

## Introduction

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COMPARED TO ITS CLOSEST PRECURSOR, THE 1623 FOLIO COLLECTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS was something of an oddball venture. When William Stansby published Ben Jonson's *Workes* in 1616—the first time plays written for the public stage had been graced with that lofty title, and also the first time they had been printed in folio—they were offered in the form of a clearly defined, elaborately designed program. The volume's emblematic title page, engraved by William Hole “almost certainly under Jonson's personal direction,” set the stakes for the project, self-consciously aligning Jonson's collection with the similarly designed title pages of Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* and James I and VI's *Workes*, thus giving readers an instant sense of the book's place in literary and cultural history, with Jonson's oeuvre cast as an English reflection of much of the breadth of classical literature.<sup>1</sup> Notably, though, neither the title page nor the plays included in the 1616 volume deny their theatrical origins: the complex illustration features many concrete allusions to the stage, even if filtered through a strictly Graeco-Roman visual frame of reference, and each play is accompanied by detailed information about its first performance, the companies that enacted it, and the “principall Comoedians” who appeared in it—including, on two occasions, Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Jonson deliberately shaped his print persona as a playwright in sharp distinction from his actual career as a theater professional, excluding most of the drama he had written for companies at Philip Henslowe's Rose playhouse and as a member of Pembroke's Men in the mid-1590s.<sup>3</sup> Everything about the 1616 volume bespeaks purposeful choices. The copy for it was rigorously prepared by its author, sometimes, but not always, working with the previous quarto printings; typographical decisions were made

with a great deal of care and attention, leading to a layout that is by turns imitative of Renaissance editions of Latin drama and highly original, but consistently realized throughout; and the book was carefully proofread as it made its way through the press, though Jonson's involvement in that process may have been less intense than a previous generation of scholars thought.<sup>4</sup> Especially when allowing for what D. F. McKenzie called the "normality of non-uniformity" in early modern printing, the 1616 Jonson folio was in many ways a remarkably uniformly presented book—and one that, with its generous margins and single column of text, made proudly uneconomical use of the format's potential for grandness.<sup>5</sup>

The volume that appeared in 1623, although Jonson's voice is encountered in it before Shakespeare's, is nothing like the *Workes*. Beyond their shared generic investment, just about the only thing the two books have in common is their format. The 1623—the FIRST—folio has attained such iconic status that it is easy to ignore, or forget, just how patched-up and uneven a collection it is in some ways. Where Jonson's volume, both in presentation and in preparation, sets out to unify an oeuvre, to bring a rich variety of texts together in a typographical whole that both in its unity *and* diversity stands for the author, the Shakespeare folio is unified by nothing except its author himself—a principle of authorial, not textual or aesthetic, integrity signaled by the title page. There is nothing emblematic here, no attempt to devise or propose a program. All the 1623 volume offers is the portrait of a man—a visual move immediately undercut and exposed as inadequate by Jonson's poem on the facing page imploring readers to "looke / Not on his Picture, but his Booke."<sup>6</sup> That Shakespeare himself is the only thing holding the collection together is further suggested by the book's very title: where Jonson brought all the diversity of his texts under control in the guise of a collective of *Workes*, parts of the structured whole emblemized and rationalized by the architectural great work of his title page, the 1623 volume

foregrounds nothing so much as generic multiplicity: “Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies,” sandwiched between the author’s head and his name, which is set in a font that dwarfs all other text on the page.

And yet, the title page’s big head and its big headline protest too much. Jonson’s folio, for all the involvement of other agents, was unquestionably *his* book; the 1623 folio equally unquestionably was not Shakespeare’s. Even Heminge and Condell’s preface concedes that much as “it had bene a thing ... worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu’d to haue set forth,” Shakespeare died before he could have “ouerseen his owne writings” as they passed from manuscript to print. To remedy this authorial absence, the address to the “great Variety of Readers” constructs a genealogy that links Shakespeare’s papers, “receiued” by his fellows in a state of notoriously unblotted perfection, directly to the “True Originall Copies” promised on the title page. His friends merely serve as a conduit in this transaction: they “onely gather his works, and giue them you.” Displacing, at long last, the “diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious impostors, that expos’d them,” what the preface offers for purchase is the immediate print translation of Shakespeare’s blotless papers.<sup>7</sup>

That this claim is mostly fictitious has, after centuries of bibliographical study, become progressively more obvious. Shakespeare’s hand did not play much of a role in the 1623 folio’s genesis. Whether *any* of the plays was set directly from holographic material is questionable. Even the 20 plays not previously printed reached the printers via more or less invasive collaborating hands: at least five of them (*The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *Cymbeline*) were set from copies prepared by Ralph Crane, whose idiosyncratic spelling, punctuation, and formatting habits significantly reshaped whatever

Shakespeare wrote; others, such as *Othello*, were set from manuscripts copied by scribes whose orthography and punctuation choices similarly stand out.<sup>8</sup> Some others were decades old in 1623, had been owned by different acting companies in the intervening years, and may well have been copies of copies by the time they reached print: *The Comedy of Errors* is the most obvious case in point, but so are some of the parts of *Henry VI*. Two further plays were written collaboratively, so that the “papers” underlying the printed text were in no sense exclusively Shakespeare’s: *Timon of Athens* and *All is True* (or, as the folio has it, *The Life of King Henry the Eighth*). Perhaps most startlingly at odds with Heminge and Condell’s claim is the recent recognition that several of the plays first printed in 1623 are not, as the two King’s Men certainly would have known, in the state Shakespeare left them in, but represent a text revised and adapted by other playwrights—or rather, most probably, by just one playwright: Thomas Middleton. *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure* (which turns out to be twice removed from Shakespeare’s papers, first by Middleton, then by Ralph Crane), and *All’s Well that Ends Well* all appear to fall into that category, as does *Titus Andronicus*, the Folio-only “fly scene” in which, as Gary Taylor and Doug Duhaime have recently shown, cannot have been written by Shakespeare.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, what may be the “the most collaborative” of Shakespeare’s plays, *I Henry VI*, is ironically also one of the texts that can most confidently be identified as printed from authorial manuscript—simply because it preserves so many “inconsistencies in spelling, stage directions, properties, character names, and plot elements” that it “was most likely prepared from an assemblage of the [various] authors’ papers that were somewhat annotated for performance.”<sup>10</sup> Here at least we can be fairly certain that the sections of the text that are in fact by Shakespeare were probably typeset from a manuscript in his hand.

What about the 16 plays that had been printed before appearing in the folio? Given that compositors evidently preferred setting type from printed copy, most of them were based on the earlier quartos—but not all. *Merry Wives of Windsor* was certainly set from a Crane transcript of a very different version from the one previously printed. Some other plays, all available in “good” quartos, may also instead have been set from manuscript. And in many cases, the printed copy seems to have been “annotated” from (or merely nebulously “influenced by”) whatever manuscripts whoever did the annotating had available.<sup>11</sup> But how difficult it is to reconstruct the relationship between quartos, holographs, playhouse manuscripts, and the folio text has recently been brilliantly demonstrated by M. J. Kidnie in an essay that explodes long-held scholarly convictions about the nature of the copy underlying the versions of *Hamlet* printed in the second quarto of 1604/5 and the folio.<sup>12</sup> More generally, and with more deeply corrosive effect on those bibliographical foundations, Paul Werstine has deconstructed the belief that authorial “foul papers” are characterized by inconsistencies that made them unusable in the theater, and that printed texts displaying such inconsistencies must therefore be based on holograph copy. Thus, for instance, the view that *Comedy of Errors* was printed from authorial “foul papers” (which somehow had survived for three decades or so), still described as the “orthodox” one in the 1987 *Oxford Textual Companion*, appears untenable in light of the evidence Werstine presents—because the category of “foul papers” itself now appears as a bibliographical (re)construction rather than an identifiable category of manuscript.<sup>13</sup> In Gabriel Egan’s summary, “much of what New Bibliographers claimed about theatrical manuscripts is simply untrue.”<sup>14</sup> Either way, the relationship between the plays *reprinted* in the Folio and Shakespeare’s papers is highly and multiply mediated at best.

Ultimately, though, the authenticity the prefatory materials flaunt may not have been the real point of the venture. Where Jonson's *Workes* set out to present a unified, if deliberately selective, record of its author's oeuvre, Jaggard et al.'s 1623 volume functions more like a package deal: here is *all* of Shakespeare (as long as we think of the author as only a playwright), in all its messy variety. Even as the title page gestures towards organization, with its innovative and persistently influential tripartite generic division, the "Catalogue" subtly undercuts the attempt: the plays may be "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies," but they are also "seuerall"—*e pluribus plura*.<sup>15</sup> Whatever Heminge and Condell may claim, what the folio actually offers is extreme diversity: 36 plays, many of which resist the generic categories into which the "Catalogue" squeezes them, printed from a dizzyingly incoherent assemblage of kinds of copy, produced by a throng of authors, scribes, and composers. The volume does not so much represent the awesome variety of Shakespeare's mind as the capacity of "Shakespeare" to quite literally contain multitudes: not a myriad-minded author so much as a myriad-faceted brand. And as with all package deals, the point, ultimately, is sales, as Heminges and Condell are happy to emphasize: "what euer you do," they repeatedly urge the potential reader, "Buy."<sup>16</sup> If the reader did buy, a good deal was to be had. Since Jaggard, unlike Stansby, used his folio pages not to showcase a central column of text but to squeeze as many words into a two-column design as possible, Shakespeare in folio was a bargain proposition for the completist. 36 plays in quarto could not have been bought for the 15 shillings that Thomas Longe paid for his copy in 1623, which corresponds to 5 pence per play—compared to the minimum price of sixpence for a play quarto.<sup>17</sup>

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This special issue takes its cue from the 1623 folio's sheer multiplicity of forms and points of origin. The goal here is not to celebrate the volume's quatercentenary, but to use the jubilee as an occasion for reconsidering the First Folio's place in our field's scholarship. How have book historians, bibliographers, editors, theater historians, archives, libraries, and collectors responded to the book's intractability? How have "we" attempted to reconcile the folio's iconic status with what I have described here as its messy reality? And how can we make sense of the volume's many inconsistencies instead of theorizing them out of existence or ignoring them altogether? Just as the folio relied on many kinds of copy and produced generic diversity, this issue strives for formal variety. The opening two contributions take a relatively conventional form but are designed to touch on a wide array of questions: Lucy Munro surveys the Folio's uses in theater history, focusing narrowly on just a few pages of the book but digging deep into the problems they pose, and have long posed, for traditional theater-historical narratives. Brandi Adams takes the opposite tack, exploring in a series of vignettes how bibliographers and book historians have attempted to come to terms with the folio over the past century; her guiding theme is the Folio's place in time, as an object with multiple moments of origin and an artifact that has continued to change and evolve in the course of its long reception history. These two meta-critical surveys are followed by two roundtables. The first, convened by M. J. Kidnie, records an actual conversation (in lightly edited form) between editors—Kidnie herself, David McInnis, Sonia Massai, and Eric Rasmussen—as they engage in a wide-ranging, profoundly learned discussion of the Folio's place in the history and the contemporary practice of Shakespearean editing, returning repeatedly to what McInnis describes as the Folio's "unevenness." The second roundtable, which concludes the issue, takes a very different approach

to the format: assembled and introduced by Claire M. L. Bourne, five relatively short essays cast sharp light on specific instances of the Folio's existence as an object in the world—primarily a collectible item, but also, in Jason Scott-Warren's contribution, a thing liable to distract us from the world around it, and around us. Tara Lyons offers a wholesale rewriting of the history of the Folio's presence in the Bodleian Library, undoing anecdotes that have long given shape to scholarly narratives about the status of playbooks in learned contexts. Aaron Pratt homes in on a single copy, even a single sheet, in the Pforzheimer collection to show how the impulses of the collector can inhibit those of the bibliographer. Vanessa Braganza analyzes the very different uses two eighteenth-century owners made of their copies, contrasting the Duke of Roxburgh's passive fetishization of his "clean" Folio with Elizabeth Brockett's active, writerly engagement with hers. Janet Wild tells the story of the Auckland Free Library's Folio, a collection highlight that cannot be separated from its arrival as a donation from New Zealand's colonial governor Sir George Grey, but which has since become associated with cross-cultural encounters and collaborations, including the first Māori adaptations of Shakespearean plays and poetry. The roundtable concludes with Jason Scott-Warren's urgent reminder that the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the folio may be the last humanity will be able to celebrate—and that this has everything to do with the system of petro-capitalism that also funded the establishment of some of the most prominent collections of Shakespeareana in the world.

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For all this variety, though, something is missing from this issue—a little like *Pericles* is absent from the Folio. There is almost no mention here of the 1623 volume's reception in the modern theater. And yet, it is perhaps here, in the sphere of modern Anglo-American performance and actor training, that the Folio, or at least its facsimiles and digital reproductions,

remains present as an object of use more than anywhere else. On the whole, scholars have little to say about this surprising development; we rarely manage more than exasperated sarcasm of the kind exemplified by Gabriel Egan's observation that "the only serious readers still labouring under the misapprehension that the Folio is the best edition for every play are theatrical practitioners."<sup>18</sup> It did not seem fruitful to me to invite an expansion of such (perfectly justified) sentiments into an essay-length contribution or, perhaps worse, gather a group of scholars and actors to have it out in a roundtable discussion. But leaving the influence the Folio has had on modern Anglophone theater entirely unaddressed in this special issue would also seem inappropriate. The final section of this introduction therefore offers my own brief reflections on the topic.

The notion that the Folio uses textual minutiae to encode meaning, from capitalizations to a highly systematized use of punctuation, has its origins in a late nineteenth-century pamphlet, as Emma Smith has shown.<sup>19</sup> But until the mid-twentieth century, the idea hardly resonated at all among theater professionals. William Poel, most famous for his attempts to reconstruct historical performance conditions, may have called for a return to the "early texts" and their performance "from a full and authorized text," but he also held that Folio or quarto punctuation and capitalizations were "not of much use to the actor." Distinguishing meaningful capitalizations—so-called "emphasis capital[s]"—from compositorial caprice struck him as a "search for a needle in a haystack."<sup>20</sup> Bernard Shaw, responding to Poel, thought not only that the early texts' punctuation and capitalizations were "practically void of authority" because of how they were printed, but that "indicat[ing] how the Elizabethan actor spoke his lines" would have been impossible for Shakespeare or early modern stationers in any event, whether they had attempted to do so or not, just as such an effort would be impossible to accomplish for him as a "publishing

playwright” in 1921.<sup>21</sup> John Dover Wilson, on the other hand, disagreed, from an editorial perspective, and equated Poel’s dismissal of the early printings’ punctuation as tantamount to “contempt” for the very “old texts” he used to “champion.” That Wilson argued his case for “adher[ing] to the punctuation of the Folio” on the basis of his *New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition of *The Tempest* is not devoid of a certain historical irony: looking for “Shakespeare’s original comma[s]” in a text set from a manuscript transcribed by Ralph Crane is, after all, precisely the needle-in-a-haystack effort Poel had decried. But Wilson, in 1921, could not have known that yet.<sup>22</sup> Almost twenty years later, R. B. McKerrow adopted a notably more skeptical position: convinced that “we cannot hope to infer with any approach to certainty Shakespeare’s own practice as regards such details as spelling, capitalization, the use of italics, or punctuation,” he saw no alternative to reprinting faithfully whatever “the most authoritative text” contained—not because the textual minutiae found there are necessarily meaningful, but because they are all an editor has. Unless unquestionably mistaken, punctuation should therefore not be altered: “if there is a way of uttering the text—even though it be not our usual way—which corresponds with the punctuation, it appears to me that it would be definitely wrong to alter it.” (McKerrow then went on to give numerous instances of punctuation habits he considers in need of editorial redress nonetheless.)<sup>23</sup>

As the turn to the text in Anglophone theater that J. L. Styan described as the *Shakespeare Revolution* took hold over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the notion that Shakespeare’s plays could or should be performed without major cuts entered the theatrical mainstream, probably for the first time ever.<sup>24</sup> Styan’s “presiding metaphors”—“the text-as-score,” “plays as blueprints for performances”—are concepts that really only gain a foothold in the theater at the beginning of the twentieth century, and played almost no role in the

performance of Shakespeare's plays before Harley Granville Barker emerged as "the giant figure behind" directors such as Tyrone Guthrie and Peter Brook.<sup>25</sup> In a sense, late twentieth-century actorly Folio-worship is only the most extreme instance of this kind of text-first thinking. It combines the understanding of the text as akin to a musical score with something like McKerrow's commitment to minimal editing, taken to extremes and enriched with the conviction that every typographical mark was intentionally placed and theatrically meaningful. As Paul Menzer has recently argued, the logical consequence of this attitude would be the total displacement of the actor: "The folio leaves nothing left to say, because it says it all. The apotheosis of Shakespearean performance would be a production that places a folio on the stage and lets it speak for itself."<sup>26</sup>

A key figure in this development has been Patrick Tucker, whose book promising to unveil the *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* through a literalist approach to the 1623 volume was first published in 2002 and reissued in an expanded second edition in 2017; it has been widely influential across the Anglophone world. Tucker cuts no corners in his extreme dedication to the Folio (punctuation, lineation, capitalizations, orthography, and all), following the text wherever it may lead. *Romeo and Juliet* provides a particularly vivid illustration of the striking difference between his approach to the 1623 printing and one informed by bibliographical scholarship. Tucker reports his delight at discovering, upon "consult[ing]" the Folio, that Mercutio's Queen Mab speech is "in fact, in prose" and only shifts into verse in its final few lines—a supposedly deliberate "gear change" that "plays wonderfully well."<sup>27</sup> No editor since the eighteenth century has read the speech this way; instead, generations of textual scholars have argued that the Folio erroneously printed a blank-verse passage as prose. Bibliographical examination of the origins of the error has revealed that the 1623 text was set from a copy of the third quarto of *Romeo and*

*Juliet* that itself followed a layout decision made in the printing of Q2.<sup>28</sup> There, the compositor had to set the speech (which has “obvious” “blank verse rhythms” and had previously been printed as verse in Q1) as prose because of space constraints.<sup>29</sup> Revealingly, the speech is *only* set as prose on sig. C2r; the remainder of the speech on sig. C2v is reproduced as verse. The latter page was part of the outer forme of the sheet, which was set and printed *before* the inner forme (and sig. C2r), and it was during the setting of the inner forme that the space shortage occurred—presumably because an error in calculating the amount of space required was belatedly discovered.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the compositor put the last few lines of Mercutio’s speech into type first, when he still worked without space constraints, and accordingly maintained the correct line breaks. Later, when forced to compress the text, he altered all the preceding lines from verse to prose. If the Folio were the kind of text Tucker argues it to be—that is, a text carefully edited down to the level of each comma and capitalization decision—we might expect the Q2 formatting of the Queen Mab speech, evidently the outcome of a typesetting emergency, to have been corrected. The fact that whoever prepared *Romeo and Juliet* for the press did not consider the change from verse to prose worthy of their attention suggests that a faithful rendition of major formal qualities of the text, let alone the reproduction of textual minutiae, was not a principle rigorously observed in the printing of the 1623 volume.<sup>31</sup> Tucker’s belief that the Folio version represents a revelation about Mercutio’s monologue may reflect a plausible effect in modern performance, but runs counter to what we can learn from a reconstruction of how the 1623 book was made.<sup>32</sup>

This single-minded commitment to the reliability of the Folio text distinguishes Tucker from other text-first practitioners, but the difference between them is merely one of degree. Dismissing “the Editors” as misguided forces barring actors’ access to Shakespeare’s textually

encoded performance directions, for instance, is common currency among modern Anglophone theater makers.<sup>33</sup> Like Tucker, Peter Hall (probably the most famous and widely influential Shakespeare director of his generation) believed that “our main source for Shakespeare is not [the “motley collection” of quartos] but the Folio of 1623,” and used ““specially prepared” texts based on the Folio” in his productions.<sup>34</sup> And if Tucker reads the 1623 text as a densely encoded book of rules for performers, he merely follows a logic established by practitioners such as Hall, John Barton, and Cicely Berry. These directors and voice teachers redefined what actors were supposed to see in the text, essentially inventing a new set of “rules” for how Shakespeare is to be acted even as they claimed merely to be rediscovering “Shakespeare’s meaning.”<sup>35</sup>

Hall did not share Tucker’s uncompromising devotion to the punctuation of the Folio (instead, his “specially prepared” texts were “stripped of everything but the essential periods”) nor did he trust the Folio quite so absolutely.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the same ideological commitment to imbuing the *form* of Shakespeare’s texts with theatrical meaning informs both “Folio acting” and what became the mainstream of Anglophone Shakespeare acting and training in the second half of the twentieth century. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the conviction that “Shakespeare’s” punctuation and lineation provide vital guides for the actor—a conviction that implicitly treats the Folio as if it were an authorial manuscript. Examples of this belief are everywhere in the modern literature on acting, from claims that punctuation marks “signal movement, either vocal or physical” and even indicate spatial “blocking” to the milder assertion that punctuation decisions such as “period-stopped lines” “provid[e]” “acting choices.”<sup>41</sup> By contrast, textual scholars have been at pains to decry the idea that *any* early modern text reliably reproduces authorial preferences in this regard; as Sarah Neville has observed, “even Ben Jonson, the figurehead for much scholarly musing about contemporary authors’ fussiness about

punctuation, gave up correcting the punctuation of his 1616 folio.”<sup>42</sup> And John Jowett notes that the same is certainly true for the 1623 volume: “clearly, there is no truth in the common assumption ... that the Folio is a useful guide to Shakespeare’s own pointing.”<sup>43</sup>

But even if it were, it is unclear that such a guide would be especially helpful, or necessary, for the actor—then or now. For instance, few contemporary performers have been as adamant about the need to “obey” Shakespeare’s punctuation as Judi Dench. “If you look at the punctuation of Shakespeare and obey it then you’ll never run out of breath. He writes where the pause should be,” she told a *Guardian* interviewer in 2012.<sup>44</sup> And yet, in her performances, no such obedience is evident. A brief clip from her appearance at a “Talking About Shakespeare” event at Hay-on-Wye in 2016 serves as a ready illustration.<sup>45</sup> There, she and Benedict Cumberbatch acted out a small section from *Twelfth Night*, usefully a Folio-only play, presented in the kind of unmounted performance that one might expect to follow the text—and to “obey” its punctuation—uncommonly closely. Instead, Dench’s entirely captivating and moving portrayal of Viola/Cesario ignores the purported differences between commas, semi-colons, colons, and periods and treats line-endings as well as the meter with whatever flexibility her characterization requires:

VIOLA

My father had a daughter lov’d a man [brief pause]

As it might be [very brief pause] perhaps, [very brief pause] were I a woman [brief pause]

I should your Lordship.

ORSINO

And what’s her history? [very brief pause]

VIOLA

A blank [brief rest] my Lord: [long pause] she never told her love, [long pause]  
But let concealment like a worm i' th' bud [no pause]  
Feed on her damask cheek: [long pause] she pin'd in thought, [pause]  
And with a green and yellow melancholy, [brief pause]  
She sat [pause] like patience on a monument, [pause]  
Smiling at grief. [very long pause, switch of focus, sharp intake of breath] Was not this  
love indeed? [brief pause]  
We men may say more, [no pause] swear more, [no pause] but indeed [barely a rest]  
Our shows are more than will: [no pause] for still we prove [very brief pause]  
Much in our vows, [no pause] but little in our love.

ORSINO

But died thy sister of her love my boy? [very long pause, breath]

VIOLA

I am all the daughters of my father's house, [long pause]

And all the brothers too: [long pause] and yet [long pause] I know not.<sup>46</sup>

Far from “following” Shakespeare, Dench pauses and speeds up more or less at will. What my transcript cannot capture is how she elongates words and shortens them, softens her voice and provides vocal pressure, and makes her breathing audible—to mention only aural effects and choices. All this work proceeds largely independent of punctuation marks, line endings, or metrical requirements. She doesn't obey the text: she acts it.

This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the gulf between professions of adherence to the text and actual theatrical practice, a gulf that is perhaps wider now than in the past but already existed in David Garrick's time. The Folio as an actor's fetish, though, can stand

as a metaphor for this long-established divide. None of the exemplars owned by notable theater professionals, from Charles Killigrew's to William Congreve's, Garrick's to a copy "connected with the Drury Lane theatre in the later eighteenth century," show any signs of theatrical mark-up or use.<sup>47</sup> John Philip Kemble's copy was "extensively washed, trimmed, and relaid onto new paper," before being "deposited in a neat case with lock and key"—about as far removed from the theater and its grubby, invasive practices as possible.<sup>48</sup> Not only did virtually no theater artist before the twentieth century seriously consider paying attention to the kinds of textual minutiae modern actors are so often taught to regard as vital guides to an authentic performance, almost none of them appears to have used the Folio as a theatrical text at all.

There are, of course, a few well-known exceptions. The Padua Folio, marked up for amateur performance at some point in the seventeenth century, is one; the "Nursery" prompt books are the other. But those—the only example we have of the 1623 volume being used in a professional performance—are the exception that proves the rule. These copies of *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were marked up for performance probably by the so-called Nursery Company of junior actors associated with Thomas Killigrew's King's Company in the 1670s. Both plays have been disbound from the larger volume, presumably to make them practically useful as a back-stage tool: a 900-plus-page codex is inherently ill-suited to that task, nor do the Folio's tightly printed double columns leave much room for a prompter's pen to work in. That pen, moreover, displayed little reverence for the text or its form: in *The Comedy of Errors* a fifth of the lines have been cut, often leaving stray half-lines and creating unmetrical long lines elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> The Folio, in other words, was rarely an object of use in the theater—and when it did end up serving that purpose, it was cut up, rebound, and its text treated with the same cavalier attitude that characterized most encounters between actors and plays before the

twentieth century. That attitude, I suspect, would not have surprised John Heminge and Henry Condell. They, after all, themselves saw no problem with using patched-up and reworked versions of some of Shakespeare's plays for the 1623 volume. What may have surprised them, however, is the idea that the Folio would be used by other actors at all. After all, unless they meant to undercut their own company's revenues, we can be fairly certain that they did not *intend* the book to be used as a "blueprint" for performance. The one readership they surely did not have in mind with their "whatever you do, buy" was actors from other companies. The King's Men themselves did not need a typeset "blueprint" in folio.

I end then, with what is perhaps the ultimate irony of the modern belief that the Folio encodes Shakespeare's directions for performers. As Jowett notes, "Shakespeare's actors would have encountered fewer and less consistent rhetorical markings than the later readers of the Folio."<sup>50</sup> The printed volume, as inconsistent as it is in its orthography and punctuation, as wildly diverse as its copy was, still provided its readers with far more textual information than actors were expected to need. If the extremely spare punctuation, erratic and very limited capitalizations, and massively divergent spellings in the probably Shakespearean Hand D sections of the manuscript *Book of Sir Thomas More* (a source ignored in much of the modern acting literature) tell us anything, it is that Shakespeare was happy to leave much of the labor of structuring his text for vocalization to his fellow actors. Why would he then bother to provide a wealth of specifically theatrical textual markers in print—the medium in which his plays were meant to reach all potential readers *except* those who might have wanted to perform them? Far from serving as invaluable clues for acting, the textual minutiae of the Folio are markers of the volume's very distance from the stage. The actors who were licensed to perform those plays already owned them, in underpunctuated, often shockingly messy manuscripts; they did not need

*Workes* or First Folios. Print, in its neatness, its relative orderliness, its helpful consistency and attention to detail, was for the people outside the theater: the “great Variety of Readers.”

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<sup>1</sup> See Ian Donaldson, “Note on the 1616 Folio Title-Page,” *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6 vols., 4: 611-17.

<sup>2</sup> See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 2 vols., 2: 71–72.

<sup>3</sup> As I have argued in detail elsewhere; see Syme, *Theatre History, Attribution Studies, and the Question of Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2023), 69–75.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Kevin Donovan, “Forms of Authority in the Early Texts of *Every Man Out of His Humour*,” in *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance*, ed. by Martin Butler (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 59–75, 65; David L. Gants, “The Printing, Proofing and Press-Correction of Jonson’s Folio *Workes*,” *ibid.*, 39–58; Gants and Tom Lockwood, “The Printing and Publishing of Ben Jonson’s Works,” *Cambridge Ben Jonson*, 1: clxiv–clxxxvi.

<sup>5</sup> McKenzie, “Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices,” *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1–75, 12.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London: William Jaggard et al., 1623; STC 22273), sig. A1v.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A3r.

<sup>8</sup> See Gary Taylor, ed., *Othello, The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, gen. eds. Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 3140.

<sup>9</sup> For an accessible summary of the nature of the folio’s copy, see Gabriel Egan, “The Provenance of the Folio Texts,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s First Folio*, ed.

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Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016), 68–85. For Shakespeare as the co-author of *Timon of Athens* and *All is True*, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); on *Macbeth*, see Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, “The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare’s Works,” in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford UP, 2017), 417–602, 564–68; on *Measure for Measure*, *ibid.*, 554–57; on *All is Well*, *ibid.*, 557–59, Rory Loughnane, “Thomas Middleton in *All’s Well that Ends Well?* Part One,” *Authorship Companion*, 278–302 and “Thomas Middleton in *All’s Well that Ends Well?* Part Two,” *Authorship Companion*, 307–20, as well as the essays by John V. Nance and Gary Taylor in the same volume; on the *Titus* fly-scene, Taylor and Doug Duhaime, “Who Wrote the Fly Scene (3.2) in *Titus Andronicus?*: Automated Searches and Deep Reading,” *Authorship Companion*, 67–91, and the summary in Taylor and Loughnane, “Canon and Chronology,” 491.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Neville, ed., *1 Henry VI*, *New Oxford Shakespeare Reference Edition*, 2387.

<sup>11</sup> For a summary, and for the tantalizingly precise yet hazy terminology, see William Montgomery, “Summary of Control Texts,” in Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 145–47.

<sup>12</sup> Kidnie, “Playhouse Markings and the Revision of Hamlet,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 71.2 (2020): 69–103.

<sup>13</sup> Wells et al., *Textual Companion*, 266; Werstine, *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 116–18.

<sup>14</sup> Egan, “Provenance,” 83.

<sup>15</sup> STC 22273, sig. A6r.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., sig. A3r.

<sup>17</sup> As I have noted elsewhere, “*Titus Andronicus* fills ten sheets in quarto but only five and a half in the first and second folios”—even though the folio text contains an extra scene (see Syme, “Thomas Creede, William Barley, and the Venture of Printing Plays,” in *Shakespeare’s Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2013), 28–46, 36). On the myth of the cheapness of quartos (and the exclusivity of folio publication), see Joseph A. Dane and Alexandra Gillespie, “The Myth of the Cheap Quarto,” in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 25–45.

<sup>18</sup> Egan, “Provenance,” 73.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Shakespeare’s First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), 267.

<sup>20</sup> Poel, “Shakespeare’s ‘Prompt Copies’: A Plea for the Early Texts,” *Times Literary Supplement* 3 Feb 1921, 75–76.

<sup>21</sup> “Shakespeare: A Standard Text,” *Times Literary Supplement* 17 March 1921, 178.

<sup>22</sup> “Shakespeare: A Standard Text,” *Times Literary Supplement* 21 April 1921. See also Gabriel Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare’s Text: Twentieth-Century Editorial Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 247–49. Crane’s work was first discussed by F. P. Wilson in “Ralph Crane, Scrivener to the King’s Players,” *The Library* 7 (1926): 194–215. By 1955, W. W. Greg reported that Dover Wilson had changed his mind regarding the manuscript behind the 1623 *Tempest* printing; see *The Shakespeare First Folio, its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 418fn1.

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<sup>23</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow, *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare: A Study in Editorial Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 7, 40–43.

<sup>24</sup> J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 232–35; W. B. Worthen, “Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies),” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.3 (2011): 309–39, 314.

<sup>26</sup> Menzer, *Shakespeare Without Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 16.

<sup>27</sup> Tucker, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 163.

<sup>28</sup> See S. W. Reid, “The Editing of Folio *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Studies in Bibliography* 35 (1982): 43-66.

<sup>29</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 184 (notes accompanying lines 1.4.52–89).

<sup>30</sup> *The most excellent and lamentable tragedie, of Romeo and Iuliet. Newly corrected, augmented, and amended: as it hath bene sundry times publiquely acted, by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants* (London: Thomas Creede for Cuthbert Burby, 1599), STC 22323, sig. C2r (inner forme), C2v (outer forme).

<sup>31</sup> An additional complication arises from the fact that the workman known to bibliographers as Compositor E played a significant role in the setting of the Folio *Romeo and Juliet* (see Reid, “Editing,” 49-59), though the by-now traditional narratives about that compositor’s youthful carelessness have been complicated in more recent scholarship (on which see Brandi Adams’s essay below).

<sup>32</sup> Tucker, *Secrets*, 256.

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<sup>33</sup> Tucker, *Secrets*, 15 and *passim*. “Editors,” for Tucker, appear to have functioned as a Borg-like collective from Rowe to now.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Abigail Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Theatre Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 41, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking*, 28. Rokison’s study remains the fullest and most rigorous account of this development.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>41</sup> John M. Sullivan, “Shakespeare’s Punctuation as Rhetorical Stage Direction,” *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 7 (2007): 77–96, 84–85; David Carey, “In Search of Shakespeare’s Use of the Period–Stopped Line: A Folio Punctuation Investigation,” *Voice and Speech Review* 8 (2014): 93–99, 93.

<sup>42</sup> Neville, “The Accidentals Tourist: Greg’s ‘Rationale of Copy-Text’ and the Dawn of Transatlantic Air Travel,” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 14 (2021): 18–29, 26fn15.

<sup>43</sup> Jowett, “Full Pricks and Great P’s: Spelling, Punctuation, Accidentals,” in *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 317–31, 324.

<sup>44</sup> Alice Fisher, “Shakespeare and me: Dame Judi Dench,” *The Guardian*, 1 July 2012  
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/jul/01/judi-dench-shakespeare-and-me-hamlet>

<sup>45</sup> “Judi Dench and Benedict Cumberbatch - Twelfth Night,” 22 Sept 2016  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjCLXQSh180>

<sup>46</sup> STC 22273, sig. Y6r; spelling modernized, original punctuation maintained.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *Shakespeare’s First Folio*, 245–53.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>49</sup> See G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Shakespearean Prompt-Books of the Seventeenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA: Bibliographical Society of Virginia, 1960), vol. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Jowett, “Spelling, Punctuation, Accidentals,” 322.