shakespeare’s verse was set as prose was due to the printer running out of the blocks that were needed to fill in the margins where text was set as verse – Okes’ shop didn’t have the proper equipment, so the compositors resorted to prose.

Both Quarto and Folio texts are authentically Shakespearean, yet they differ substantially. Logic suggests that Quarto was his first version of the play, Folio his second. The textual variants give us a unique opportunity to see the plays as working scripts. *Lear* as it had been printed for nearly three centuries – and as it is still printed in many popular editions such as the Arden, Riverside and UK Penguin – is not a reconstruction of what Shakespeare wrote, but a construction on the part of editors. What they have done is conflate passages which Shakespeare wrote as alternatives.

Shakespeare could be taxed with overkill in the following exchange, as it is printed in the mainstream editorial tradition:

**LEAR** What's he that hath so much thy place mistook  
 To set thee here?  
**KENT** It is both he and she,  
 Your son and daughter.  
**LEAR** No.  
**KENT** Yes.  
**LEAR** No, I say.  
**KENT** I say, yea.  
**LEAR** No, no; they would not.  
**KENT** Yes, they have.  
**LEAR** By Jupiter, I swear, no.  
**KENT** By Juno, I swear, ay.  
**LEAR** They durst not do't,  
 They could not, would not do't. (2.2.189-200, conflated)

Here there are four negative blasts from Lear, four affirmatives from Kent. But Shakespeare knew, as his editors seemed not to, that for rhetorical effect you reiterate things three times, not four. Quarto gives the original three interchanges, with the 'By Jupiter' line going straight into 'they durst not do't'. In Folio, Shakespeare came up with the idea of answering 'By Jupiter' with Kent's 'By Juno' line. But he didn't just add in the line, as modern editors do: having created a fresh paired exchange, he compensated by taking out the previous one. 'No, no; they would not' and 'Yes, they have' are omitted from the Folio.

In the received editorial tradition, there is a very puzzling moment in act three scene one where Kent reports to the Gentleman on the division between Albany and Cornwall (3.1.17-42 in many editions). The syntax half way through the speech is incomprehensible and the content is contradictory: are there merely French spies in the households of great ones or has a French army actually landed in Dover? The confusion comes from editors having conflated alternative scenarios: in Quarto the French army has landed, whereas in Folio there are only spies reporting to France (thus lines 30-42 in conflated texts are Q only, 22-29 are F only: in RSC text, compare and contrast 3.1.16-23 and Quarto Passages 48-61).

The alteration seems to be part of a wider process of diminishing the French connection. In the Quarto we have a scene in which Shakespeare feels compelled to explain away the absence of the King of France – why isn't he leading his own army?

**KENT** Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back, know you no reason?  
**GENTLEMAN** Something he left imperfect in the state, which since his coming

forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary. (Quarto Passages, 172-78)

It is to say the least a halting explanation, which is perhaps one reason why Shakespeare cut the whole of this scene, 4.3 in the received editorial tradition, from the Folio text. Theatre audiences tend to think most about the things that are mentioned: by drawing attention to the king's absence, the dramatist in a curious way establishes his presence. Better just to keep quiet about him, which is what happens in Folio – since he's not mentioned, the audience forgets him.

Who, then, is to lead the French army? In Quarto, the Gentleman informs Kent that the Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far, has been left in charge. By omitting the scene in question, Folio obliterates Monsieur La Far; it compensates by altering the staging of the next scene (4.4 in the received editorial tradition, 4.3 in ours). In Quarto, the scene begins '*Enter Cordelia, Doctor and others*', whereas in Folio it begins '*Enter with Drum and Colours Cordelia, Gentleman and Soldiers*'. Where in Quarto Cordelia is a daughter seeking medical attention for her father, in Folio she is a general leading an army. She has replaced Monsieur La Far. This alteration is part of a broad shift of emphasis from family to state in the revision - Folio makes less of the familial love-trial and more of the fractured internal politics of the divided kingdom. So it is that the later version adds some crucial lines in the opening scene, giving a stronger political justification for the division of the kingdom:

We have this hour a constant will to publish  
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
May be prevented now. (1.1.34-36)

Furthermore, Folio cuts the so-called arraignment of Goneril, the mock-trial in the hovel scene that is the *quid pro quo* for the show-trial of love in the opening scene. This has the effect of retrospectively rendering the opening more political and less personal.

Other Folio cuts include the passage at the end of the blinding scene when loyal servants promise to apply flax and whites of egg to Gloucester's bleeding eye-sockets. When Peter Brook cut this from his famous 1962 RSC production, critics rebuked him for imposing on the play his own theatre of cruelty. But now we know that Brook's cut was made in Shakespeare's own theatre.

A further intensification of the play's moral bleakness is brought about by a series of

cuts to Albany's role: his castigations of Goneril in act four scene two are severely trimmed back, considerably reducing his moral force. Quarto Albany is a well-developed character who closes the play as a mature and victorious duke assuming responsibility for the kingdom. In Folio he is weaker, he stands by as his wife walks all over both him and the moral order, he avoids responsibility. His ultimate vacation of power is such that the revision ends at the point where my discussion began: with Edgar having no choice but to take over as sustainer of the gored state.

*Hamlet's delay*

The new awareness of Shakespeare's revision of *King Lear* emerged just as the scholar Harold Jenkins was completing the Arden *Hamlet* on which he had been working for many, many years. In the introduction to that edition, published in 1982, Jenkins complained that 'There has been too much irresponsible conjecture about Shakespeare's supposed revisions of supposed earlier attempts. My conception of Shakespeare is of a supremely inventive poet who had no call to rework his previous plays when he could always move on to a new one.' But developments in *Lear* studies forced Jenkins to add a footnote which reads very much like a defensive afterthought: 'If it comes to be accepted that the Quarto and Folio texts of *King Lear* represent two Shakespearean versions, the exception will be of a kind, I think, to prove the rule' (Arden second series *Hamlet*, p. 5). It is a very sad footnote, for *Lear* has proved nothing of the kind. Revision is not the exception; it may well be the rule. And it applies to *Hamlet*. After all Jenkins's labour, his edition was rendered textually obsolete within five years of publication. There is no greater sign of the paradigm shift in Shakespearean editing than the fact that the successor Arden edition, published in 2006, not only gave up on textual conflation, it went so far as to print three separately edited texts, those of the First and Second Quartos and the First Folio, treating each of them as an autonomous version of the play and implying that no one version had any more authority than any other. Or rather, *almost* implying – Q2 got a volume to itself, whereas Q1 and F were forced to share a second, much more expensive volume, suggesting that the old preference for 'literary' over the 'theatrical' texts is still alive.

*Hamlet* exists in two quartos and the Folio. Q1 does seem to be a classic ‘bad’ Quarto, with strong marks of having been, in Thomas Heywood’s phrase, ‘copied only by the ear’. This text is extremely useful in that it derives from the theatre. From it we know, for instance, that in at least one early production the mad Ophelia entered ‘*playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing*’. But since it almost certainly does not derive from Shakespeare’s script, I shall set Q1 aside. The scholarly consensus is now that Q2 represents Shakespeare’s first full draft of the play and Folio his revision. Folio cuts about 230 lines and adds about seventy; there are about 1,300 local variants. The major alterations involve streamlining of the action, pruning of verbal elaborations and smoothing of certain abrupt transitions.

Some of the cutting is extremely skilful. Consider the trimming of Hamlet’s long speech to Gertrude comparing the pictures of her two husbands. It is a full thirty-five lines in Q2. To improve the dramatic pace Shakespeare edited out about ten lines from the latter part of it. I indicate cuts by means of square brackets:

and what judgment  
 Would step from this to this? [Sense sure, you have,  
 Else could you not have motion: but sure that sense  
 Is apoplexed, for madness would not err  
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne’er so thrall’d  
 But it reserved some quantity of choice,  
 To serve in such a difference.] What devil was’t  
 That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?  
 [Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling *sans* all,  
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
 Could not so mope.] O, shame, where is thy blush?  
 Rebellious hell,  
 If thou canst mutine in a matron’s bones. . .  
 (3.4.77-81 & Quartos Passages 52-61)

In the revision, the lines left metrically incomplete by the first cut are joined together to form a seamless pentameter, ‘Would step from this to this? What devil was’t?’, and the second cut allows Shakespeare to get rid of the half-line he had in the first version by making up a new line, ‘O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell’.

There is another neat excision in act one scene four: Q2’s lines about the very place putting toys of desperation into the brain (Quarto Passages, 44-47) do not appear in either of the theatre texts (Q1 seems to be relatively accurate in the first act because the reporter

of the text may have been the actor who played the role of Marcellus). The lines are unnecessary and perhaps even confusing in that it is the ghost and not the place which is supposed to be the danger to Hamlet. Only an editor prejudiced against the theatre will reinsert them. The pace of the first act is quickened by some more substantial cuts, such as Horatio's lines on the portents before the death of Caesar and Hamlet's on Danish drinking habits and the 'vicious mole of nature'.

As in *Lear*, there is some fine tuning of the roles of the lesser characters. In Shakespeare's sources Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are merely the king's ministers; in Q2 they are both agents of the king and fellow-students of Hamlet; in F there is greater emphasis on Hamlet's friendship with them. Thus Folio cuts Hamlet's hostile speech about them at the end of 3.4 where he says that he will hoist them with their own petar (Quarto Passages, 72-80). But in order not to lose altogether the idea of poetic justice in their fate, Folio adds a single line early in the final scene, 'Why, man, they did make love to this employment' (5.2.61). Hamlet thereby justifies the killing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with a witty punning line after the event rather than in elaborate and more malicious language before it.

The early part of the final scene in Folio also articulates more fully Hamlet's newfound 'perfect conscience' for the killing of Claudius. Q2 simply has 'is't not perfect conscience?' and then the entrance of Osric. Folio withholds Osric while Hamlet asks

is't not perfect conscience  
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned  
To let this canker of our nature come  
In further evil? (5.2.72-75)

Furthermore, Folio adds a new speech emphasizing Hamlet's acceptance of his fate ('a man's life's no more than to say "one"') and highlighting the parallel between himself and Laertes ('For by the image of my cause I see / The portraiture of his').

It is an interesting exercise to attempt to cut 200 lines from *Hamlet*. We have seen how local pruning can remove ten-line bites, but somewhere a substantial single chunk has to go. What one may select for the larger cut may well be what Shakespeare alighted on (and in this he has often been followed in the theatre): Hamlet's last major soliloquy. Act four scene four in the Folio text, and in the theatre-derived short Quarto, merely has Fortinbras and his army marching across the stage. Hamlet is not present. There is no

exchange with the Captain, there is no ‘How all occasions do inform against me / And spur my dull revenge!’ This is a highly significant cut. That Hamlet rambles on about his ‘dull revenge’ and his ‘craven scruple / Of thinking too precisely on th’event’ so very late in the play does more than anything else to foster the idea that he delays excessively in carrying out his revenge. Strikingly, no one seems to have been exercised by the so-called problem of Hamlet’s delay until eighteenth-century editors conflated the Q2 and F texts. In the 1730s one George Stubbs, who worked from Lewis Theobald’s conflated text, said that Fortinbras and his army were brought on in 4.4 ‘to give Rise to Hamlet’s Reflections. . . which tend to give some Reasons for his deferring the Punishment of the Usurper’ (quoted in the pioneering 1987 Oxford text of *Hamlet*, edited by G. R. Hibbard, p. 24).

Does Hamlet delay? He has to establish that the ghost is reliable and not a devil sent to tempt him; as soon as he has done this by means of the Mousetrap play, he goes off to kill Claudius. He doesn’t kill him while he’s praying because that would be not to revenge but to send his adversary to heaven. He then thinks he detects him in Gertrude’s chamber and stabs him to death. It turns out of course to be Polonius, then because of this murder Hamlet is closely watched and packed off to England. His first opportunity to carry out the revenge is when he returns to court and fights the duel with Laertes. Naturally I oversimplify in this account, but I do so to suggest that Hamlet’s delay is not nearly such a big issue in the play as Shakespeare revised it for the theatre minus ‘How all occasions do inform against me’ as it is in the critical tradition that stems from reading texts which were established in the eighteenth century by conflating Quarto and Folio.

#### *Othello & Macbeth: the woman’s part*

*Othello* presents a now familiar picture: about 150 lines that are in one early text and not another, about 1,000 verbal variants. Even tiny variants can be dramatically telling: in Quarto, Desdemona asks Emilia to put ‘our’ wedding sheets on the bed, whereas in Folio she asks for ‘my’ wedding sheets. Though there is not a scholarly consensus on the matter, it seems that the extra 150 lines in Folio are theatrically purposeful additions to the original script.

The Folio seems closer to playhouse practice. Its additions include an extra



expository speech in the opening scene concerning the Moor's marriage (1.1.127-44), which serves to clarify matters for the audience, and a new extended simile for Othello at the climax of the temptation scene ('Like to the Pontic Sea. . .'), which serves to convert Iago's oath to the stars and elements into a cruel parody of Othello's rhetoric. It is possible that the experience of symmetrical staging, with both characters kneeling, required a rewrite which had symmetrical speeches. Most interestingly, the Folio strengthens the female roles. The willow song is not in the original version; it is a Folio addition, which adds immeasurably to the pathos of Desdemona's tragedy. Three further passages (4.3.87-106, 5.2.142-45, 5.2.175-79) considerably flesh out the character of Emilia. Most powerful is the extraordinary defence of woman in act four scene three:

But I do think it is their husbands' faults  
If wives do fall ...  
                                          ... And have not we affections?  
Desires for sport? And frailty, as men have?

The introduction of this plea for recognition of female bodily desire and for an end to the double standard over adultery makes an enormous difference to the play. That Shakespeare seems to have written it not in his first draft but in response to theatrical need is most revealing.

Alteration to certain females also seems to have been a principal revision in *Macbeth*. With this play, we have a simpler textual situation, but in its way a more frustrating one. There is only one early text, the Folio, so editors are spared difficult choices. But we are not immediately brought closer to Shakespeare's original text, for there is strong evidence that the play as we have it was adapted by Thomas Middleton (who is also thought to have made a substantial contribution to *Timon of Athens*). The two songs (in 3.5 and 4.1) appear in Middleton's play *The Witch*. The authorship of them seems to be the same as that of the rest of *The Witch* (certain demonic details are borrowed from Reginald Scot's 1584 *Discovery of Witchcraft*, an important source for Middleton's play but not for Shakespeare's).

It is highly probable that the whole of act three scene five and the Hecate portions of act four scene one are Middletonian insertions. They have the self-contained quality of inserted scenes such as the fly-killing incident in *Titus Andronicus*. They are put in to beef up the witchcraft business and spice the play with a couple of song and dance routines.

They were probably written after Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queens* (1609), a short text with chanting hags who are well worth comparing to the revised Shakespeare/Middleton witches. Indeed, the final dance in act four scene one may have used the music and choreography from Jonson's masque. The additions represent an excellent example of theatrical alteration to cash in on a new fashion.

But the change may have been more than local. As long ago as 1818 Samuel Taylor Coleridge made a very interesting observation: he said that despite living in an age of witchcraft and astrology, Shakespeare included in his plays no witches (notes for lecture of 6 February 1818). He added the parenthetic note, 'for we must not be deluded by stage-directions' – what he had noticed was that the Weird Sisters are never actually called Witches by themselves or the other characters. They are Witches in the Folio stage directions but Weird Sisters in the text. The only person who refers to a witch is the sailor's wife reported in act one scene three and the first Weird Sister is obviously not very pleased with the appellation.

Are the Weird Sisters fair or foul? They're more fair than foul in Shakespeare's source, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, as may be seen from the engraving of them as they stand greeting Macbeth and Banquo:



And in Simon Forman's recollection of the performance of *Macbeth* he saw at the Globe in 1611, they are described as 'fairies or nymphs', which also sound more fair than foul.

The sense of their foulness derives principally from the Middletonian witch-scenes; physical foulness is suggested by Banquo's description in act one scene three, but his language is characterized primarily by bafflement as to the sisters' appearance. Could they initially have been fair ladies giving apparently fair but in fact foul prophecies? Whatever their appearance, it is significant that they foretell rather than control. In Shakespeare's original text, I suggest, the Weird Sisters would have been morally ambiguous creatures who do nothing more than give voice to equivocal, mysterious solicitings, oracular prophecies. Middleton then converted them into the kind of overtly evil singing and chanting witches who had appeared in Jonson's *Masque of Queens* and about which he wrote his own *The Witch*. He also doubled their number and brought on Hecate and assorted attendant spirits, including one in the shape of a Cat.

Shakespeare's Weird Sisters are elusive and equivocal. They are more like classical Fates than vernacular witches. The term 'weird' at this time referred specifically to the Fates and the power of prophecy. In order to suggest something of this nature, and to avoid the modern vernacular associations of 'weird', our text adopts the Folio-based spelling 'weyard' (suggesting 'wayward, marginal'). Middleton's Witches, by contrast, are crude practitioners of black magic, unequivocal to the point of comedy. This said, I do not think that we should dismiss Middleton's contributions as 'spurious interpolations'. They are the product of the play's evolving life in the Jacobean theatre. We need to get away from the idea of a single 'authentic' text. Terms like 'spurious' and 'interpolation' must be replaced with others like 'collaboration', 'adaptation' and 'revision'.

*Summary: the mobile text*

Whilst we are not talking about rewriting on the scale of, say, Nahum Tate's 1681 version of *King Lear* with a happy ending, we must acknowledge that Shakespeare – and his collaborators in the theatre – substantially revised the plays. With the 'four great tragedies', as criticism since the eighteenth century has denominated them, revision led to major shifts of emphasis in such key areas as who rules Britain at the end of *Lear*, whether Hamlet delays, the representation of women in *Othello*, and the nature of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*.

The perspective of revision makes Shakespeare's tragedies into vital, mutable theatrical scripts. It makes Shakespeare into a working writer, constantly having second thoughts as we all do, not some inspired genius whose works appeared fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. His plays become more exciting because they are variable, not fixed in amber. As readers, teachers, and students we can come closer to Shakespeare's own experience of writing for the theatre by ourselves making choices about which text to prefer, which version to perform. In a sense we can construct our own texts, just as theatre directors always do – cutting, adding and altering have always been a prerogative in the Shakespearean theatre and are vital means of keeping the plays alive and fresh.

Shakespeare cut the arraignment scene from Folio *King Lear*. Perhaps that was a mistake: many directors seem to think so, as may be seen from the fact that Trevor Nunn chose not to cut this sequence from his 2007 RSC production with Sir Ian McKellen as Lear. But a Shakespeare who gets things wrong, as we do, is an approachable Shakespeare. Revision gives us wonderful material for debate on the rights and wrongs of Shakespeare's own textual choices.

But maybe this should be rephrased. There are two *Lears*, one with the arraignment scene and one without it. They are not a right and a wrong text, they are just *different* texts. Revision theory reinforces the first lesson of all good drama: playwrights are not in the business of proposing right and wrong answers, portraying black and white ways of looking at the world. They are in the business of difference, of argument, of debate and constructive disagreement. We have always granted a plurality of opinion and of interpretation in our dealings with Shakespeare. But those pluralities used to depend on deference to a single authoritative text. Now, however, we know that the texts themselves are plural.

That, however, presents a dilemma for the editor: should we print two or three versions of *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, as some recent editions have done? Valuable for scholars and advanced students as it is to do so, this is not the best option for most readers. Nor is it an option available in the theatre: a play cannot play the same moment with two different texts. Lear must either die telling his own heart to break, as in the Quarto, or telling the on- and off-stage audiences to look at Cordelia, as in the Folio, where the line

'break, heart, I prithee, break' is reassigned to Kent. He can't do both. We have to make a choice.

\* \* \*

## **THE CASE FOR THE FOLIO (1): THEATRICAL COPY TEXT**

*In the face of all these reasons for scepticism about ever pinning down a single 'definitive' text, of what can we be confident in the editing of Shakespeare? We can be confident that the First Folio of 1623 represents the first authorized 'complete works', the best that Shakespeare's friends and fellow-actors could do in the way of preparing a text.*

The single most significant – and still insufficiently appreciated – fact about the choice of copy for the First Folio is the decision not to prepare straight reprints of a number of quarto texts. If you look at printers' handbooks from the age of Shakespeare, you quickly discover that one of the first rules was that whenever possible compositors were recommended to set their type from existing printed books rather than manuscripts. This was the age before mechanical typesetting. Each individual letter had to be picked out by hand from the compositor's case and placed on a stick (upside down and back to front) before being laid on the press. It was an age of murky rushlight. And of manuscripts written in a secretary hand which had dozens of different, hard-to-decipher forms. Printers' lives were a lot easier when they were reprinting existing books than when they were struggling with handwritten copy. Easily the quickest way to have created the First Folio would have been simply to reprint those eighteen plays that had already appeared in quarto and only work from manuscript on the other eighteen.

Pavier put his mini-collected works of Shakespeare together at speed in 1619 because he reprinted existing texts and did not bother to consult independent manuscripts. But the overseers of the First Folio did not follow suit. Whenever quartos were used, playhouse 'promptbooks' were also consulted and stage directions copied in from them. And in the case of several major plays where a well-printed quarto was available (notably *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard III* and *Troilus and Cressida*), the Folio printers were instructed to work from an alternative, playhouse-derived manuscript. This meant

that the whole process of producing the first complete Shakespeare took months, even years, longer than it might have done. But for Hemings and Condell, the friends and fellow-actors who had been remembered in Shakespeare's will, the additional labour and cost were worth the effort for the sake of producing an edition that was close to the practice of the theatre. They wanted all the plays in print so that people could, as they wrote in their prefatory address to the reader, 'read him and again and again', but they also wanted 'the great variety of readers' to work from texts that were close to the theatre-life for which Shakespeare originally intended them.

With this in mind, let us look at a list of the plays in the First Folio ('holograph' means a manuscript in the author's own hand; I prefer the term to 'foul papers', given the questions hanging over the idea of draft working scripts finding their way into the printing house):

WORK	TEXTUAL HISTORY	FOLIO COPY
<i>Tempest</i>	F only	Crane transcript of theatre playbook
<i>2 Gents</i>	F only	Crane transcript of either theatre playbook or holograph
<i>Merry Wives</i>	'bad' Q 1602; F not based on Q	Crane transcript of theatre playbook
<i>Measure</i>	F only	Crane transcript of theatre playbook
<i>Errors</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] holograph?
<i>Much Ado</i>	Q 1600; F based on Q with some editing	marked up quarto
<i>L L Lost</i>	Lost Q? 1598; Q 1598; F based on Q with some editing	marked up quarto
<i>Dream</i>	Q1 1600; Q2 1619; F based on Q2 with some editing	marked up quarto
<i>Merchant</i>	Q1 1600; Q2 1619; F based on Q, with some editing	marked up quarto
<i>As You Like</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] theatre playbook?
<i>Shrew</i>	F only (anonymous 1594 <i>Taming of A Shrew</i> in background)	[scribal transcript of?] holograph, perhaps marked up for theatre
<i>Alls' Well</i>	F only	holograph? Transcribed? Annotated for theatre?
<i>12 Night</i>	F only	Scribal transcript of theatre playbook?
<i>Winter's</i>	F only	Crane transcript of theatre playbook
<i>John</i>	F only (anonymous 2 pt 1591 <i>Troublesome Reign</i> in background)	transcript by 2 different scribes?
<i>Richard 2</i>	Q1 1597; Q2-3 1598; Q4 1608; Q5 1619; F based on Q3 + abdication scene added	marked up quarto with added scene and consultation of theatre playbook
<i>1 Henry 4</i>	Q0 [Lost Quarto of which one sheet survives], Q1-2 1598; Q3 1599; Q4 1604; Q5 1608; Q6 1613; Q7 1622 F based on Q5, with some editing	marked up quarto, with probable consultation of theatre playbook
<i>2 Henry 4</i>	Qa/Qb 1600; F based on independent manuscript (some infl of Q)	'literary' transcript of theatre playbook?
<i>Henry 5</i>	'bad' Q 1600, repr. Q2 1602, Q3 1619; F based on independent manuscript (possibility of some influence of Q3)	[scribal transcript of?] holograph
<i>1 Henry 6</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] collaborative holograph? Influence of playbook?
<i>2 Henry 6</i>	'bad' Q 1594 ( <i>1 Contention</i> ), repr. Q2 1602, Q3 1619; F based on independent manuscript (some influence of Q3)	[scribal transcript of?] holograph
<i>3 Henry 6</i>	'bad' O 1595 ( <i>Richard of York</i> ), repr. Q2 1602, Q3 1619; F based on independent manuscript (some influence of Q3)	[scribal transcript of?] holograph with Q3 consulted? Or possibly marked up Q3?

<i>Richard 3</i>	'bad??' Q1-2 1598, repr. Q3 1602; Q4 1605; Q5 1612; Q6 1622; F printed from annotated Q3, annotated Q6 with passages from independent manuscript	marked up and interleaved quartos?
<i>Henry 8</i>	F only	scribal transcript of collaborative holograph?
<i>Troilus</i>	Q 1609; F often thought to be based on Q with substantial annotation, but may derive from independent manuscript	heavily marked up quarto? Scribal copy based on theatre playbook?
<i>Coriolanus</i>	F only	scribal transcript (of holograph or theatre playbook?)
<i>Titus</i>	Q1 1594; Q2 1600; Q3 1611; F based on Q3, with some editing + fly scene added	marked up quarto with added scene
<i>Romeo</i>	'bad?' Q1 1597; Q2 1599; Q3 1609; Q4 1622; F based on Q3 with some editing	marked up quarto
<i>Timon</i>	F only	collaborative holograph?
<i>Caesar</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] theatre playbook
<i>Macbeth</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] theatre playbook
<i>Hamlet</i>	'bad' Q1 1603; Q2 1604/5; Q3 1611; Q4 1622?; F based on independent manuscript (some infl of Q3)	scribal transcript of theatre playbook
<i>Lear</i>	Q1 1608; Q2 1619; F based on independent manuscript (some influence of Q2)	Probably transcript of theatre playbook with scribe sometimes referring to Q2
<i>Othello</i>	Q1 1622; F based on independent manuscript that is influenced by Q?	Crane? transcript of theatre playbook
<i>Ant &amp; Cleo</i>	F only	[scribal transcript of?] holograph
<i>Cymbeline</i>	F only	Crane transcript [possibly of earlier transcript in two different hands]

The profusion of question marks in the third column of this table shows how uncertain scholars remain over the origin of the copy for many of the Folio plays. But a clear pattern emerges. The process of preparing the Folio began with the scribe Ralph Crane being commissioned to copy the texts of a number of hitherto unpublished comedies. He seems to have worked primarily from the playbooks kept in the theatre. He has left testimony to the fact that he worked for the King's Men, in a poem that suggests the mutual respect between him and them in the period when work was beginning on the Folio:

And some employment hath my useful pen  
Had 'mongst those civil, well-deserving men  
That grace the stage with honour and delight,  
Of whose true honesties I much could write,  
But will comprise't (as in a cask of gold)  
Under the *kingly service* they do hold.  
(Crane, preface to *Works of Mercy*, 1621)

As Crane set to work on the theatre manuscripts of the previously unpublished comedies, someone else – perhaps Edward Knight the book-keeper – began marking up quartos of the previously published comedies with reference to the theatre playbooks, paying particular attention to the insertion of stage directions. The decision to undertake this annotation is a clear indication that the Folio was intended to be presented as a more

*theatrical* volume than the quartos had been. For four of the five final plays in the comedies section, another scribe, with different habits from Crane, seems to have joined the team, but the method remained the same – where possible, it was the theatre text that formed the basis for the manuscript given to the printing shop.

In a couple of cases, *The Comedy of Errors* and *All's Well that ends Well*, holograph (authorial) copy is more likely than theatrical. One of the signs that this is the case is that these plays have a higher instance of the oath 'God', which would have been expurgated from theatre playbooks after the implementation of the parliamentary Act to Restrain Abuses of Players in 1606. *The Comedy of Errors* was an old, short play, performed at the Inns of Court nearly thirty years before the production of the Folio: it may well not have been in the active repertoire of the King's Men at the time when the copy was prepared for the printer. As for *All's Well that ends Well*, there is no record of any performance. The absence of any vestige of an expurgated theatre playbook, despite the fact that it seems to have been a relatively new play at the time of the Act to Restrain Abuses, suggests that this play may have failed to reach the stage or may have been badly received on its first performance and not been revived, so there was no 'live' playbook. We have no way of knowing where Hemings and Condell obtained Shakespeare's holograph copy for transcription or typesetting: a stock of old unrevived plays would not have been a high priority for salvation from the burning tiring-house at the time of the Globe fire in 1613, so perhaps someone made a trip to Stratford and retrieved an authorial draft from Shakespeare's family. The text of *All's Well*, ridden with knots and inconsistencies, is one of the few where the term 'foul papers' seems genuinely apt. But this is all pure speculation.

The picture becomes more complicated with the history plays, which came next in the process – though with some overlap in the printing, in that the histories were started before the comedies were finished, as later the tragedies were started before the histories were finished. Here there are further examples of transcripts of theatre playbooks and quartos marked up with reference to theatre playbooks. So, for example, in *Richard II* the playbook supplied the deposition scene that was missing from the quarto that was used by the typesetter. But with *Henry V* and the *Henry VI* plays, the scholarly consensus is that the Folio printers were given manuscripts that were closer to holograph (authorial) than



playhouse copy. Whereas the lack of expletives such as ‘God’ is a strong indication of playhouse influence on the Folio copy for the two parts of *Henry IV*, such oaths are especially common in the Folio texts of (in descending order) *Richard III*, *Henry V* and *Henry VI Part 2*. The vogue for English history plays based on Holinshed’s *Chronicles* was long past by the time the Folio was produced, so again these may well have been plays that had dropped out of the living repertoire. In the case of *Richard III*, there is other evidence strongly suggesting that although the Folio text was printed long after the Quarto, the manuscript that was used in its preparation represents the play in an earlier state than that reproduced in the Quarto.

The final section of the Folio, the tragedies, shows the most marked predilection for copy transcribed from the theatre playbooks: the option of reprinting the quartos of *Troilus*, *Lear*, *Hamlet* and the freshly-published *Othello* was firmly rejected in favour of texts presumably closer to the current theatre version of each play. The only Folio tragedy texts where there are clear signs of holograph copy are *Timon of Athens* and *Antony and Cleopatra* – which also happen to be the two tragedies for which there is least evidence of an active performance history. *Timon*, almost certainly written in collaboration with Thomas Middleton, is especially likely to have been unstaged or taken out of the repertoire after an unsuccessful opening.

Tentative and speculative as this survey of Folio copy has been, it leaves no doubt that whenever possible Hemings and Condell were trying to present the most theatrically-inflected versions of Shakespeare that they could find. It surely follows that a Folio-based complete works is the best starting-point for a theatrically-inflected Shakespeare today.

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## **THE CASE FOR THE FOLIO (2): GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The argument in favour of Folio may be reiterated in terms of general editorial theory, as opposed to the specific circumstances of the obtaining of copy. What we mean by editing a text from the age before standardised spelling and ‘rational’ grammar-led punctuation, is *modernizing* (the spelling and the punctuation – but not the words themselves, we are not

talking about changing Shakespeare's 'thou' to modern 'you'), and *correcting* the printing errors (of which there are a lot in early texts). But what do we modernize and correct? What is our 'copy text'? Editorial theory usually suggests that we should work from one of the following

- (i) the author's manuscript
- (ii) the first published text
- (iii) the final published text authorized by the author.

In the case of Shakespeare,

- (i) is impossible because all his manuscripts are lost, save for the one scene he wrote for the unstaged *Sir Thomas More*
- (ii) is possible for some plays but not others, because some of the first published texts in quarto format are riddled with errors, while
- (iii) doesn't exist.

Except maybe an approximation to (iii) does exist, if we extend the rule and embrace 'the published text authorized after the author's death by his friends and closest colleagues, the people who knew his plays best because they performed them'. By which we mean the First Folio, the original 'Collected Works of Shakespeare' published in 1623 and overseen by his fellow-actors John Hemings and Henry Condell. All modern-spelling complete Shakespeare editions since 1709 offer a mix of (ii) and this extended interpretation of (iii), that is to say of quarto-based and folio-based texts.

I have often been asked why our editorial team has devoted nearly twenty person-years to the preparation of a new edition of Shakespeare when the shelves of libraries and bookshops around the world are already groaning with them. My answer is that we have done so because there is an edition we need, but do not have: a modernized edition of the First Folio. My decision to accept the commission to edit the works for the Royal Shakespeare Company was made when I said to myself 'Why follow the crowd and offer a mix of (ii) and (iii)? Why not go consistently for (iii)?' I was inspired to make this decision by the fact that, unusually, the commission came from a theatre company rather than a publisher. In asking what would be the best text for the RSC today, the obvious answer was the text of the original royal Shakespeare company – his own company, the King's Men. The polemical proposition behind the project is that the Shakespeare First Folio is

the most important book in the history of world drama and yet no one has edited it – in the sense of correcting and modernizing it – since Rowe in 1709 (and even he contaminated it with that quarto sequence in the fourth act of *Hamlet*). There have been facsimiles and modern-typography-but-original-spelling versions, but no proper edition.

Both the ‘new bibliographers’ and the ‘Oxford revisionists’ were trying to restore something imagined, something lost, something anterior to the multiple agencies that intervene between the act of writing or playing and the appearance of a printed text. A Folio edition, by contrast, tries to restore, correct (and then modernize) something more nearly recoverable: the canon of Shakespeare’s plays in the form in which they first became a canon and were authorized by the agents who knew them best, namely the King’s Men.

The Folio has two other great merits:

(1) It provides valuable evidence as to how Shakespeare’s own colleagues classified his plays and in what order they thought the plays should be read. Though many of the histories are also tragedies and the tragedies not without comedy, the Folio’s threefold generic classification into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies is deservedly influential. Though the comedies may have been printed first for the simple reason that they presented fewer problems over licensing, length and choice of text than the histories and tragedies, there could be no better introduction to Shakespeare’s distinctive imagination than the first play in the collection, *The Tempest*. And though modern evolutionary models of authorial development make many editors incline to the view that an *oeuvre* should be presented in chronological order of composition, there is much to be said for the Folio editors’ decision to present the English history plays not in the order that they were written, but in the chronological order of the reigns they represent.

(2) Though Hemings and Condell took the trouble to obtain theatre-based copy text whenever possible, the editors of the Folio also took the trouble to present the plays as ‘literary’ reading texts, imposing on Shakespeare’s fluid scenic development an (albeit incompletely implemented) structure of act and scene divisions on the classical model. An edition of Shakespeare will always be a compromise between a text for reading and a template for performance: to judge from both the editorial method and the prefatory

address ‘To the great variety of readers’, Hemings, Condell and their team seem to have been aware of this and to have done their best to negotiate the compromise.

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### **THE CASE FOR THE FOLIO (3): EDITORIAL AGENCIES AND THE MARGIN OF ERROR**

Hemings and Condell, acting on behalf of the King’s Men and under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke and his brother the Earl of Montgomery were the instigators of the First Folio. The publisher/bookseller Edward Blount and the syndicate he assembled (some of whom held prior rights to individual plays as a result of having published quartos) were the distributors of the book. Isaac Jaggard and his men (compositors, pressmen, proof-readers) were its executors. The other human agencies in the production of the volume were the intermediaries between Hemings and Condell in their capacity as the business managers of the King’s Men and the team who worked for Jaggard in the production of the volume to be sold by Blount and others. Those intermediaries were the men who prepared the texts – certainly Crane and the book-keeper (who was almost certainly Knight), probably one or more additional scribes, perhaps an assistant book-keeper. They may be described as the editors of the First Folio.

Perhaps because the tradition of named Shakespearean editors does not emerge until Rowe in 1709, a surprising number of twentieth-century scholars were reluctant to acknowledge that the early printed texts of Shakespeare had editors. Consider the following characteristic hypotheses by three generations of distinguished textual scholars:

With regard to the First Quarto of *Richard III*: ‘A curious literary feature is the headings “His oration to his souldiers” and “His Oration to his army” before Richmond’s and Richard’s speeches at V.iii.237 and 314. They may have been added by the printer.’ (Sir Walter Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio*, 1955, p.192).

With regard to *Romeo and Juliet*: ‘The Q4 compositors consulted Q1 while basing their text on Q3’ (Brian Gibbons, Arden edition of *Romeo*, 1980, p. 24).

With regard to Folio *Henry V*: ‘It is equally possible that Q3, which had been printed by Jaggard in 1619, was simply available in the shop in 1622 and that it was sporadically consulted by the Folio compositors’ (Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, 1987, p. 376).

Are we really to imagine that compositors, typesetters who were essentially journeymen, had the sophistication and initiative to add ‘literary’ flourishes to their copy or to compare two different quartos as they were setting? I am not aware of there being any demonstrable example of a printer setting from two distinct copy-texts anywhere in the records of the early modern printing house. Printers’ handbooks such as Joseph Moxon’s *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* portray the compositor as a kind of galley-slave, not an active agent engaged in the business of making substantive textual choices. His first rule is to stick to his copy. The rule was not obeyed, in that printers had their own idiosyncratic habits in such areas as punctuation and they sometimes consciously or unconsciously sophisticated or otherwise altered their copy. But they didn’t waste time comparing and contrasting the copy propped in front of them on their case of type with the content of some alternative source of copy.

*The added stage directions from the theatre books and the consultation (sometimes systematic, sometimes sporadic) of quartos were not part of the Folio printing process but part of the preparation of the Folio copy.* Moxon’s manual goes through the personnel in the printing house: his compositors, pressmen and correctors are the equivalent of typesetters, printing machine operators and proof readers in modern times. But there was no equivalent for the modern copy-editor. That must be because the work of preparing the copy – in the case of the Shakespeare Folio, writing out transcriptions or marking up quartos – took place before the copy-text went into the printing shop. The key agents of creation, hardly ever mentioned in the twentieth-century scholarly tradition that became obsessed with the habits of the Folio compositors, were the scribes, transcribers, annotators – the copy-text

preparers. To personalize them, we might call them ‘Crane and Knight’. We may certainly call them editors.

Our distinguished twentieth-century textual scholars should have spoken of ‘a curious literary feature added by the quarto editor’ and ‘sporadic consultation of a different quarto by the Folio editor’.

The 1622 Fourth Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* was based on the 1609 Third Quarto, but someone consulted the (very different, often defective but sometimes illuminating) 1597 First Quarto and, as a result, introduced a number of highly intelligent corrections and emendations. Who was this person? Certainly not a compositor. We know that the dramatist Henry Chettle sometimes undertook work in the printing house that can only be described as editorial. The editor of Q4 *Romeo and Juliet* was the same sort of agent.

Proposition one: *the First Folio had editors.*

The printing and proof-reading of the First Folio was an ongoing process in Jaggard’s shop. That is to say, stop-press corrections were undertaken. On more than 100 occasions, the press was stopped and a correction implemented. But the sheets printed before the stopping were retained and eventually mixed into copies of the finalized book. All copies of the Folio contain a mixture of ‘corrected’ and ‘uncorrected’ sheets. So it is that, strictly speaking, no two individual copies of the First Folio are exactly the same. This was a common occurrence: almost all early modern English printed books have press variants.

‘Postmodernist’ scholars of the late twentieth century very much liked the idea of every copy of the Folio being different from every other. The image of random variation played well with notions of textual indeterminacy and the absence of controlling authorial agency, favoured themes in the age of literary theoretical ‘deconstruction’. The postmodern editorial theorist took pleasure in pointing out that the ‘authoritative’ Norton Facsimile of the First Folio (1968, second edition 1996) was created by photographing pages from several different copies to make an ‘ideal’ copy that never really existed.

But the headline about the lack of a single authoritative copy masked the more mundane truth that the variants were for the most part very minor. The fanatical Bardolater Henry Clay Folger collected about 80 copies of the First Folio (roughly one-third of the total extant in the world). They are now housed in the library named after

him on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. In the 1950s and 60s, the scholar Charlton Hinman undertook a word-by-word search for the variants between them, using a specially-designed collating machine. Having collated 55 of the copies, he discovered 510 press variants, of which around 80 were ‘substantive’ or ‘semi-substantive’ (i.e. involving changes to actual words) as opposed to ‘accidental’ (involving inking space-types, page-number and signature errors, obvious literals and so forth). Given that there are nearly a million words of Shakespeare in the Folio, this seems a rather small number, especially as in most cases even the substantive variants involve the correction of minor typographical errors. Only five of Hinman’s press variants have caused scholars to pause and reconsider readings in the received editorial tradition. This now looks like poor reward for so many years’ loving labour.

What Hinman seems to have forgotten, or not known, is that in the early modern printing house it was customary to proof-read each sheet before copies began to be run off the press. Stop-press correction was an added check, not the main defence against error. To the dismay of postmodernists, we can truthfully say that the degree of press error in the First Folio was relatively low for such a large and complicated book.

*Proposition two: the First Folio was better proof-read and has fewer significant press variants than is often supposed.*

Between them, propositions one and two suggest that we should have more faith in the Folio than was often placed in it by twentieth-century editors.

\* \* \*

## **EDITING THE FOLIO WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE QUARTOS**

Strong as the defence of Folio may be, we cannot deny that it is marred by many clear typographical errors and other confusions. Verse is sometimes set as prose and vice-versa, either out of compositorial confusion or for reasons of space. Speakers’ names are sometimes missing or incorrect. Individual words do not make sense, phrases and even whole lines are missing.

It would be ridiculous to reproduce a manifest compositor's error for the sake of fidelity to the Folio: if one is going to do that, one might as well fall back on a transcription or facsimile rather than call one's text an edition. There are many occasions where Folio is printed from a quarto, the quarto text is manifestly accurate and the Folio compositor has made a clear error: in such instances, the editor must restore the quarto reading.

So it is that in preparing the RSC edition we have certainly not edited the Folio as if the quartos did not exist. Quarto readings are invaluable in the process of identifying and correcting printing errors in the Folio. And, indeed, it is a matter of peculiar good fortune that they exist for several of the tragedies. The overall standard of printing in the First Folio is remarkably high, though there are degrees of variation according to the nature of the printer's copy for each play and the habits of the various members of the team of compositors who worked on the project. However, after the comedies and histories were completed, a new and less competent printer joined the team. Probably an apprentice, he is known by scholars as Compositor E. He was responsible for typesetting large chunks of *Troilus and Cressida*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*: consultation of the quartos allows us to undo much of his bad work in these plays. He also set parts of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline*, together with a page of *Timon of Athens*: since there are no quartos of these plays, correction of his errors in them requires a higher degree of editorial conjecture.

Like all editors since those of the 1632 Second Folio we have attempted to be more accurate than the First Folio compositors were. Our golden rule has been to follow the Folio whenever it makes sense, but to correct it from the quartos when a quarto is manifestly correct and the Folio manifestly erroneous. So too with the larger question of emendation: we follow the Folio whenever it makes sense, but correct it from the editorial tradition when the editorial tradition makes sense of what is manifestly erroneous in the Folio. In cases where differences between Folio and quarto are, in the editors' judgement, due not to a compositor's error but to a divergence in copy (because of authorial or playhouse revision, or intelligent alteration or annotation or sophistication on the part of the book-keeper or editor or scribe who prepared the Folio text), the Folio is followed, but if the revision is of substance and interest it is flagged in the textual notes. For the sake of



completion, substantial quarto-only passages – which are especially numerous in *Hamlet* and *King Lear* – are edited separately at the end of each play where they occur and non-Folio works (*Pericles*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the poems and sonnets) are appended at the end of the book.

We grant that this results in the alteration of some things that Shakespeare originally wrote, as in the case of oaths, which were modified (‘heaven’ for ‘God’, removal of the blasphemous ‘zounds’ and ‘sblood’) following the parliamentary act of 1606 (hence Folio’s ‘Heauen’ rather than ‘God’ in Hamlet’s first soliloquy). We accept that there are almost certainly passages in the Folio that are the result of playhouse additions after Shakespeare’s death or scribal regularization and emendation in the process of preparing copy. But such features are worth retaining for the sake of editorial consistency, of fidelity to the ambition of recovering the plays at one particular key moment in their evolutionary history, and of recognition that Shakespeare’s achievement was at the profoundest level collaborative.

\* \* \*

### **DERIVATIVE QUARTOS AS FOLIO COPY: HARD CASES MAKE BAD LAW**

How does an edition based primarily on the Folio differ from one based on the usual eclecticism?

In the 18 Folio-only plays, there will not be much difference, though respect for the producers of the Folio means that there will be less interference and emendation than is often the case.

In the 4 plays (*Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 2 & 3*, *Merry Wives*) where there is such a high degree of variation between Folio and quartos that editors used to dismiss the quartos as ‘bad’, there will again not be much difference: in these instances, all modern editions begin from the Folio.

For the 5 plays (*Richard III*, *Troilus*, *Lear*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*) where there is a highly variant but ‘good’ (or, in the cases of *Richard III* and *Lear*, what might better be described as a ‘not bad’) quarto, suggesting that the Folio represents a revised text or at least a different lineage of manuscript origin, modern editors have sometimes used Folio and sometimes used Quarto. With *Richard III*, Oxford used Folio for its *Complete Works* text but Quarto for its stand-alone edition. A Folio-based edition will choose Folio in all five cases and it will not follow such editions as the Riverside and the Norton in providing conflated texts of *Hamlet* and *Lear* that stitch together Quarto and Folio (though in the interests of completeness the editors may provide appendices of Quarto-only passages). The three great virtues of this approach are consistency of choice, respect for the theatrical origins of Folio copy and rigorous rejection of the long tradition of conflation that has created texts, particularly of *Hamlet* and *Lear*, that Shakespeare never wrote (see discussion above in the section **Changing the Script: The Mobile Texts of Shakespeare’s Tragedies**).

For the 3 plays where the Folio text was printed from a marked-up copy of a First Quarto (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*), all other modern editors use Q1 as their copy-text but import stage directions, act divisions and some corrections from Folio. The Folio-led editor will follow the reverse procedure, using Folio as copy-text, but deploying Q1 as a ‘control text’ that offers assistance in the correction and identification of compositors’ errors. Differences are for the most part minor.

The hard cases are the remaining 6 plays, where the Folio was printed from a marked-up copy of a later (‘derivative’) quarto. Here orthodoxy uses first quartos as the base text, but with the imposition onto those quartos of materials that postdate their appearance, for example Folio act and scene divisions, stage directions, added scenes (such as the fly-killing in *Titus* and the deposition in *Richard II*) and added or rewritten speeches (notably in *Henry IV Part 2*). The rationale for the use of quarto copy is that the Folio text contains compositors’ errors, accumulated each time a later quarto was printed. Thus *Henry IV Part I* was printed from a marked-up copy of the Fifth Quarto. On the road from the First Quarto to the Fifth, about 200 local errors had been introduced into the text. The Folio editors only corrected just over 10% of these.

At the same time, however, Folio *Henry IV Part 1* represents a particular moment in the history of the text, where significant alterations were made. Folio is more different from Q5 than Q5 is from Q2. The introduction of stage directions and the removal of oaths, in accordance with the Act to Restrain Abuses, are clear signs of the influence of theatre-derived copy. The logic of version-based editing dictates that where Folio makes good sense, even if it is slightly different from Q1 due to the accumulation of alterations in Q2-Q5, the Folio reading should be retained. That is to say, if a correction was not made by the Folio editor as he prepared the copy by marking up a Fifth Quarto in consultation with the theatre playbook, then it should not be imposed by the modern editor. Errors introduced by the compositors in the Folio printing process should, however, be corrected. Though the distinction between kinds of error involves a process of scholarly conjecture, on the basis of evidence regarding the habits of compositors and scribes and the conditions of the early modern printing house, the ambition of the modern Folio editor should be to reconstruct the text prepared by the original Folio editor.

It is also worth pointing out that the traditional editorial notion of fidelity to the first quartos (or first ‘good’ quartos), on the grounds that they represent the texts closest to ‘what Shakespeare wrote’, is sometimes more an ideal than a reality. First quartos have errors too. And later quartos made good corrections as well as introducing new errors. When I edited *Titus Andronicus* for the Arden series, I followed Q1 as my copy text, in accordance with editorial custom, but on many occasions the text I created was actually closer to that of Q2, because it happens that Q2 makes excellent corrections to a number of errors in Q1 and has much better punctuation. So too with *Romeo and Juliet*: modern editors say that they are editing Q2 (the first good quarto), but since there are many errors in Q2 and since Q4 makes excellent corrections and conjectural emendations in the face of those errors (partly by means of judicious use of the ‘bad’ or ‘short’ or ‘copied by the ear’ Q1), the reality of modern editions of *Romeo and Juliet* is that they are closer to Q4 than Q2. Folio *Romeo and Juliet* was printed from a marked up copy of Q3, often corrected similarly to Q4’s correction of Q2. If supposedly Q2 editions are actually closer to Q4 and Folio is also close to Q4, though independent from it, is it so very wrong to begin from F?

The accusation is that Folio should not be used when its copy-text is a derivative quarto, since it suffers from an accumulation of errors evolving through several quartos. The riposte is that it also has the benefit of accumulated improvements evolving through several quartos. In response to the argument for accumulated improvements, the textual conservative might say: in that case, why are you editing the First Folio and not the Second, Third or Fourth? Each of those later Folios (especially the Second, which includes many fine emendations) made corrections and modernizations even as it introduced new errors. Conservatives attack Rowe for basing his 1709 text on F4 rather than F1, but the principle of returning to the *fons et origo* is overridden in the practice of line by line editing, where F2, F3 and F4 corrections are gladly adopted. What all this means is that in the act of making local choices, all editions to some extent ‘conflate’. Editing is not possible without editorial tradition and that tradition began not with Rowe but with an array of quarto and Folio correctors.

We must cut the Gordian knot here. It is best not to over-fetishize the source of individual corrections. In accordance with this principle, our textual notes record emendations adopted from quartos or later folios, but for those from subsequent tradition, we do not specify an originating edition. The Shakespearean text was mobile in its own time and remains ever mobile: each time one of the plays is performed, whatever the ‘copy text’, the words will be slightly different, thanks to the tricks of actors’ memories. *The merits and demerits of the choice to edit consistently from the First Folio should accordingly be debated at the level of general theory and dramatic shape, not that of local emendation.*

*General theory:* the mobility and multiple agency of the Shakespearean text call into question both the traditional editorial aspiration of getting back to ‘what Shakespeare originally wrote’ and the ‘Oxford revisionist’ aspiration of getting back to the putative first performance. We accept that there are many different texts, none of them altogether definitive, but we propose that an especially valuable – and unusually authoritative – moment in the life-history of the plays is the text established by the First Folio editors (the editors, not the compositors – i.e. the First Folio as it went into the printing house as opposed to how it came out), and that is what we edit.

*Dramatic shape:* Folio texts are generally closer to theatrical practice than quartos were; their cuts, additions and purposeful alterations should be respected. Hybridization

of different moments in the life of each play should be avoided. Folio *Henry IV Part 2* has eight substantial passages that are not in the Quarto. The advantage of editing Folio is that one can avoid back-projecting those passages into the Quarto. The price of respecting the integrity of Folio is that its other changes, such as the removal of profanities and apparent elements of scribal ‘improvement’, must also be retained. Thus in the case of *Titus Andronicus* staying with Folio saves us from the false impression given by most other editions that the fly-killing scene was part of the ‘original’ version of the play, but the price of integrity is the retention of an element of rewriting in the closing moments of the play (including the insertion of four extra lines at the very end) that occurred because F was set from Q3 which was set from Q2 which was set from a damaged copy of Q1 that forced the Q2 editor to conjecturally reconstruct the content of some torn leaves. In this instance, we have used marginal sigla to indicate the doubtful status of those final lines – a procedure we have also adopted with regard to certain other questionable sequences, such as putative authorial first thoughts intended for deletion (which some modern editors simply drop) and the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* (which is for some reason absent from the Folio).

\* \* \*

## **TO EMEND OR NOT TO EMEND?**

### *Johnson’s Law*

Of Shakespeare’s leading editors, the commonsensical Dr Samuel Johnson was, out of respect for the First Folio, among the most conservative in emending. He took pride in never introducing new emendations of his own into the text, but rather ‘confining his imagination to the margin’. The magnificent preface to his edition of 1765 has several guiding principles that are still worth following:

- do not correct unless you are fully confident that the text is corrupt or obscure; if there is difficulty or obscurity, seek to explain possible meanings before emending

- to something less obscure ('To alter is more easy than to explain, and temerity is a more common quality than diligence. Those who saw that they must employ conjecture to a certain degree, were willing to indulge it a little further ... now we tear what we cannot loose, and eject what we happen not to understand').
- remember that the text is often obscure not because of corruption but because 'the style of Shakespeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure': annotation is accordingly more important than emendation, which is one reason why an unannotated edition is of strictly limited worth. 'It has been my settled principle, that the reading of the ancient books is probably true, and therefore is not to be disturbed for the sake of elegance, perspicuity, or mere improvement of the sense': we may grant that the compositors were far from perfect, 'yet they who had the copy before their eyes were more likely to read it right, than we who read it only by imagination'.
  - where there is manifest error ('strange mistakes by ignorance or negligence'), we must emend, but in doing so we should keep a 'middle way between presumption and timidity'. When a passage is obscure, begin by trying to recall it to sense with the least possible violence: 'I have adopted the Roman sentiment, that it is more honourable to save a citizen, than to kill an enemy, and have been more careful to protect than to attack'.
  - in short, on the matter of emendation, *when in doubt, don't. Or, if Folio is defensible, then retain its reading.*

#### *Some Examples*

Enough of the theory and the principles. Here are some examples of our editing in practice.

(1) Robin the Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.178:

Q: Ile put a girdle, roüd about the earth, in forty minutes.

F: Ile put a girdle about the earth, in forty minutes.

The ‘n’ in ‘round’ in the Quarto text is represented by the printer’s mark of a tilde (~) above the ‘u’. This creates a close resemblance between ‘rouïd’ and ‘about’. Such resemblances in adjacent words often led to eyeskip on the part of the compositor. The dropping of ‘round’ from the Folio is therefore almost certainly a compositor’s error and not a purposeful editorial emendation, so we emend using Quarto, whilst also splitting the line for the sake of the metre (something that, for reasons of space, was done by neither Quarto nor Folio compositor, but which manifestly needs to be done, since the whole sequence is in verse). Our text:

I’ll put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes.

(2) By contrast, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 3.2.221:

Q: I am amazed at your words

F: I am amazed at your passionate words

The insertion of ‘passionate’ makes up the line into a pentameter. This kind of change is much more likely to be a purposeful editorial emendation than a compositorial error. The Folio reading is accordingly retained in our text. We also follow the custom of assisting the reader or actor in speaking the pentameter by indicating that the past participle is sounded as a syllable: ‘I am amazèd at your passionate words’.

(3) Demetrius at *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 5.1.242-43:

Q: Why? All these should be in the lanthorne: for all these are in the Moone.

F: Why all these should be in the Lanthorne: for they are in the Moone.

A Quarto-based edition would assume that the Folio has erroneously changed ‘all these’ to ‘they’. The Folio-based editor considers this an unlikely compositorial substitution and proposes that it is likelier that the Quarto printer has erroneously repeated ‘all these’ from earlier in the line and that the Folio correction is purposeful. We accordingly retain Folio, whilst modernizing the punctuation, spelling and typography: ‘Why, all these should be in the lantern, for they are in the moon.’

(4) Speech heading (speaker’s name) at *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 5.1.325:

Q: *Lyon*. No, I assure you, the wall is downe, that parted their fathers.

F: *Bot.* No, I assure you, the wall is downe, that parted their Fathers.

Lion is not on stage. The style is Bottom's. Dramatically, who but Bottom is fit to speak the final lines of the play within the play? Well corrected, Folio.

But in all these cases, there is an element of conjecture in deciding whether to emend or not to emend. In his *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* (1939), the great twentieth-century textual scholar R. B. McKerrow laid down the principle that the editor should choose 'the most careful copy of its [a work's] original and the most free from obvious errors' and should depart from this copy only when its readings 'appear to be certainly corrupt'. 'Appear to be' and 'certainly' are wonderfully oxymoronic, suggesting what an imprecise science textual emendation can be.

Editorial choice is not confined to 'Quarto or Folio reading?' To emend or not to emend is still the question in Folio-only plays. Consider four cases from a notoriously messy text, *All's Well that Ends Well*. What follows from our rule – a cleaner version of McKerrow's demand that we should only emend in 'apparently certain' cases of corruption – *if Folio is defensible, then retain its reading?*

(1) Some of the Countess's most beautiful lines are addressed to Helen in act one scene three:

what pale agen?  
My feare hath catcht your fondnesse! now I see  
The mistrie of your louelinesse, and finde  
Your salt teares head, now to all sence 'tis grosse:

In 1733 the editor Lewis Theobald emended 'louelinesse' to 'loneliness', arguing bibliographically that the substitution of 'u' for 'n' is the easiest possible compositorial error and semantically that the context of paleness and tears clearly suggests sorrow rather than beauty. 'The mystery of your loveliness' or 'the mystery of your loneliness'? Is Helen lonely because she is unrequitedly in love with Bertram or is she lovely because she is in love? The Countess has just referred to Helen's 'fondness' and goes on to infer 'you love my son', suggesting the run of thought 'she's fond, she's in love, she's in love with my son!' Furthermore, 'loveliness' may be interpreted as suggesting 'the state of being in



love'. Read thus, the Folio text is defensible. Whereas most modern editors follow Theobald's emendation, we retain Folio (1.3.137), though we signal the possible emendation in the explanatory notes at the foot of the page. This is an instance where the choice of a single letter has profound implications for the actor's and director's reading of the entire part: a lonely Helen, becoming a solitary pilgrim, is a different character from a lovely Helen, drawing strength from her desire.

(2) Stage direction at *All's Well*, 5.1.6:

Folio: *Enter a gentle Astringer.*

F2, its editor apparently not knowing the rare word: *Enter a gentle Astranger.*

F3, emending in pursuit of sense: *Enter a Gentleman, a stranger.*

Rowe's 1709 edition: *Enter a Gentleman* – the stranger is dropped.

Most modern editors create a stage direction based on F3.

There is, however, a good rule in textual bibliography, known as *lectio difficilior*, 'prefer the more difficult reading'. 'Astringer' is more difficult than 'a stranger'. Who is more likely to have introduced a difficult word? The writer with the most inventive vocabulary in the language? Or a jobbing printer? An astringer (alternatively spelt 'ostringer') was a keeper of goshawks. Shakespeare knew a lot about hawking, so would have known the word. Monarchs were avid hawkers, so a genteel keeper of court goshawks might well be the kind of person who had the power of access to, as Helen puts it as the character comes on stage, 'help [her] to his majesty's ear'.

Though the principle of *lectio difficilior* inclined the Arden editor, G. K. Hunter, to consider retaining the astringer, he rejected him and turned the part into a 'stranger' because he could not imagine 'how [his job] would have been conveyed in S's theatre'. Yet his job could perfectly well be conveyed by giving him a hawk (real or stuffed). Shakespeare's failure to follow through on the dramatic potential of the part, in a play where the language of hawking is used in relation to sexual desire and control, is just one of the many loose ends in the text of the play. The existence of a loose end is not in itself sufficient cause to emend.

(3) A key pair of couplets in the final scene. *All's Well*, 5.3.78-81:

The main consents are had, and here we'll stay  
To see our widower's second marriage day,  
Which better than the first, O dear heaven, bless!  
Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse!

Spoken by the king in the Folio text, but nearly all editors since Theobald in 1733 have reassigned the latter couplet to the Countess, making her say something to the effect of 'I'd rather die than see this marriage work out unhappily'. The Folio ascription to the king seems to me much stronger dramatically: he is saying that since he has failed in his management of Bertram's first marriage, the second had better be a success otherwise 'nature' may as well 'cesse' (cease). According to the theory of the great chain of being, the collapse of monarchical justice and authority and the collapse of nature are as one.

(4) In the three above examples, Folio is defensible, so it is retained in our edition. Sometimes, however, Folio is flatly self-contradictory or theatrically impossible. Thus it is with the business of the two French lords/brothers (late in the play we learn that they are called Dumaine): they have several different designations, variants on '1 Lord G.' and '2 Lord E.', 'French E.' and 'French G.', 'Captain G.' and 'Captain E.' The initials are sometimes supposed to refer to actors' names. The problem is that Shakespeare sometimes seems to forget whether 'G.' is '1' and 'E.' is '2' or vice versa. This means, for instance, that there is confusion over which brother leads the ambush of Parolles and which accompanies Bertram as he sets off to seduce Diana. We have adopted a solution (similar to that in the stand-alone Oxford edition of Susan Snyder, different from that in the complete Oxford edition of Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor) that is dramatically consistent whilst requiring only minimal alteration of Folio's speech ascriptions.

And finally, an example from *The Winter's Tale*, to show that the handling of stage directions is as important a part of editorial work as the treatment of dialogue. When Hermione collapses at the climactic moment of the trial scene (3.2.153), all modern editions have Paulina exiting with the ladies who carry off her body and then re-entering on the line 'Woe the while! / O, cut my lace'. But there is no Folio warrant for this exit and re-entrance. In her very next speech, Paulina refers to Leontes' betrayal of Polixenes and false accusation of Camillo. But Leontes has only admitted to his betrayal of

Polixenes and false accusation of Camillo in the speech delivered while Paulina is supposedly off-stage. This renders the exit dramatically implausible: Paulina must surely remain on-stage all the time. We accordingly break with editorial tradition and do not insert a direction for her to exit and re-enter. This means that she must really believe that Hermione is dead, and persuade Leontes to believe the same, not that – as would be implied if she went off with the body and came back – she has discovered that Hermione has only fainted and then quickly come up with the plan of pretending that she is dead. There is accordingly genuine suspense as the action shifts away from Sicilia to Bohemia: no one on stage, not even Paulina, yet knows that Hermione is actually alive.

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## **NEW TOOLS FOR THE TASK**

The earlier discussion of ‘sallied’, ‘sullied’ and ‘solid’ made use of a resource that is available to twenty-first century editors, but not their predecessors: instantly searchable online databases of huge *corpora* of texts from Shakespeare’s period, which provide information about word usage. The key collections are *Early English Books Online* (EEBO, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>), *Literature Online* (LION, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/>) and *Lexicons of Early Modern English* (LEME, <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/>).

Three more simple examples from *Hamlet* and two from other plays offer excellent illustrations of how modern technology has altered the editorial process.

(1) Horatio describes Marcellus and Barnardo quivering with fear as the ghost of Old Hamlet appears to them on the battlements of Elsinore (1.2.207). They have metaphorically turned to jelly. But what verb did Shakespeare use here? In the quarto editions they are ‘distilled / Almost to jelly with the act of fear’, whereas in the Folio they are ‘bestilled’. Since the eighteenth century, the majority of editors have preferred quarto’s ‘distilled’ (meaning ‘dissolved’) but a distinguished minority have argued for Folio’s ‘bestilled’, with its suggestion of being *frozen* by fear. A search of the databases reveals that the verb ‘bestill’ is not otherwise found prior to 1723 (the *Oxford English*

*Dictionary*'s earliest usage other than that in Folio *Hamlet* dates from 1770). It is not unknown for Shakespeare to coin a verb and no one else to use it for a hundred years, but in this instance the database search strongly suggests that 'bestilled' is a printing error ('b' for 'd' is an easy substitution), so we emend from Quarto.

(2) A famous pair of lines about Old Hamlet:

So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle  
He smot the sledded Pollax on the Ice.

(No significant variations between early texts, though the adjective is spelt 'sleaded' in Q1 and Q2, 'sledded' in F and the noun 'pollax' is lower-case in the quartos.)

Problem for editors: what is a 'sledded pollax'?

Commonest solution proposed by editors: emend to 'sledded Polacks', i.e. Polish soldiers fighting on sledges. The Oxford *Complete Works* adopts this emendation without any justificatory discussion in its *Textual Companion*, despite the fact that no one has ever found examples of Polish (or any other) soldiers on sledges in the literature of the period.

Problem with the solution: Old Hamlet is combating 'Ambitious Norway', not Poland. A 'parle' is a 'parley', a peace negotiation, not a battle. An iced-over river on the border between Denmark and Norway is an appropriate setting for the negotiation of a treaty, whereas the notion of a battle fought on ice is colourful but wildly implausible.

Problem with retaining 'sledded pole-axe': search of databases reveals no other usage of the word 'sledded' or 'sleaded' in the period.

Inference: surely the problem is with 'sledded', not 'pollax'.

Action: search early modern databases for occurrences of 'pollax' (and its variant spellings), to see what adjectives customarily qualify it.

Discovery: many usages in Shakespeare's time refer to a 'steele-pollax' or 'pollax well-steed'. Furthermore, there is an abundance of steeded weaponry in Shakespeare's other plays, and a 'steeded coat' in *Henry VI Part 1* (1.1.85).

Further discovery from contexts thrown up the databases: the pole-axe was primarily a ceremonial implement rather than a weapon used in battle. It was literally a steel axe on a pole, analogous to the halberds carried by the Yeomen of the Guard and the 'Switzers' who still form the ceremonial guard in the Vatican.

Conclusion: the absence of other occurrences of ‘sledded’ strongly suggests compositorial error; the occurrence of ‘steeled’ with pole-axe suggests the emendation ‘steeled pole-axe’. During a parley with the Norwegians, angry Old Hamlet grabs the steel-headed pole-axe from the Switzer who stands guard beside him and bangs it emphatically on the ice.

Check with editorial tradition: *Hamlet* has been edited so many times and discussed in such minute detail for so many years that one is unlikely to find new solutions to the old problems. Most strong emendations will have been proposed before. And so it proves: a search of the online variorum edition, [www.hamletworks.org](http://www.hamletworks.org), yields this from Friedrich August Leo’s *Shakespeare-Notes* of 1885:

I never heard of a battle called a ‘parle,’ and I cannot suppose that a parliamentary negotiation between two monarchs would end in a row. No! Horatio speaks of two positions he has seen the dead king in: the first, when he went to war against Norway – Horatio remembers the very armour the king had on; the second, when he became angry in the course of a discussion, and – to vent his anger – smote his *steeled pole-axe* on the ice. (For ‘to smite’ in the same sense, see *Lucrece*, 176.) You must see him how he frowned, how he tried to overcome his passion, and how at last this grew upon him, and he lifted his arm, and battered the axe down on the ice! There is more life, more action and nature in this picture, than in the poor Polack, who tumbles down and falls on his nose.

(3) The absence of ‘bestilled’ and ‘sledded’ from the databases of early modern *corpora* create a presumption in favour of emendation where it has often not been undertaken. Sometimes, though, new discoveries from the *corpora* create a presumption against emendation where it has usually been undertaken. Thus most editors fail to find a meaning for Hamlet’s ‘dram of eale’ in the Quarto-only passage concerning the destructive effects of Danish drinking habits and the ‘vicious mole of nature’ that tarnishes personal or national character. The *Oxford English Dictionary* could find no other occurrence of ‘eale’. But type the word into the LEME database and up comes ‘Laurence Nowell, *Vocabularium Saxonicum* (circa 1567), Eale, Ealu & Ealo: Ale, the auncient drinke of England’. ‘Ale’ makes good sense in context, especially as the speech has begun with drinking (regarded in Shakespeare’s time as the common vice of the Danish and the English). ‘Dram’ is still a word associated with measures of alcohol: even a wee measure, the smallest dram, the smallest fault, has the capacity to destroy a person’s (or a nation’s)

good name. The ‘dram of eale’ may stand (though the sense of the rest of the sentence remains problematic).

(4) The name of the heroine of *Cymbeline*, a Folio-only play, is ‘Imogen’ throughout the text. She is such a lovely character that the name took hold in the wider culture and generations of parents have christened their daughters after her. However, in Shakespeare’s source and Simon Forman’s eyewitness account of an early performance of the play, her name is ‘Innogen’. The misreading of ‘nn’ as ‘m’ is a very easy scribal or compositorial error. Recent editors have accordingly emended the character’s name to Innogen, noting that there is another Innogen in Shakespeare (Leonato’s silent wife in *Much Ado about Nothing*) and that late Shakespearean heroines have symbolic names. Marina in *Pericles* comes from the sea, Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale* is the lost one, Miranda in *The Tempest* is associated with wonder, so by the same account Innogen in *Cymbeline* is the innocent one. A search of the databases reveals that *the name Imogen occurs nowhere else in the age of Shakespeare, whereas Innogen is well-attested in historical sources concerning early Britain, the setting of ‘Cymbeline’*. This information provides additional supporting evidence in favour of the emendation, so we adopt Innogen, despite our usual tendency to remain loyal to Folio wherever plausible.

(5) We have also adopted the rule that if emendation proves necessary, the smaller the emendation the better. Thus nearly all editors since Theobald in 1733 have altered Hostess Quickly’s famous account of Falstaff’s dying moments in *Henry V* from ‘his Nose was as sharpe as a Pen, and a Table of greene fields’ to ‘his nose was as sharp as a pen and a [meaning ‘he’] babbled of green fields’. The alteration of ‘Table’ to ‘babbled’ is, however, a major intervention, especially as the Folio compositor set the word with an initial capital, indicating that he read it as a noun rather than a verb. A table goes with a pen, especially when one conducts a search of the databases and discovers that the table used by an accountant was often covered in green baize, as was a gaming table. ‘Fields’ and ‘points’ (the latter standing in metonymic relation to the sharp end of a pen) were also technical terms referring to the layout of a green baize-covered backgammon table. Both gaming and the drawing up of accounts are appropriate to the context: death is the

ultimate drawing up of accounts and the location is a tavern. Over forty years ago, in an admirable book called *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (1962, p.133), the scholar Hilda Hulme noted that 'by no more than modernization of spelling, the "Pen" can be either "on" or "in" the "Table": the "intrusive" *d*, after "final" *n*, was common enough in various kinds of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century colloquial and sub-standard speech [such as that used by Hostess Quickly]'. The reading 'for his nose was as sharp as a pen on a table of green fields' (our text, 2.3.12) could therefore be described as either a modernization or a minimal emendation. It makes sense in context and performs less violence upon the original Folio than Theobald did with his famous 'babbled'.

\* \* \*

## **BACK TO THE FOLIO: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEAREAN EDITING**

From 1632 until 1709, editing Shakespeare meant correcting and modernizing the Folio. From 1725 until 1986 it meant attempting to restore 'the original Shakespearean text'. In the standard history, the apostolic succession of most significant editions runs as follows:

- Nicholas Rowe 1709 – systematic modernization of spelling and punctuation, organization of act and scene divisions, locations, *dramatis personae* list. Folio followed except with the quarto-derived importation of Hamlet's last soliloquy.
- Alexander Pope 1725 – first editor to make substantial use of quartos, but decisions made on aesthetic more than bibliographic grounds ('shining passages' of poetic excellence highlighted by means of marginal quotation marks, 'excessively bad' lines, especially those with too much word play, 'degraded' to the foot of the page).
- Lewis Theobald 1733 – first editor to undertake sustained collation of Folio and quartos, and to make conjectural emendations on bibliographic as opposed to mainly aesthetic grounds, under the influence of editorial techniques learned from classical and biblical scholarship.

- Edward Capell 1768 – first editor to use the modern technique of establishing which of the ‘old editions’ should be used as the ‘ground-work’ for the editorial task by asking which version constituted the earliest authoritative text.
- Edmond Malone 1790 – first editor to apply principles of ‘authenticity’ to all aspects of the preparation of an edition, seeking not only to get back to the Shakespearean originals behind the texts ‘corrupted’ by printers and copyists, but also to attend to chronology of composition, together with contextual and historical determinants of meaning.
- Cambridge Editors (W. G. Clark and W. A. Wright) 1863-66 – first editors to thoroughly collate all quartos, folios and subsequent editions, and to record textual variants on the page, inaugurating a convention replicated in successive generations of Arden (and comparable) editions throughout the twentieth century; their textual choices widely disseminated through the one-volume ‘popular’ condensation of their work, the ‘Globe’ edition of 1864.
- Sir Walter Greg, John Dover Wilson, R. B. McKerrow and others – exponents of the ‘new bibliography’ of the first half of the twentieth century, who used ‘scientific’ principles to establish the ‘correct’ copy-text for each play, their work disseminated, by themselves and others, in a range of major editions, and perhaps best summed up in the practice of Peter Alexander in the preparation of his one-volume *Complete Works* of 1951, which displaced the Globe as the ‘standard’ edition.
- Oxford Editors (Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, William Montgomery) 1986 – effected an editorial paradigm shift by seeking to reconstruct (then modernize) a text approximating to that of the *first performance* as opposed to that which was penned by Shakespeare; the first complete edition to accept and act upon the principle of the ‘mobile’ theatrical text, especially with regard to major revisions in some of the major tragedies.

An alternative lineage can, however, be proposed:



- 1623-1685: the Folio tradition supplants the quarto, by authority of Shakespeare's own fellow-actors and their successors.
- 1709: Rowe makes the right decision in modernizing and correcting the Folio, but a fatal error in adding Hamlet's last soliloquy from the Second Quarto.
- 1723-1986: the tradition of conflated texts dominates.
- 1986: the Oxford revolution begins to undo the tradition of conflation, but does not go far enough.
- 2000 onwards: the Folio reasserts itself after centuries dominated by conflation and preference for (most) quartos. The theatre-book publisher Nick Hern begins to publish a series of pioneering (though often error-strewn) Folio-based editions of individual plays (edited by Nick Somogyi, 2002 onwards, 15 titles published to date) and the Royal Shakespeare Company agrees to a Folio-based text for its new edition of the *Complete Works*.

This alternative lineage ought to celebrate the little-known pioneers of the editorial counter-tradition: the handful of adherents to Folio in the long centuries of conflation and quarto domination.

The Victorian editor and all-round Shakespearean Charles Knight reacted against the quarto leanings of the line from Pope to Malone: he produced a succession of editions in different formats, in which as far as possible he favoured the Folio. He began with his Pictorial Edition in 1838, followed with the Library Edition ('with corrections and alterations') of 1842, then the National Edition of 1851, the Stratford Edition of 1854, the Pictorial of 1867 and finally the splendid Imperial Edition of 1873. In each case, he preferred the Folio because he believed that it corrected the quartos, though in the more scholarly of his editions he included notes pointing out where the Folio departed from the quartos. He could not, however, resist inclusion of Hamlet's last soliloquy and the Quarto-only passages of *King Lear*. His preface explained how he dealt with them:

Where there are omissions in the folio of passages found in the quartos, such omissions not being superseded by an extended or a condensed passage of a similar character, we give them a place in the text; distinguishing them, however, by brackets. But we utterly object to the principle which has too often guided the modern editors, of making up a text, when the variations are considerable, out of the text of the quartos and that of the folio. If any part of the variation

demonstrates that it is the author's improvement, we are bound to receive the whole of the improvement, with the exception of any manifest typographical error; satisfying, however, the critical reader, by giving him the original passage in a note. To act upon any other principle is to set up private judgment against all authority.

The principle here is admirable. And yet in practice, Knight did not always follow Folio when he could have done. Thus in the final scene of Folio *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus rather than Philostrate introduces the play of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. This sets up a nice frisson between him and the lovers in the on-stage audience (especially Lysander), who have contracted marital arrangements expressly against his will. In terms of the practice of the Elizabethan court, it is perfectly plausible to imagine Philostrate as a 'master of the revels' figure in the first act, being sent out to commission possible entertainments, and Egeus as a 'lord chamberlain' figure in the last act, overseeing the actual performance in front of the court. The revision seems to be theatrically purposeful, presumably based on consultation of the playhouse book. A Quarto-based text should give the lines in the final scene to Philostrate, a Folio-based one to Egeus. But Knight, despite printing a mostly Folio text, reverted to the Quarto speaker at this point, offering a note that seems unduly deferential to editorial and theatrical custom:

The folio has 'Call Egeus;' and to him nearly all the speeches subsequently given to Philostrate are assigned. As some stage convenience possibly suggested this arrangement in the folio, it is not worth while to derange the received allotment of the dialogue to Philostrate, which is that of the quartos. (*Library Edition*, vol.2, p.83)

On this and several other occasions, Knight did not quite have the courage of his Folio convictions.

The professionalization of literary and philological studies in the eastern United States after the Civil War led to the first major American scholarly edition: H. H. Furness's *Variorum Shakespeare*, which began to appear in 1871 and remains unfinished today. Furness's *Variorum* printed old-spelling texts that were in most cases Folio-based, with quarto insertions marked by asterisks. His example inspired two remarkable Bostonian ladies, Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke, to create the first ever complete Folio-based edition. Entitled the Pembroke Edition, in honour of the original Folio's patron, it appeared in 12 volumes from Thomas Crowell of New York in 1903 and was reprinted in 28 volumes over the following nine years with the title 'First Folio Edition'. A London

reprint was published in 13 volumes by Harrap in 1906, but was not intended for the mass market – a princely 75 copies were printed.

In their preface, Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke granted that the First Folio is in old spelling and that the spelling of Shakespeare had customarily been modernized. But, they argue, Chaucer and Spenser are edited in original spelling, so why not Shakespeare? Provided you modernize the typography – get rid of the long s, interchange i and j, u and v, replace the occasional ‘y’ with ‘th’ and ‘thē’ with ‘them’) – then ‘there is practically nothing in the form of the first complete text of the Plays, published in 1623, and commonly called the First Folio, particularly if these few changes mentioned be made, which should cause the present-day reader to stumble in reading it’ (Editors’ Preface, vol.1, p.vii).

*The quartos may well have been unauthorized, but the Folio was definitely authorized:* this in itself was, for Porter and Clarke, sufficient reason to prefer Folio. Even the plays first printed in quarto ‘are the more interesting in their Folio form because they bear the marks of use upon the author’s stage’. Porter and Clarke point to ‘many additional stage directions, and divisions into acts and scenes. Moreover, here and there they may contain marks of later revision by their author – a precious possibility which the Quartos cannot claim.’ Despite the earlier issue of the quartos and the defects of the Folio, conclude these Bostonian pioneers, ‘still the First Folio remains, as a matter of fact, the text nearest to Shakespeare’s stage, to Shakespeare’s ownership, to Shakespeare’s authority’ (p.ix). Their particular attention to the *theatrical* origins of most of the Folio texts was, I would suggest, nearly a hundred years before its time.

Curiously, though, Porter and Clarke point out, the First Folio had been neglected by editors – Rowe worked from F4 which was based on the second issue of F3 which was based on F3 which was based on F2. The ‘worst and least authoritative of the four Folios is the historic basis of all English texts’ – each editor after Rowe printed the text of the one immediately before, introducing changes of his own. Capell and Malone were the most careful, but didn’t shift the paradigm. The Cambridge editors, ‘whose Globe text may be regarded as distinctively the Victorian text’, quickly resorted to collation and conflation. ‘In a word, the English editors of Shakespeare have continuously groped backward from the most modern toward the most ancient text’. It took an American, Dr

Horace Howard Furness, write Porter and Clarke with pride, ‘to be the first to adopt the rational and scientific method which alone makes it possible to catch all preceding slips and to forestall new causes of error by printing the First Folio as it stands, and noting variations from that in chronological order.’ Though even he, they point out, did not start doing so until the fifth of his *Variorum* texts.

‘The present editors have chosen instead to begin with the light of the original’: the Porter and Clarke text is an old-spelling, modern-typography, warts-and-all First Folio, with footnotes collating errors and giving the source (a quarto or a modern editor) of the ‘correct’ reading. Porter and Clarke assent to the opinion of the great Victorian scholar J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps that, ‘with all its imperfections on its head’, the Folio is ‘the most interesting and valuable book in the whole range of English literature’. They end their introduction, signed from Boston on 5 January 1903, by acknowledging Furness, ‘whose new and thoroughly American lead they have followed in adopting for this edition the First Folio text’.

As far as I am aware, Porter and Clarke were the first editors to produce a complete text of the 36 canonical plays by working directly from the First Folio at all times. But in so doing, they went on to note in their preface, they found that they had ‘laid bare the imperfections of the first editions’. Thus

Where the Folio contains, as in some plays it does, – *Lear*, for example, – passages not in either of the earlier Quarto editions of the same Play, the Folio here followed supplies them; where the Quartos, on the other hand, as in the same play of *Lear*, contain passages not in the Folio, the additional parts are inserted in the text exactly as they appear in the earliest Quarto form, but enclosed between brackets to show that they are not in the Folio, and a note at the foot of the page calls attention to the insertion, and states the Quarto from whence the added passage was copied.

In other words, despite their admirable prefatory polemic in favour of the First Folio, in their practice, like Charles Knight before them, they could not resist making quarto insertions (albeit signalled by brackets) in *Hamlet* and *Lear*.

So has *any* editor produced a *Complete Works* entirely based on the Folio? Had the courage to leave those passages out from *Hamlet* and *Lear*, to stick with Egeus instead Philostrate, to eschew all conflation? I think there has been just one, Herbert Farjeon (brother of Edward Thomas’ friend, the writer Eleanor Farjeon). His superb yet rarely

mentioned edition is the one that I would specify, beside a copy of the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible, if I were ever invited onto Desert Island Discs.

Farjeon's text was originally published between 1929 and 1933 by Random House's Nonesuch Press, in a numbered limited edition of 1050 American and 500 British copies, but reprinted more accessibly in 1953 in four handsome yet conveniently compact volumes dedicated by permission to Queen Elizabeth II in honour of her coronation. This is that rare thing, an edition of Shakespeare that does exactly what it says on the title-page and that is rigorously true to its own principles: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: The text and order of the First Folio with Quarto variants and a choice of modern readings noted marginally: to which are added 'Pericles' and the first quartos of six of the plays with three plays of doubtful authorship: also the poems according to the original quartos and octavos.*

Farjeon offers an old-spelling but modern-typography Folio text, with quarto variants and significant later editorial corrections and conjectures given in the margin. With the 6 plays where there is a quarto so heavily variant that it could not be presented in this way (*Merry Wives*, *Henry V*, 2 & 3 *Henry VI*, Q1 *Romeo*, Q1 *Hamlet*), separate quarto texts appear after the Folio ones. For good measure, there are also texts not only of *Pericles* and the poems and sonnets, but even of *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Edward III* and *Sir Thomas More*.

When I was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and Random House to prepare the first new complete Shakespeare of the new century, I suggested (half-seriously) that the best possible edition would be a reprint of Farjeon's edition, to which Random House already held the rights, with new introductions and explanatory glossarial notes (of which Farjeon has none). But the notion of an old-spelling edition in four volumes for some reason failed to excite the marketing team. It was then that I realized there was a true gap in the crowded market: a modern-spelling and lightly corrected Folio-based edition. I salute Nicholas Rowe, Charles Knight, Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke, and Herbert Farjeon, but still find it extraordinary that not even they quite fulfilled this very obvious need.