

Shakespeare from Page to Stage¹

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As General Textual Editor of the *Norton Shakespeare* third edition, I am often asked why we need new editions. Underlying this question are two I am going to try to answer in the current paper: (1) Why do we need editions of Shakespeare at all?; and (2) What do editions, on the page, have to do with Shakespeare's plays on the stage?

As you may know, we have no holograph manuscripts of plays or poems by Shakespeare. The closest we get are a few pages in a collaborated play that was ultimately not produced, *Sir Thomas More*. It has been convincingly argued that the so-called "Hand D" of this manuscript is Shakespeare's. From 1594 on, Shakespeare was the attached dramatist of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who became the King's Men in 1603. The *Thomas More* manuscript contains notes from the Master of the Revels asking for cuts and revisions, and Shakespeare seems to have been brought in to do what he could to salvage the drama, including rewriting one long scene. Figure 1 shows a page from this precious manuscript, now elaborately preserved in the British Library.²

Quite aside from the difficult secretary hand, extremely light punctuation, and cancellations and corrections, you may notice that although it was conventional in dramatic manuscripts to fold the page into four columns—the first for the speech prefixes, the second and third for the text, the last for run-over prose and stage directions—there are no directions here. More about that later.

Since this is our only manuscript, for the remainder of Shakespeare's works we are dependent on early printed texts. For about one-half of the plays, we have small books called quartos. Famously, the texts in these quartos have been categorized as good and bad, but even the good ones would pose problems to an inexperienced reader. A page from the 1608 quarto of *King Lear* appears in Figure 2. For comparison, Figure 3

1 Read 13 November 2015. The author co-presented with Tina Packer, Founding Artistic Director, Shakespeare & Company. To view Ms. Packer's portion of the talk, which can be viewed as a video, please refer to the electronic version of this article on the website of the American Philosophical Society at www.amphilsoc.org. Ms. Packer was accompanied in her presentation by actor Nigel Gore.

2 All Figures appear in the Appendix at the end of this paper.

depicts a page from the *Norton Shakespeare* with the same, familiar passage. By this point in the quarto, the compositor had realized he was running out of space for the material he had “cast off” or estimated for each page, and he has squeezed the entire passage into something that to the casual eye looks like prose to fit his material onto the space available. Of course, since Shakespeare’s verse is anything but a mechanical iambic pentameter, generations of editors have had their say about where the verse lines begin and end. You may notice, for instance, “That she may feel” is treated as one short line, whereas in other cases, two short lines are aligned to indicate that they constitute a single verse, as in “Within a fortnight? What is the matter sir?”

Figure 4 shows the reverse, a page of *Henry V* where prose was set as verse to stretch out the material (notice the caps on each of Fluellen’s lines). The Norton page, on the other hand, appears in Figure 5 and makes clear that the dialogue is prose.

Besides the quartos, our other source is the First Folio (1623), which contains most but not all of the same plays that had previously appeared in quarto and as many again, for a total of 36. For plays as important as *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*, the Folio is our only source. Some of these plays are very carefully presented, and we even know the name of the scribe who prepared them. But the Folio texts are still imperfect, for example, missing lines, as we can tell at moments such as one in *All’s Well*. Here Figure 6 shows two successive speech prefixes for the Clown, who thus apparently speaks twice without an intervening answer to his original question.

Often, where we have two early texts (usually a quarto and the Folio but sometimes two quartos), the texts differ, frequently in a word or two but sometimes more grossly. Occasionally, as in *Hamlet*, the Folio text is shorter. The entrance of Fortinbras, meeting the Captain, in the Folio appears in Figure 7, whereas in Figure 8, we see the 1604 Second Quarto, which goes on to an entrance for Hamlet and his party and a conversation between Hamlet and the Captain. Notice that one of Hamlet’s most famous soliloquies, “How all occasions do inform against me / And spur my dull revenge,” with its familiar line about “thinking too precisely on th’event,” is found only in the Second Quarto. By contrast, in *Othello*, the bedroom scene between Desdemona and Emilia, including Desdemona’s willow song and Emilia’s lengthy feminist excuse for straying women—“it is their husbands’ faults if wives do fall”—is reduced to a few lines in the Quarto (Figure 9). Figure 10 shows the equivalent in the Folio, the inspiration for Verdi among others. The song is in italic.

There are competing theories about why quarto and folio texts may differ. One may be a draft and the other one finished. One text may have been cut for performance, due to time limitations or problems with the cast. Perhaps the willow song was cut when the boy playing Desdemona couldn't sing. One version may report a censored text, such as the quartos of *Richard II* from Queen Elizabeth's lifetime, which do not include the deposition scene. Other possibilities are that one text was earlier and later revised, a theory now in vogue for *King Lear*, or that one text was the result of "reconstruction," either by actors recalling their parts—so-called memorial reconstruction—or made from notes or shorthand taken down in the theatre, a theory recently revived. Some of these theories, especially those that imply Shakespeare's own revision, assume both texts are "good"; some, particularly in the case of what seem to be really deficient texts, such as the Quarto of *Merry Wives*, assume one text is bad, the other good.

Editors have taken different views on how to proceed. At first, the quartos were ignored on the assumption that they were the "stolen and surreptitious copies" complained of by Hemings and Condell in the Epistle to Readers of the Folio. Later, noticing that some Folio texts were actually set from quartos but others seemed to report a separate history, for several centuries the tendency was to "conflate." Conflation was based on two assumptions: first, that there was originally a single authorial text—the "real" *Hamlet*, sometimes referred to by textual editors as the "work"—from which all surviving texts, no matter how deficient, derived, and which it was the editor's duty to approximate as closely as possible; and second, that the editor could do so on the basis of his—for centuries, only his—intuition and knowledge. Sometimes this worked smoothly: one can insert the conversation between Hamlet and the Captain and the subsequent soliloquy into the shorter Folio text, assume they have been cut for length, and *voilà*, more Shakespeare. But sometimes it didn't work at all. When Othello tells the Venetian Senate about his wooing of Desdemona, does he report that, "She gave me for my pains a world of sighs," as in the 1622 Quarto, or more surprisingly, as in the Folio, "She gave me for my pains a world of kisses"? Was Desdemona modestly sighing or ardently kissing? Nineteenth-century editors favored the sighs; modern editors tend to favor the kisses. But the lines are not conflatable.

In the Norton 3, our editors follow a different theory, called "single text editing." We do not pretend we can see through what the New Bibliographers called "the veil of print" to the "authorial intentions" of our poet, imagined, like Joseph Fiennes in *Shakespeare in Love*, sitting

alone in his garret composing the unimprovable product of genius. Instead, we edit the so-called base text or texts—both, when they both exist, and three for *Hamlet*—sticking with what they report as much as possible, that is, as long as coherent sense can be made out of the early modern English. Furthermore, we acknowledge that there may never have been a single inflexible “work,” especially because as a member of his company, Shakespeare may have worked with the actors in developing scenes as they were tried out.

In my remaining time, I’m going to give you a taste of how stage directions complicate these questions. It is said among scholars that directors—we can ask Tina Packer later—would prefer a script to have no directions, not even the original ones, because so often a production’s interpretation is conveyed through action. For an extreme case, consider the end of *Measure for Measure*. As he reveals the heroine’s presumably dead brother, the Duke says to Isabella, “Give me your hand, and say you will be mine,” and he repeats his offer in the play’s final speech, “Dear Isabel, I have a motion much imports your good. Whereto, if you’ll a willing ear incline, What’s mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.” The teleology of comedy, as followed in all known productions up to the 1980s, suggests that the novice nun follows the Duke’s direction and rushes into his arms. But in the feminist ’80s, in a famous Royal Shakespeare Company production, Isabella looked at the Duke, turned her back, and walked off stage.

What should an editor do here—leave a blank? Insert a direction? Or hedge like the Norton, which provides a waffley footnote, “It is not clear how Isabella responds to the Duke’s proposal of marriage”?

Directions that are present in the base texts can be equally problematic. The scribe Ralph Crane, who prepared some of the texts in the First Folio, liked to follow the classical formatting for plays, as found in the Latin drama grammar-school boys like Shakespeare studied. So, he frequently created what are called “massed entries” for his plays. Figure 11 shows an entrance from *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act 4, scene 2, which Crane prepared for the Folio. The text reads, “Enter Protheus, Thurio, Julia, Host, Musicians, Silvia.” However, the Norton pages, which are the product of generations of editorial labor, clarify that the scene begins with Proteus’s 17-line soliloquy, followed by the entrance of Turio with Musicians, followed eight lines later by the entrance of Julia and the Host, who talk apart (Figure 12). Silvia will only enter at line 77. Modern editors specify that she enters “above,” as Proteus tells Turio “must we to her window, And give some evening music to her ear.”

As an editor decides what directions to insert, her first question is what she thinks her anticipated reader will need or appreciate. Consider Hamlet’s very first line. Having dealt efficiently with the ambassadors

and then with Laertes, Claudius turns to his next problem (Figure 13). He begins, "And now my cousin Hamlet, and my son—." Hamlet snidely comments, "A little more than kin and less than kind." And Claudius continues, "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" Is Hamlet's line, as marked by some but not all editors, an "aside"? Claudius's speech is continuous, as if he doesn't hear Hamlet. Or is it a confrontational interruption that the wily King chooses to ignore?

Often stage directions are implied in the dialogue even when they do not appear in the text. When Richard II says to Henry Bolingbroke in the deposition scene, "Here cousin, seize the crown. / Here, cousin. On this side my hand, on that side thine," no director is going to have the eager usurper walk off stage. So is a direction "missing," or is it just unnecessary? But usually the action is less certain, and "missing stage directions" is, consequently, an elastic category. Consider the passage from the so-called "bedroom scene" in the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*, usually considered the best text (Figure 14). There are no stage directions at all. It's pretty clear what happens to Polonius, and indeed at "I am slaine" the Folio punctiliously adds "Killes Polonius" (Figure 15). But neither text has any direction following the Queen's line, "What wilt thou doe? Thou wilt not murder me." So just what *does* Hamlet do? Approach menacingly? Shake her? Put his hands on her neck? Or as he promised, just "speak daggers to her"?

The Lord Chamberlain's Men did not use a stage director. It is probable that playwrights—most were freelance, not attached—gave some pointers on how they wanted things done. We know that Ben Jonson was backstage for some of the court masques he composed, and that for those special, richly supported occasions, he could make demands of a kind that would have been impossible on the public stage. Compare two sets of directions. The first, "The witches dance and vanish," is from the Folio (Figure 16). The second is from Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, performed at court a few years after *Macbeth* and featuring an antimasque of witches:

At which, with a strange and sudden music they fell into a magical dance, full of preposterous change and gesticulation . . . dancing back to back and hip to hip, their hands joined, and making their circles backward, to the left hand, with strange fantastic motions of their heads and bodies.

The description here is helpfully clarifying. But does that mean that an editor of *Macbeth* should direct that the witches dance "back to back and hip to hip"? And since the court masques had movable scenery but the theaters did not, how useful for a *Macbeth* editor is Jonson's report that at a "sound of loud music . . . not only the hags

themselves but the hell into which they ran quite vanished, and the whole face of the scene altered”?

Finally, to demonstrate how critical arguments about good and bad texts, editorial neglect or conscientiousness, and text and performance all intersect, I will conclude with four directions from a familiar play (Figures 17, 18, 19, and 20). They all look helpful, and audiences have probably seen one or more carried out onstage. Yet they are all from the 1603 “bad” quarto of *Hamlet*, a copy of which was only discovered in 1823 and radically altered some performance traditions. For example, neither of the “good” texts, the Folio or Second Quarto, says anything about what the ghost wears in Gertrude’s “closet”; until the discovery of the First Quarto, he simply continued to wear the armor of his first act appearance. Neither good text describes Ophelia as she enters after her father’s death. The Second Quarto gives no graveside directions; the Folio has a direction for Laertes to leap into the grave but none for Hamlet to follow. The Second Quarto gives no direction for the queen’s death or the duel; the Folio also ignores her but has a brief explanation of how Hamlet is poisoned (Figure 21).

How is an editor to treat these directions, which come from a Quarto that famously includes a soliloquy that begins “to be or not to be, ay there’s the point. To die, to sleep, is that all? I all, / No, to sleep, to dreame I marry there it goes”? The First Quarto directions could summarize Shakespeare’s oral instructions to his company; they could reflect common theatrical practice—hair down was or became a trope for madness; or they could be the accurate or inaccurate recollection of actions employed in a particular performance, whether or not the author approved. We have evidence that Richard Burbage, as Hamlet, did leap into the grave. We can work out from the poisoning of both Hamlet and Laertes that at some point, they must change rapiers: “The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,” says Laertes to Hamlet. But should an editor, whether committed to single-text or traditional methods, include them in her text? In many productions, there is no grave leaping, and when the First Quarto was first discovered, Victorian productions prudishly left the ghost in armor in the bedroom. How far can or should an editor go to help a director get from page to stage? Over to you, Tina.

APPENDIX

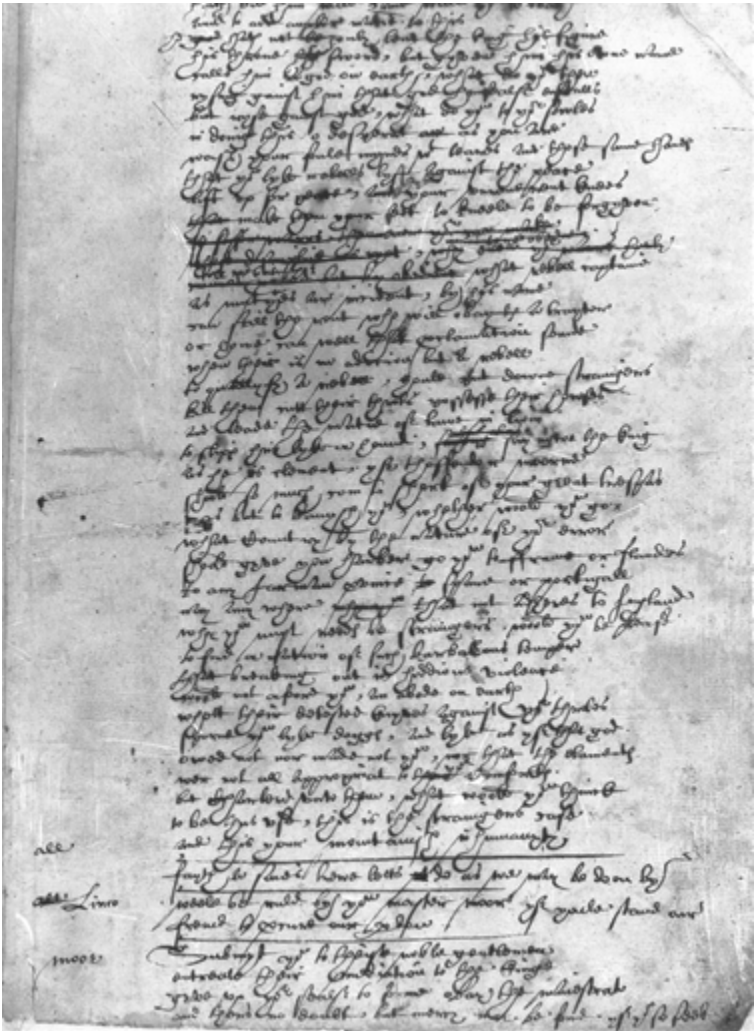


FIGURE 1. “Hand D” in folio 9a of *Sir Thomas More*. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

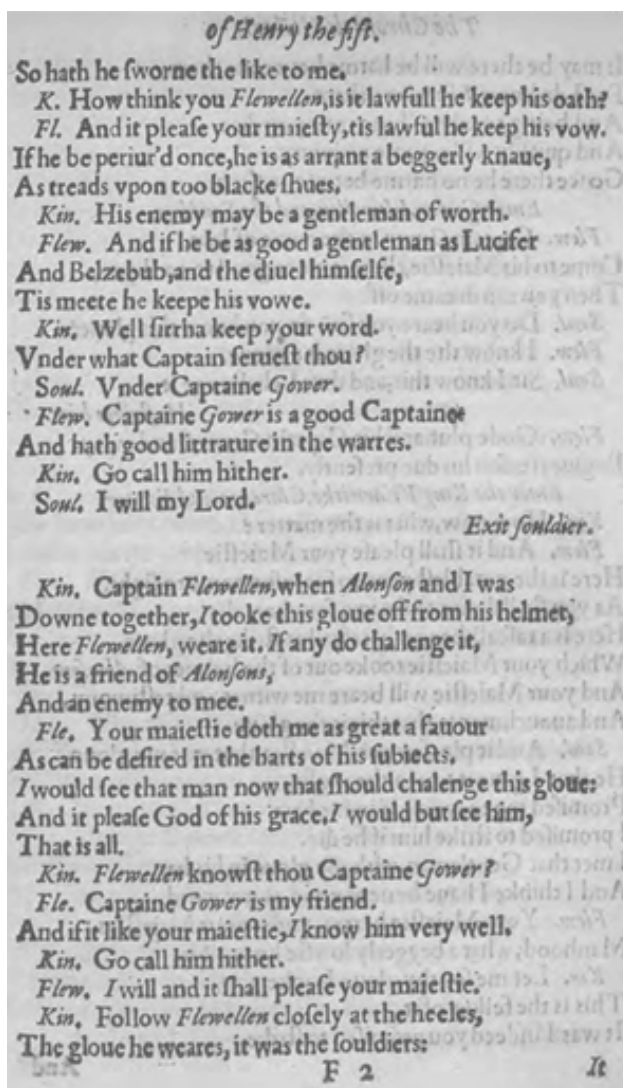


FIGURE 2. *King Lear*, First Quarto, signature Dr. Photo courtesy of W.W. Norton.

Shows^o like a riotous inn; epicurism^o and lust
 Make more like a tavern or brothel
 230 Than a great palace.¹ The shame itself doth speak
 For instant remedy. Be thou desired
 By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
 A little to disquantity your train,^o
 And the remainder that shall still depend^o
 235 To be such men as may besort^o your age,
 That know themselves^o and you.
 LEAR Darkness and devils! [to his SERVANTS] Saddle my
 horses;
 Call my train together. [to GONORILL] Degenerate bastard,
 I'll not trouble thee. Yet^o have I left a daughter.
 240 GONORILL You strike my people, and your disordered rabble
 Make servants of their betters!

*Appears / gluttony**to reduce your retinue
be retained
befit
Who know their place**Still**Enter [Duke of] ALBANY.*

LEAR We that too late repent 's! [to ALBANY] O sir, are you
 come?
 Is it your will that we prepare any horses?
 [to GONORILL] Ingratitude! Thou marble-hearted fiend,
 245 More hideous when thou showest thee in a child
 Than the sea-monster! Detested kite,^o thou liest!
 My train and men of choice and rarest parts^o
 That all particulars of duty know,
 And in the most exact regard support
 250 The worships of^o their name. —O most small fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,
 That like an engine wrenched my frame of nature
 From the fixed place,² drew from my heart all love
 And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear!
 255 Beat at this gate^o that let thy folly in
 And thy dear^o judgment out. [to his SERVANTS] Go, go, my
 people. [Exeunt SERVANTS.]
 ALBANY My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant.
 LEAR It may be so, my lord. Hark, Nature, hear,
 Dear goddess! Suspend thy purpose if thou
 260 Didst intend to make this creature fruitful.
 Into her womb convey sterility,
 Dry up in her the organs of increase,
 And from her derogate^o body never spring
 A babe to honor her. If she must teem,^o
 265 Create her child of spleen,^o that it may live
 And be a thwart dis-uterer^o torment to her.
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
 With cadent^o tears, fret^o channels in her cheeks;
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits^o
 270 To laughter and contempt, that she may feel—
 That she may feel
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
 To have a thankless child. —Go, go, my people!
 ALBANY Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?
 275 GONORILL Never afflict yourself to know the cause,
 But let his disposition have that scope
 That dotage gives it.
 LEAR What, fifty of my followers at a clap,
 Within a fortnight?
 ALBANY What is the matter, sir?
 280 LEAR I'll tell thee: life and death! [to GONORILL] I am
 ashamed

*carriion-eating hawk
qualities**honor accorded**(his head)
precious**debased
breed**malice
a perverse unnatural**flowing / carve
cares and kind actions*FIGURE 3. *The History of King Lear*, 1.4.228-280. Photo courtesy of W.W. Norton.

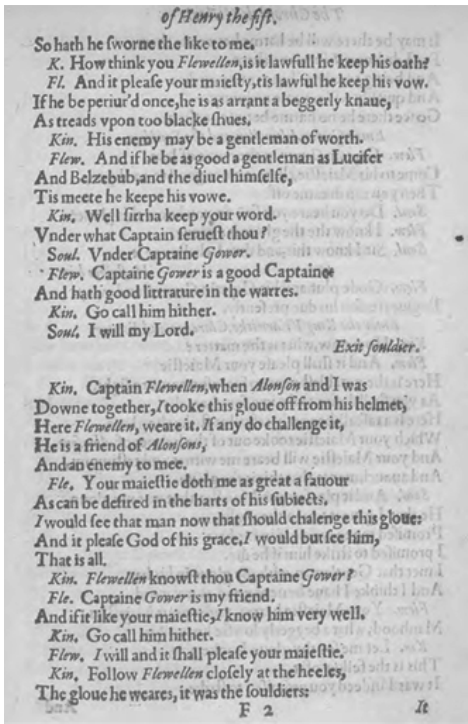


FIGURE 4. *Henry V*, First Quarto, signature F2r. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

SECOND SOLDIER An't please your majesty, 'tis a rascal's that
swaggered with me the other day, and he hath one of mine,
which if ever I see, I have sworn to strike him. So hath he
sworn the like to me.
KING How think you, Fluellen, is it lawful he keep his oath?
FLEULLEN An it please your majesty, 'tis lawful he keep his
vow. If he be perjur'd once, he is as arrant a beggerly knave
as treads upon two black shoes.
KING His enemy may be a gentleman of worth.
FLEULLEN An if he be as good a gentleman as Lucifer and
Belzebub^e and the devil himself, 'tis meet he keep his vow.
KING Well, sirrah, keep your word. Under what captain servest
thou?
SECOND SOLDIER Under Captain Gower.
FLEULLEN Captain Gower is a good captain and hath good
literature^e in the wars.
KING Go call him hither.
SECOND SOLDIER I will, my lord. *Exit [SECOND] SOLDIER.*
KING Captain Fluellen, when Alençon and I was down
together, I took this glove off from his helmet. Here, Fluellen,
wear it. If any do challenge it, he is a friend of Alençon's
and an enemy to me.
FLEULLEN Your majesty doth me as great a favor as can be
desired in the hearts of his subjects. I would see that man
now that should challenge this glove. An it please God of His
grace, I would but see him, that is all.
KING Fluellen, know'st thou Captain Gower?
FLEULLEN Captain Gower is my friend. An if it like your maj-
esty, I know him very well.
KING Go call him hither.
FLEULLEN I will, an it shall please your majesty. *[Exit.]*
KING Follow Fluellen closely at the heels.
The glove he wears, it was the soldier's.

FIGURE 5. *Norton Shakespeare* third edition, *Henry V*, Scene 18. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

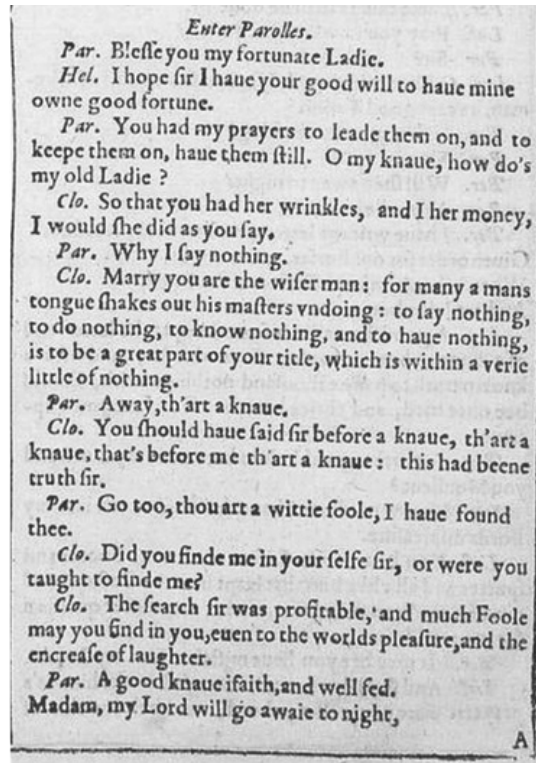
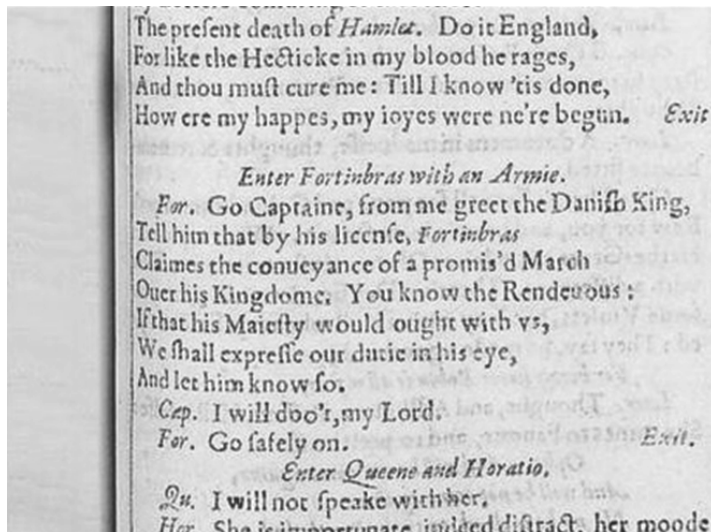


FIGURE 6. *All's Well That Ends Well*, First Folio, signature V5r. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.



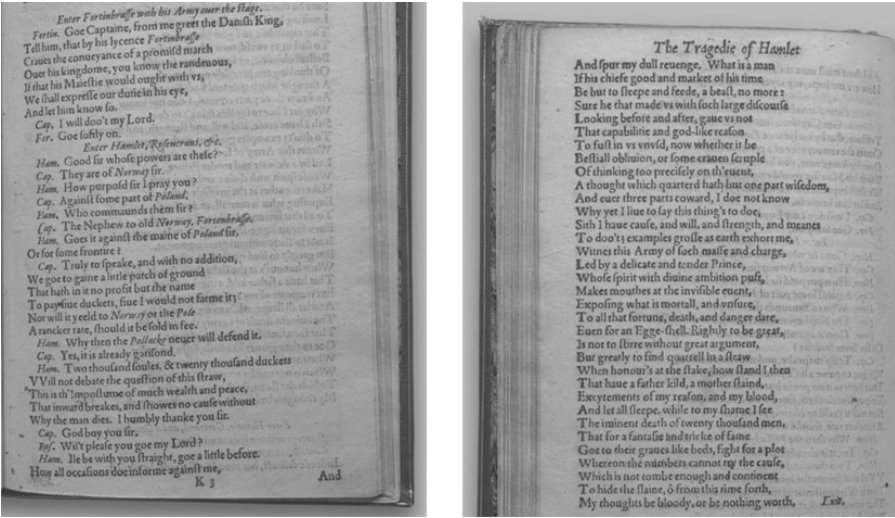


FIGURE 8. *Hamlet*, Second Quarto, signatures K3r and K4r, Hamlet meeting the Captain, through “How all occasions do inform against me.” Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International License.

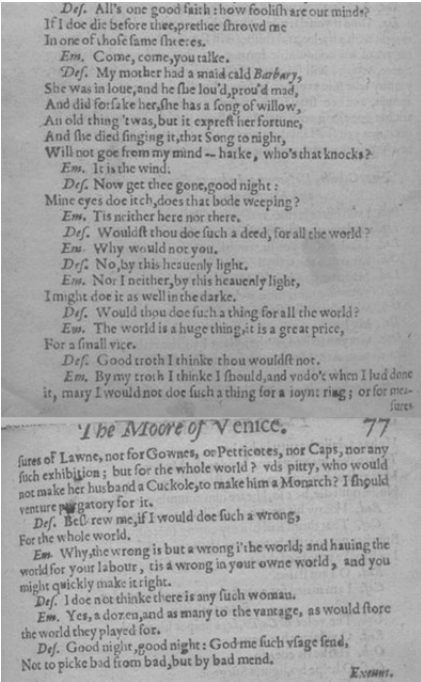


FIGURE 9. *Othello*, First Quarto, signatures L2v and L3r. Photo courtesy of W.W. Norton. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

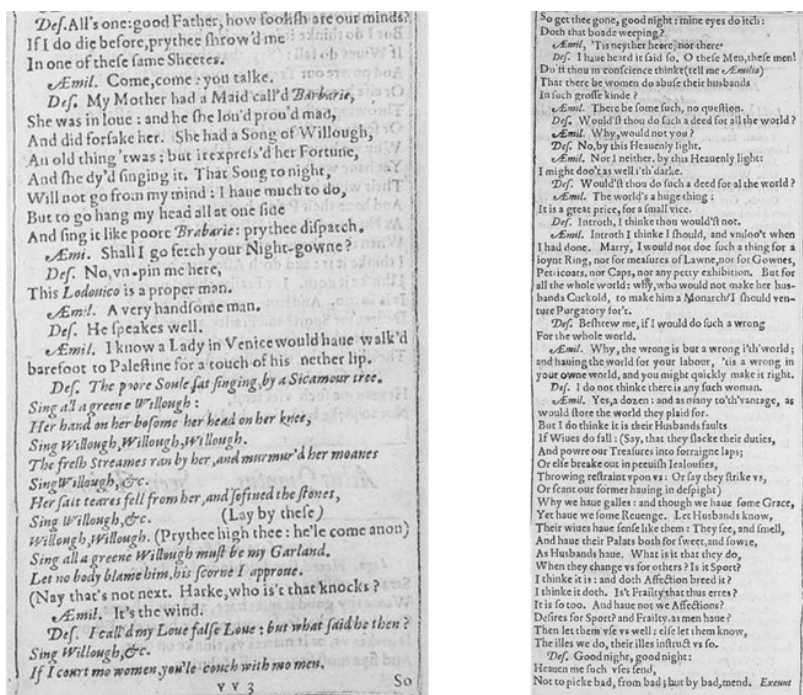


FIGURE 10. *Othello*, First Folio, signatures vv3r and vv3v. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

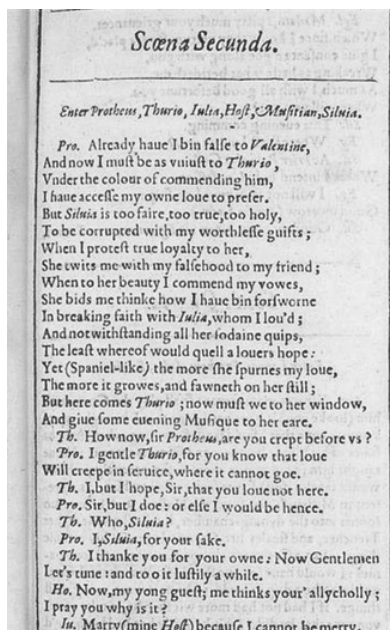


FIGURE 11. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, First Folio, signature C5r. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

4.2
Enter PROTEUS.
PROTEUS Already have I been false to Valentine,
And now I must be as unjust to Turio.
Under the color^c of commending him
I have access my own love to prefer.^c *pretext advance*
5 But Silvia is too fair, too true, too holy
To be corrupted with my worthless gifts.
When I protest true loyalty to her,
She twits^d me with my falsehood to my friend. *reproaches*
When to her beauty I commend my vows,
10 She bids me think how I have been forsworn
In breaking faith with Julia, whom I loved.
And notwithstanding all her sudden quips,^e *sharp rebukes*
The least whereof would quell a lover's hope,
Yet, spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love,
15 The more it grows and fawneth on her still.
[*Enter TURIO with Musicians.*]
But here comes Turio. Now must we to her window
And give some evening music to her ear.
TURIO How now, Sir Proteus? Are you crept before us?
PROTEUS Ay, gentle Turio, for you know that love
20 Will creep^f in service where it cannot go.^f *crawl / walk*
TURIO Ay, but I hope, sir, that you love not here.
PROTEUS Sir, but I do, or else I would be hence.
TURIO Who? Silvia?
PROTEUS Ay, Silvia—for your sake.
TURIO I thank you for your own.^g [*to Musicians*] Now, *own sake*
gentlemen,
25 Let's tune, and to it lustily awhile,
[*Enter JULIA, in page-boy's clothes, as Sebastian, and the most. They talk apart.*]
HOST Now, my young guest, methinks you're alicholly?^h I pray *melancholy*
you, why is it?

168 • THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA 4.2
75 PROTEUS Sir Turio, fear not you. I will so plead
That you shall say my cunning driftⁱ excels. *scheme*
TURIO Where meet we?
PROTEUS At Saint Gregory's^k well.
TURIO Farewell.
[*Exit TURIO and Musicians.*] *(at her window)*
[*Enter SILVIA above.*]
PROTEUS Madam, good even to your ladyship.
SILVIA I thank you for your music, gentlemen.
80 Who is that that spake?

FIGURE 12. Norton *Shakespeare* third edition, *Two Gentleman of Verona*, 4.2.1-27, 75-80. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

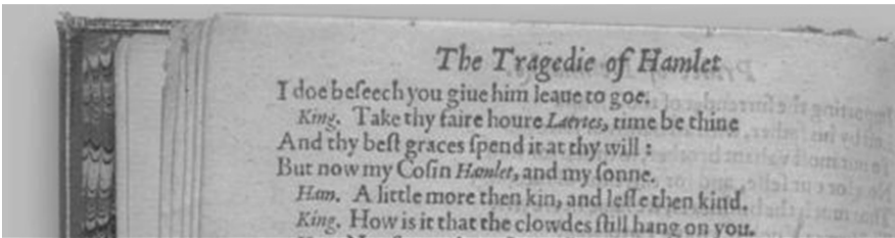


FIGURE 13. *Hamlet*, Second Quarto, signature B4r. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

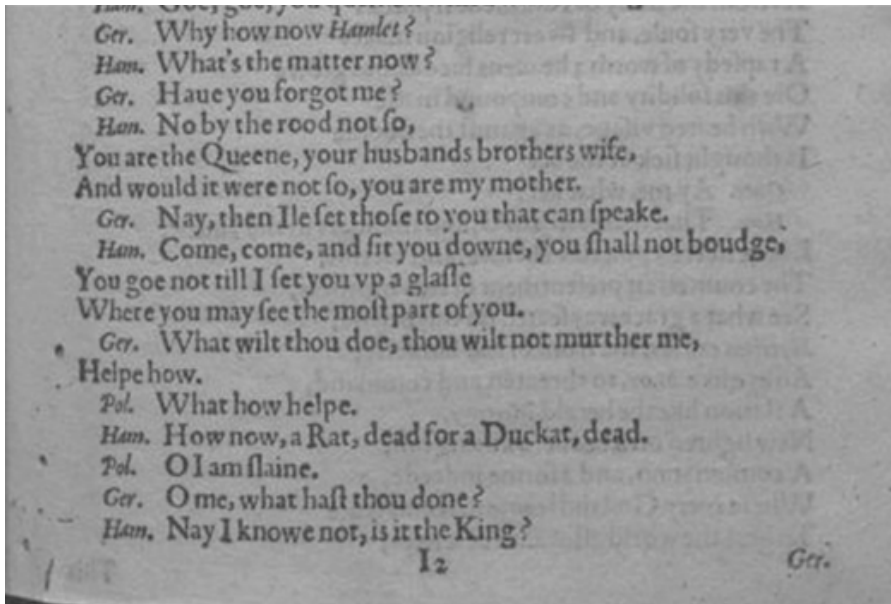


FIGURE 14. *Hamlet*, Second Quarto, signature I2r. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

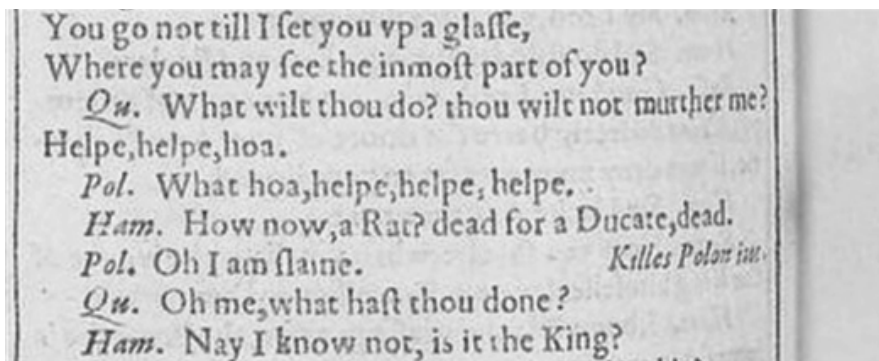


FIGURE 15. *Hamlet*, First Folio, signature pp1v. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

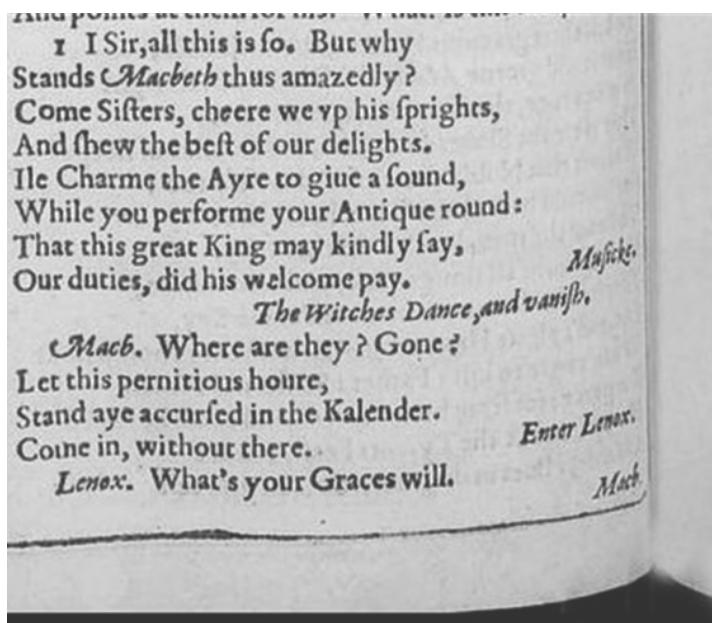


FIGURE 16. *Macbeth*, First Folio, signature mm6v, *Musicke*, *The Witches Dance and vanish*. Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.

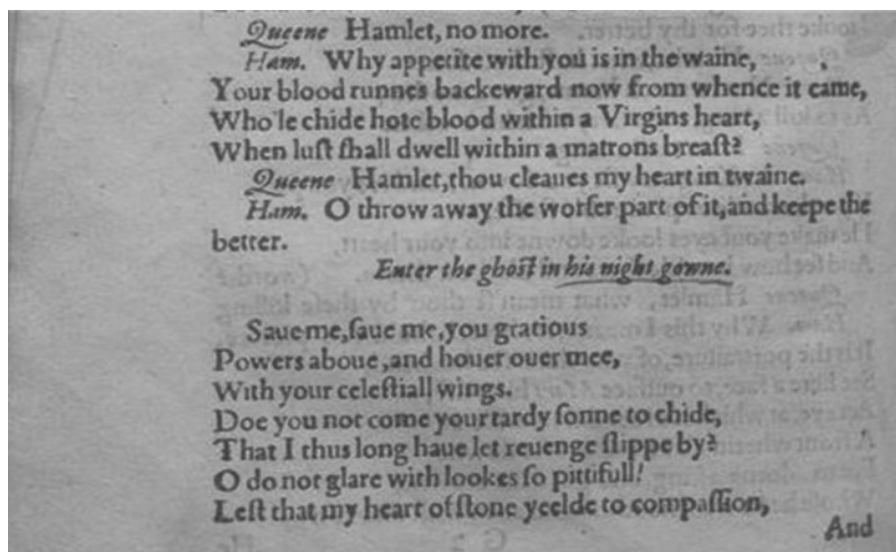


FIGURE 17. *Hamlet*, First Quarto, signature G2v. *Enter the ghost in his night gowne*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

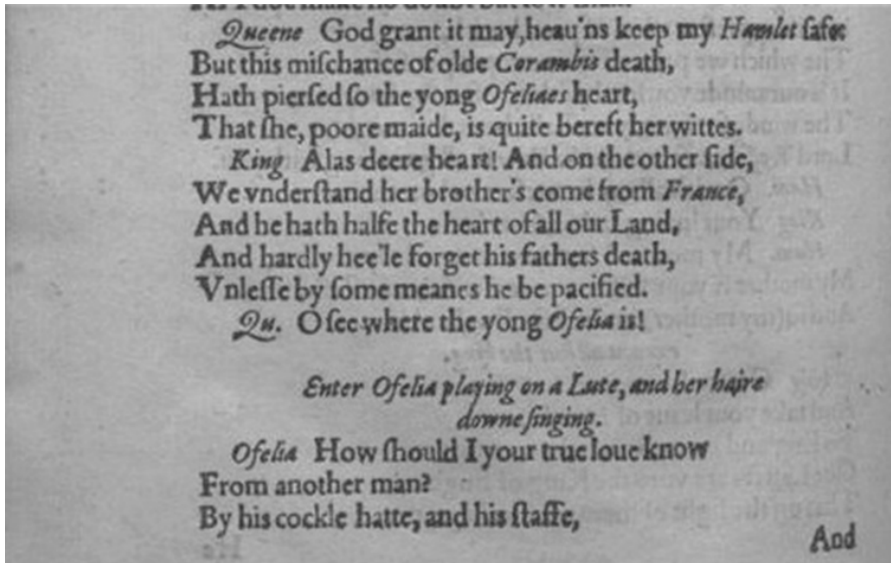


FIGURE 18. *Hamlet*, First Quarto, signature Gv4, *Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her hare downe singing*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

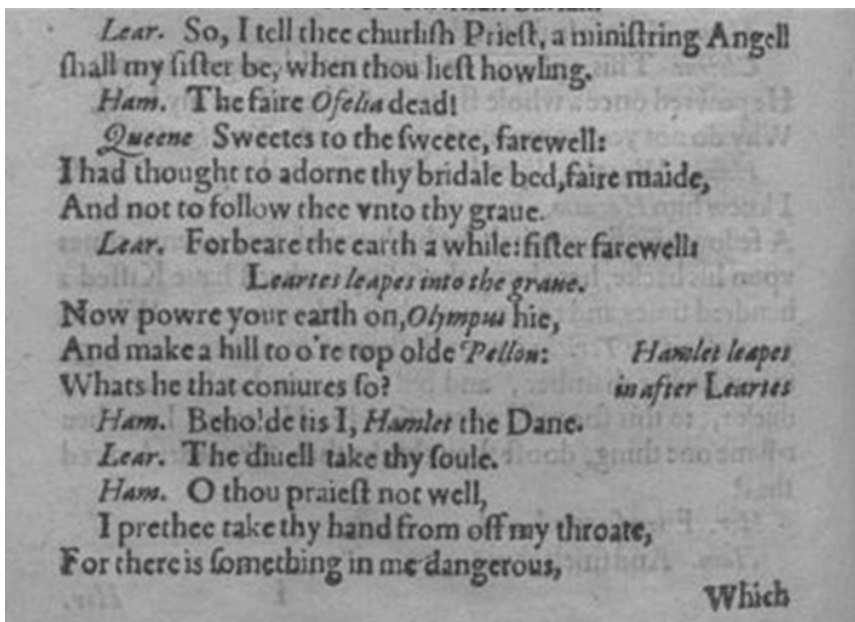


FIGURE 19. *Hamlet*, First Quarto, signature I1v, *Lear's leapes into the grave. Hamlet leapes in after Lear's*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

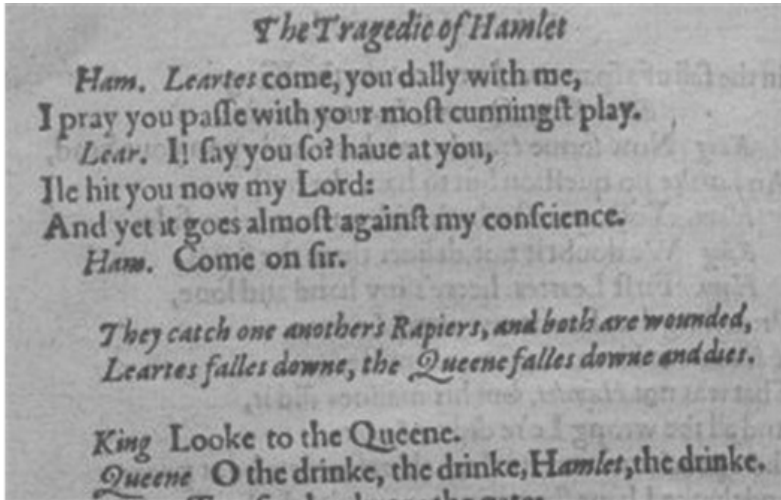


FIGURE 20. *Hamlet*, First Quarto, signature I3v, *They catch one anothers Rapiers, and both are wounded. Laertes falles downe, the Queene falles downe and dies.* Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

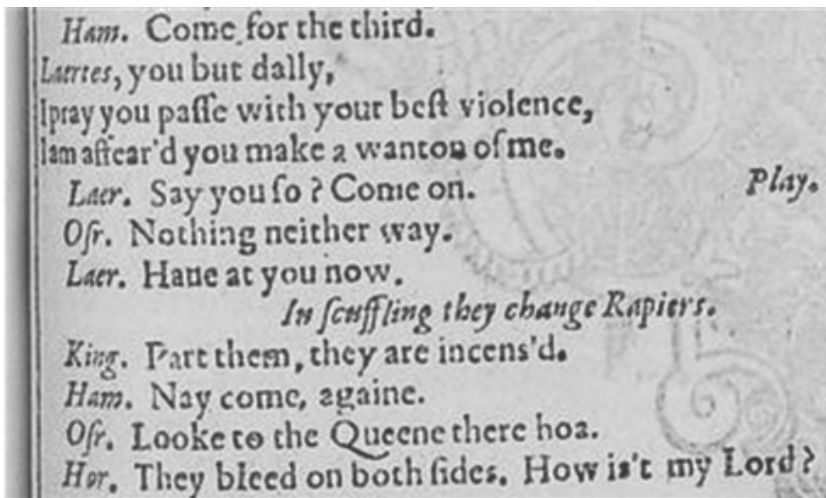


FIGURE 21. *Hamlet*, First Folio, signature qq1r, *In scuffling they change Rapiers.* Photo courtesy of W. W. Norton.