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King Lear: *The Division of the Critics*

Since 1733, following Lewis Theobald's edition of Shakespeare's plays, the standard text of *King Lear* has been the result of the conflation of quarto and folio texts. Until relatively recently, therefore, editions used for research, analysis and theatrical productions have been composite texts, albeit texts created with the best of intentions and with ample justifications by editors. Beginning with the 1988 Oxford edition of *The Complete Works* edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, some editors have chosen to publish two separate versions of the play. The conflated text continues to be available, however, and is still the one most often adopted.

There are at least three versions of *King Lear*: the first quarto or Pied Bull Quarto (Q1) published in 1608, a second quarto (Q2) published in 1619 but falsely dated 1608 – basically a reprint of Q1 with slight editing[1] – and the first folio (F) published in 1623 with Shakespeare's other plays by Heminge and Condell. The debate around the authority of these texts focuses mainly on the differences between Q1 and F, even though some readings from Q2 – commonly considered a bad quarto and a non-authoritative version – have found their way into F. This has further complicated transmission of the text but compared with Q1 the alterations,

[1] On 26 November 1607, a "historye" of *King Lear* was entered on the Stationers' Register by Nathaniel Butter and John Busby. In 1608 the first quarto appeared, printed by Nicholas Okes for Butter. In 1619 a second quarto was published, printed by William Jaggard for Thomas Pavier in a group of ten plays apparently intended to form a collection of plays attributed to William Shakespeare. Q2 Lear bore a false imprint stating that it was printed for Nathaniel Butter in 1608. The Lord Chamberlain subsequently demanded that no more plays belonging to the King's Men should be printed without their consent.

which largely involve spelling, punctuation and lineation, are not substantial and need not be addressed in this context[2]. The Q1 and F texts, on the other hand, present important variations from the title page onwards. Where Q1 reads:

> Master William Shakespeare: his 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 humor of Tom of Bedlam

the Folio simply refers to *The Tragedy of King Lear*. Though the transformation from history to tragedy could in itself be interpreted as a change in intention, it is more likely to reflect a choice by the editors who retained the term "history" for the English histories (*Richard II*, for instance, undergoes the opposite process: described as a tragedy in the Quarto it is placed in the section of Histories in the Folio), given that "the quarto's history of Lear is no less tragic than the folio's tragedy, and the folio makes as much of Gloucester's and Edgar's story as the quarto does"[3]. More significantly, Q contains about 300 lines that do not appear in F, and F has approximately 100 lines that are absent from Q, apart from variations in speech assignments and stage directions. These differences involve some of the most frequently quoted and studied parts of the play such as the mock trial and Edgar's closing soliloquy in III.vi – present in Q but not in F – the Fool's prophecy in III.ii, which only appears in F, the third scene of the fourth act with Kent in disguise discussing the political situation with the Gentleman – only in Q – and the final speech, which is present in both texts but attributed to Albany in Q and to Edgar in F. These are only the more striking differences.

The argument in favour of a conflated text rests on the assumption – now seriously challenged – that the Quarto and Folio texts are variously corrupted versions of a lost original *King Lear* (the F text being superior in most aspects, but Q essentially reliable), and that the lines missing in Q and F come from this lost original and therefore should be preserved "upon the principle that not a line which appears to have been written by Shakespeare ought to be lost"[4]. Editors of conflated texts have attempted to identify corruptions and provide an integral 'restored' text. The reasons most commonly advanced for the different state of the Q and F texts are: (i) Q may have derived from an original

[2] For issues concerning Q2 see P. W. K. Stone, *The Textual History of* King Lear, London, Scolar Press, 1980: "The repetition of Q1's errors (especially on those sheets, which we know to have been contemporaneously corrected) is the clearest evidence that no authoritative source of copy was available to the publishers" (p. 5).

[3] *King Lear, the 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio Texts*, ed. Stephen Orgel, The Pelican Shakespeare, London, Penguin Books, 2000, p. xlvii. Henceforth Q1 will be indicated as Q.

[4] Charles Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspere*, 1839-[46], 8 vols, vol. VI, 1843, p. 392, quoted by Stanley Wells, "The Once and Future *King Lear*", in Gary Taylor and Michael J. Warren, eds, *The Division of the Kingdoms*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983, pp. 1-22, p. 8.

draft, possibly not legible in parts; (ii) Q may have been contaminated by the imperfect memories of actors or by the printer's incompetence[5]; and (iii) F may have been modified, possibly with the aid of a prompt book. F is in practice the base text for most conflated editions, and where minor variants occur a choice is made on the basis of assumptions and well substantiated hypotheses. Nonetheless, the 300 or so lines from Q are inserted into this more 'authoritative' text.

This editorial practice was considered satisfactory until the late 1970s, with a few exceptions. Long before the true establishment of analytical textual studies of Shakespeare, critics such as A. C. Bradley and H. Granville-Barker had expressed dissatisfaction with the composite text, highlighting some structural and dramatic deficiencies[6] or, more specifically, claiming that "where Quarto and Folio offer alternatives, to adopt both versions may make for redundancy or confusion"[7]. In 1931 Madeleine Doran[8] ventured that the F text was in fact a revision of the earlier Q, that there was no lost original and that the two texts simply represented different stages of a developing script; the theory found little support at the time, however, and was partly modified by Doran herself later. Some thirty years later, E. A. J. Honigmann similarly proposed that the differences between Q and F could "represent first and second thoughts"[9] and that the changes could be authorial, but it was not until 1976 that a true "revision theory" emerged, prompted by a paper delivered by Michael J. Warren to the International Shakespeare Congress in Washington[10]. Through analysis of the speeches attributed to Albany and Edgar in the two texts, Warren detected an intentional revision of the roles of these characters as part of a strategy to amplify the role of Edgar in F and weaken the stature of Albany. In introducing his subject Warren clearly states the theoretical premises upon which he worked, which have been considered as founding elements among revisionists; they are quoted by Stanley Wells in his introduction to the seminal

[5] For problems concerning the state of the printing house, see Peter Blayney, *The Texts of* King Lear *and their Origins*, vol. I, *Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, who affirms that "it proves to be of some importance that *Lear* was the first play that Okes ever printed" (p. 10) and was set by two compositors who were unfamiliar with conventions of play-texts and who therefore made a number of mistakes, among which was the frequent printing of verse as prose.

[6] Cf. Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearian Tragedy* [1904], London, Macmillan and Co.,1919, p. 247.

[7] Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* [1927], London, B. T. Batsford, 2 vols, 1958, vol. I, p. 329.

[8] Madeleine Doran, *The Text of* King Lear, Stanford University Publications Series, Language and Literature, vol. IV, n. 2, Stanford University Press, 1931.

[9] Ernst A. J. Honigmann, *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text*, London, Arnold, 1965, p. 121.

[10] Michael J. Warren, "Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar", in David Bevington and Jay L. Halio, eds, *Shakespeare, Pattern of Excelling Nature* [Associated University Presses, Inc., 1978], Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1979, pp. 95-107.

volume on this issue *The Division of the Kingdoms*[11]. Warren claimed:

> (a) that there may be no single 'ideal play' of *King Lear* ('all of what Shakespeare wrote'), that there may never have been one, and that what we create by conflating both texts is merely an invention of editors and scholars; (b) that for all its problems Q is an authoritative version of the play of *King Lear*; and (c) that F may indeed be a revised version of the play, that its additions and omissions may constitute Shakespeare's considered modification of the earlier text, and that we certainly cannot know that they are not.[12]

He concludes that Q and F are sufficiently dissimilar to be treated as two versions of a single play, both having authority.

It became clear to revisionists that the F *King Lear* was probably a post-performance revision by Shakespeare, that there existed no archetypal 'lost' *Lear* of which Q and F were mere imperfect copies, and that therefore the two versions must be considered as two separate plays. Evidence has been put forward – as we shall see – in an attempt to identify a pattern of revision in order to demonstrate this. If we accept this theory, however, it remains uncertain whether or not the changes can be ascribed to Shakespeare, or to Shakespeare alone. Warren's slightly evasive remark that these revisions must be considered authorial simply because "we cannot know that they are not" is echoed by similar statements by other critics whose work has been, and is still, central to this textual debate. An example is *Shakespeare's Revision of* King Lear by Steven Urkowitz, where we read: "Except for only a very few variants that are obviously the results of errors in copying or printing, the vast majority of the changes found in the Folio *must be accepted as Shakespeare's final decisions*"[13] or Gary Taylor's paper on "The War in *King Lear*", where he concludes: "It is hard to believe that such a succession of interrelated changes happened by accident, and *it would be churlish (let alone unnecessary) to attribute them to anyone but Shakespeare*"[14]. Taylor confirms his view a few years later in *The Division of the Kingdoms* where he specifies that on the evidence available "*King Lear* was originally composed in late 1605 to early 1606, and was then revised, *by Shakespeare himself*, probably in 1609-10"[15]. More cautiously, Wells concludes that "Quarto and Folio texts are distinct [...] those who wish to produce an editorial conflation of *King Lear* must first demonstrate that both of the original documents seriously misrepre-

[11] Cf. Wells, p. 14.

[12] Michael J. Warren, pp. 96-97.

[13] Steven Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of* King Lear, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 189 (my emphasis).

[14] Gary Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*", *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), pp. 27-34; p. 34 (my emphasis).

[15] Gary Taylor, "*King Lear*, The Date and Authorship of the Folio Version", in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, pp. 351-451; p. 429 (my emphasis).

sent Shakespeare's intentions [...] conservative scholarly procedure is to suppose that the Quarto gives us Shakespeare's first thoughts and the Folio the text in its revised state". He adds, however, that "the matter of whether any of the Folio revisions are not by Shakespeare may remain a topic for debate"[16]. And this debate seems still unresolved if, a quarter of a century later, R. A. Foakes states at the beginning of his paper "The Reshaping of King Lear" – in which he somewhat reconsiders his previous thoughts on the issue – that he is not "concerned to argue here for Shakespeare's authorship of textual changes" yet he concludes that authorial revision "remains the most economical explanation of the changes between Q and F" and that "we should take very seriously the possibility that the differences help us to trace the evolution of the dramatist's conception of one of his greatest plays"[17]. Some scholars have sided with the revisionists; others have criticised them, often not altogether refuting the idea that F may be some kind of revision of Q, but alleging that such interpretations were arbitrary and founded on unconvincing bibliographical evidence. A few examples of these positions are needed to clarify some aspects of the controversy.

In the pioneering two-version theory of *Lear* mentioned above Warren examines the roles of Albany and Edgar, which were in his view deliberately recast in F. Noting that play texts are scripts for performance and that even inaction and silence have an impact on stage that is undetectable through reading, he observes:

> The part of Albany is more developed in Q than in F, and in Q he closes the play a mature and victorious duke assuming responsibility for the kingdom; in F he is a weaker character, avoiding responsibility. The part of Edgar is shorter in F than in Q; however, whereas in Q he ends the play a young man overwhelmed by his experience, in F he is a young man who has learned a great deal, and who is emerging as the new leader of the ravaged society.[18]

Following Warren's argument, we find the chief clues for Albany's diminished stature at the end of the play and particularly in the last scene: when he enters in IV.ii his lines, which prompt Goneril's famous "Milk-livered man" in F, are simply:

> O Goneril
> You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
> Blows in your face (31-33)

[16] Wells, p. 20.

[17] Reginald A. Foakes, "The Reshaping of *King Lear*", in Jeffrey Kahan, ed., King Lear, *New Critical Essays*, New York, Routledge, 2008, pp. 104-123; pp. 105, 121.

[18] Michael J. Warren, p. 99.

whereas in Q the speech continues:

I fear your disposition.
That nature which contemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap perforce must wither,
And come to deadly use. (33-37)[19]

And after Goneril's "no more, the text is foolish" – absent from F – Albany launches into a long speech of potent ethical rebuke, the one that includes "Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?" and ends with "Humanity must perforce prey on itself / Like monsters of the deep" (41, 50-51). The speeches that follow in Q are greatly reduced in F, which, Warren notes, reduces his theatrical impact and the "lines of moral outrage at the news of the blinding of Gloucester present Albany as a man of righteous wrath, outraged by injustice", and even though "F presents Albany equally outraged [...] because of the brevity of his previous rebukes he appears more futile in context, less obviously a man capable of action. The cutting diminishes his stature"[20].

It is undeniable that these cuts can be interpreted, as Warren does, as part of an intention to recast the character. But we can also observe that Warren himself had previously commented on I.iv that "Q lacks two of the eight brief speeches that F assigns to Albany, and a phrase that completes a third" and that "Albany, who is bewildered and ineffectual in either text, is more patently so in Q"[21]. Cutting, in this case, clearly does not diminish the character's stature, and Warren is, quite rightly, resorting to his own critical assessment rather than to philological evaluation alone. This kind of judgement has fuelled controversy. Commenting on Warren, Gabriel Egan writes: "The chief weakness of this argument is its reliance on literary-critical interpretation of dramatic characters, a subjective matter notoriously open to dispute"[22].

If we are to resort to critical interpretation, bearing in mind that most revisionists insist on the superiority of F in terms of character definition, faster pace and greater coherence, it can be argued that the lines from Q quoted by Warren, that are absent in F, carry themes and images that are central to the play. Examples include the theme of nature ("that nature which contemns its origin"), the reference to the text being "foolish" (deliberate reiteration of terms related to the Fool after his disappearance is frequently remarked), animal imagery (tigers/daughters) related to the 'unnaturalness' of the behaviour of the younger generation with respect to parents, the question of degenerate humanity

[19] All quotations are from *King Lear, the 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio Texts*, ed. Stephen Orgel.
[20] Michael J. Warren, p. 100.
[21] Michael J. Warren, p. 99.
[22] Gabriel Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 134.

("Humanity must perforce prey on itself / Like monsters of the deep") and many more. It is hard to accept any suggestion that such pregnant lines should be consciously scrapped as a result of post-rehearsal or post-performance reflection, or indeed to reshape a character. These observations are not intended to weaken Warren's hypothesis, but rather to highlight the controversial aspects of the debate.

The fifth act contains elements that support Warren's allegations: in Q Albany has three passages not in F that give him "immediate prominence" and he is given the closing lines of the play, which confirm, in Warren's view, his "command throughout the last scene in Q, while in F he is considerably effaced at the close"[23]. Steven Urkowitz, in his comprehensive and attentive study of Albany, picks up a similar reshaping of the character: this further evidence of revision includes the changes in the personality of Kent, who is particularly affected by Q/F variants. As mentioned above, IV.iii in Q is cut from F, as are passages from III.vi and IV.vii, but one of the more convincing arguments against a conflated text put forward by Urkowitz with reference to Kent concerns III.i. In Q, Kent instructs the Gentleman to go to Dover and deliver the news of Lear's abuse:

Now to you:
If on my credit you dare build so far
To make your speed to Dover, you shall find
Some that will thank you, making just report
Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
The king hath cause to plain. (26-31)

In F "France has the news and Kent need not and does not send the Gentleman to Dover"[24]: in fact in F he reports that spies, having learnt of the abuse, have informed their leader. Urkowitz rightly remarks that in the composite text: "France has the news *and* the Gentleman is sent to Dover with the same news"[25]. Such incongruence clearly calls for adjustment and is a strong case for the autonomy of the Q and F texts: it positively alters the motivation of the French army which, in the first version, is not moved by the news of Lear's treatment. We shall return to this when looking into Gary Taylor's consideration of the depiction of the war in this play.

Despite the reduction of Edgar's lines in F and the fact that no indication to his role appears in the title of the play as in Q, Warren believes that the two texts offer different artistic visions: "In Q Edgar remains an immature young man and ends the play devastated by his experience [...] in F Edgar grows into a potential ruler, a well intentioned resolute man in a harsh world"[26].

[23] Michael J. Warren, p. 101.
[24] Urkowitz, p. 74.
[25] Urkowitz, p. 74.
[26] Michael J. Warren, p. 105. E. A. J. Honigmann, comparing the "strategy of revision" in *Lear* to that in *Othello*, identifies similarities between the conscious intention to strengthen Emila and the remodeling of Edgar: "in the folio versions, Emilia and Edgar learn more clearly to understand villainy and to accept responsibility; in each case, a humane morality reasserts it-

This occurs primarily, though not solely, through F's omission of the closing soliloquy in III.vi, where Edgar compares his own suffering with Lear's – "When we our betters see bearing our woes" – and the addition of four lines to the opening of Act IV and preceding Gloucester's entrance. Q reads:

Yet better thus and known to be contemned
Than still contemned and flattered. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
Stands still in Esperance, lives not in fear.
The lamentable change is from the best,
The worst returns to laughter. (1-6)

F adds:

Welcome then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace:
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts. (6-9)

What this revision achieves is enhanced pace in the play and, Warren continues, the cutting of Edgar's previous moral meditation brings his speech into sharper focus. The added lines "emphasise the hollowness of Edgar's assertions [...]. Edgar gains in prominence, ironically enough, by the loss of a speech, and the audience becomes more sharply aware of his character"[27]. In the final act he emerges as a man capable of assuming power: this is confirmed by the fact he is assigned the last four lines of the play – lines assigned to Albany in Q as we have just seen. Warren, like Urkowitz, reiterates that we "have two plays of *King Lear* sufficiently different to require that all further work on the play be based on either Q or F, but not the conflation of both"[28].

But once again opposing voices have disputed these clear affirmations. Discussing the transition to the stage, Robert Clare has asserted that in the case of Albany, Kent and Edgar no authorial intention can be detected, but that we witness a process of rationalisation[29]; and David Richman, drawing on his experience of producing the play, has suggested that the relationship between Albany and Edgar does not differ if staged as it appears in the conflated text[30]. It is interesting that this opposition should come

self at the close, through a sympathetic secondary character whose earlier moral naiveté is replaced by insight. The fact that it happens in two different plays confirms, I think, that we are looking over the dramatists shoulder as he rethinks his work": "Shakespeare as a Reviser", in Jerome J. Mc Gann, ed., *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 1-22; p. 8.

[27] Michael J. Warren, p. 103.

[28] Michael J. Warren, p. 105.

[29] Cf. Robert Clare, "Quarto and Folio: a Case for Conflation", in James Ogden and Arthur H. Scouten, eds, *Lear from Study to Stage*, London, Associated United Press, 1997, pp. 79-108; pp. 90-91.

[30] Cf. David Richman, "The *King Lear* Quarto in Rehearsal and Performance", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37:3 (Autumn 1986), pp. 380-82, quoted by Alan Gibbs, "The Play's the Thing: Textual Criticism and Performance of *King Lear*", *Postgraduate English*, ed. Richard Brewster, 7 (March 2003).

from critics whose observations derive from staging the play or commenting on performance: revisionists almost unanimously agree that full commitment to either Q or F is significant, especially when it comes to dramatising the play. Kenneth Muir has expressed a similar opinion when stating that choosing one text over the other "would alter marginally our assessment of Albany and Edgar, but there would be no radical change in our understanding of the meaning of the play"[31].

Alterations to Q affecting the war have also been viewed as the result of an intentional change of emphasis. Gary Taylor, writing before the publication of *The Division of the Kingdoms*, examines the subject and establishes the premises subsequently enlarged on in that influential volume. Though the battle itself is identical in the two texts, Taylor suggests that the war as a whole is presented differently and that if the differences are disregarded any serious critical account becomes impossible; conflation can only confuse the issue. The motive for changes to F is "to strengthen the structure of Act IV": this is done by "cutting superfluities [...] and strengthening the narrative line, largely by accelerating and clarifying the movement towards the war"[32]. Like Warren, Taylor ascribes changes and omissions to a conscious design to accelerate the second half of the play; this is also achieved by establishing a narrative expectation of war. In addition to this, the crucial issue becomes who actually leads the invading army: the Q "*Powers of France*" become in F simply "*drum and colours* [...] *and soldiers*", without indication of nationality"[33]. And:

> the Folio also omits Goneril's reference to French invasion (IV.ii.56), the scene which includes discussion of French general La Far and of the king's absence from his army (IV.iii), and Albany's explanation that he takes arms against Lear because "France invades our land" (V.i.25).[34]

In other words, references to the nationality of the invading forces are weakened so that we see Cordelia lead "not an invasion but a rebellion, like Bolingbroke's or Richmond's". Presenting the war more as a civil insurrection and intensifying the movement towards war "clarifies and simplifies that movement as well, deliberately excising the extraneous political complication"[35]. Removing the direct reference to the nationality of Cordelia's army renders her defeat – and death – all the more tragic and unjustified. Taylor, like Warren, stresses the incoherence of the composite text on the basis of the consistently different treatment of Cordelia's army –

[31] Kenneth Muir, *William Shakespeare, King Lear*, Penguin Critical Studies, London, Penguin, 1986, p. 117.
[32] Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*", p. 28.
[33] Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*", p. 30.
[34] Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*", p. 31.
[35] Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*", p. 31.

he also refers to the episode of Kent and the Gentleman we have just seen in Warren – and suggests that the other F alterations have the positive effect of "streamlining" the plot. In analysing the major differences between Q and F texts Taylor, in another study, also notices greater emphasis on symbolical and metaphorical elements in Q compared to greater attention given to dramatic elements in F. This is particularly noticeable in the reunion scene between Lear and Cordelia where F "facilitates an audience's attention to the dramatic, emotional, and intellectual heart of the scene: Lear's reactions on awakening, and his recognition of Cordelia", whereas Q "emphasises symbolic properties – an attendant doctor, music, Lear rising from his bed like a man from his grave – at the expense of the central dramatic relationship"[36].

Some have argued that these concepts belong more to modern productions[37] and that they are influenced by modern critical practices and do not necessarily represent priorities for Shakespeare's plays. More specifically, there has been disagreement over the portrayal of Cordelia's army, which is treated so consistently differently that incompatibility is created in any conflated text, and over the diminished role of the French in that F alone mentions French colours on stage[38]. These diverging points of view indicate the difficulty of extricating textual interpretation from textual scholarship. This is confirmed by two further instances that consistently arise in the *Lear* debate: the mock-trial and the role of the Fool.

Roger Warren tries to find theatrically effective reasons for the omission in F of the mock-trial in III.vi, citing his assumption that "the Folio cuts, additions, and rewordings represent Shakespeare's own second thoughts"[39], which resulted from dissatisfaction with performance or problems arising during rehearsal. It can be argued that Q's mock-trial is significantly 'Shakespearian' in its open display of a theatrical device – a small play-within-the play – the theme of which is perfectly in line with the play's larger subjects of justice and injustice and the reversal of accepted values, in which a fool and a Bedlam beggar take on the role of judges. But the scene itself, in Warren's view, does not achieve its intended goal because Tom/Edgar and the Fool revert to their habitual roles, performing nonsensical songs and jibes. It is true, he admits, that:

[36] Taylor, "Date and Authorship", p. 413.

[37] Paul A. Cantor, for instance, in discussing a similar approach by Urkowitz, claims "he seems to be automatically thinking in terms of contemporary productions and making little or no effort to imagine how the plays would have been staged in Shakespeare's day": "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 775:1 (1996), eds Paul R. Gross *et al.*, pp. 445-58; p. 450.

[38] Cf. Reginald A. Foakes, New Arden Edition of *King Lear*, Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997, p. 140, quoted by Alan Gibbs.

[39] Roger Warren, "The Folio Omission of the Mock Trial, Motives and Consequences", in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, pp. 45-57; p. 45.

This very state of confusion is in itself an appropriate image of Lear's view of injustice, a tour de force of technical dexterity which combines various elements from the preceding scenes – Lear's madness, the Fools professional folly, Edgar's mock possession – in an elaborate climax.

But, he concludes:

In rehearsal or performance it became clear that the focus of the scene had shifted from Lear's mock justice to eccentric individual detail – the Fool's joint-stool joke, Edgar's songs and devils – leading to a generalised sense of chaos. Certainly the effect in performance more often than not seems to amount to no more than the eccentric tricks of a stageful of madmen.[40]

And why "a stageful of madmen" is not effective in the end is because audiences respond to madness in a somewhat "distracted" manner, no longer concentrating on the lines. At this point, the argument goes, halfway through the play a tired audience would fail to understand that this "mad" image is in fact a true reflection of the world. In Warren's own words: "the mock trial's combination of real and assumed madness keeps pulling the scene in different directions" and the audience will "lose concentration on Lear's sense of mock-justice because they are so distracted (and perhaps bewildered) by the eccentricities, songs and jokes of Tom and the Fool"[41].

Paradoxically, the iniquities of justice and the "reason in madness" themes central to this scene are, for Warren, blunted rather than highlighted by this general sense of chaos and they slow down the pace of the performance. Once again we come across the hypothesis of "streamlining" and providing the play with a greater sense of urgency and speed; cutting out the trial replaces a backward glance with a forward look, it strengthens the dramatic structure and prepares for the meeting of Lear with blind Gloucester. This omission, along with that of Edgar's closing soliloquy in this scene, "cut[s] material which is given more effective (and, in the Folio, expanded) treatment later in the play"[42]. Here Roger Warren is in agreement with Michael J. Warren, who made similar remarks concerning the roles of Albany and Edgar: omitting the mock-trial avoids the anticipation of elements that will appear later in the play, hence producing a greater impact when we encounter them later on. So whereas in III.vi "the mock-trial presents an arraignment of the daughters and of false judgement in terms of an ensemble of madness", in IV.vi this is done "by concentrating on Lear's mind alone"[43]. This revision, therefore, fits in with the trend of F changes

[40] Roger Warren, pp. 46-47.
[41] Roger Warren, p. 47.
[42] Roger Warren, p. 49.
[43] Roger Warren, p. 50.

aimed at "streamlining and simplification" and ensures that presentation of mock justice is concentrated in one scene only, which enhances its effectiveness.

Of the F omissions, this is one of the most difficult to accept in terms of theatrical efficacy: the vast majority of productions which make cuts rarely omit this scene. Paul Cantor's pungent comment on Roger Warren's argument is that "it would never occur to anyone to doubt that the mock trial is an indispensable part of *King Lear*. It is a brilliantly effective moment on stage [...] one of the greatest moments in all of drama"[44]. Cantor, and most Shakespearian scholars, have always noted how the mock trial is an integral part of the structure of the play: it provides parallels and contrasts with the real trial of Gloucester in the next scene. This is not, of course, a sound argument against voluntary revision, and though we may be tempted by his 'common sense' conclusion:

> I frankly admit that I do not know why the mock trial is missing from the Folio, but I do feel that I can say with whatever certainty is possible in literary study that Shakespeare cannot be responsible for the omission. *King Lear* is not *King Lear* without the mock trial of Goneril and Regan[45]

we must admit this is more an emotional than a critical approach. But the same could, perhaps, be said of John Kerrigan's concluding remarks in his discussion of the Fool, to which we now turn, where he states "the only writer capable of surpassing Shakespeare at the height of his powers was Shakespeare"[46].

Kerrigan justifies his conviction that Q/F variants are the result of authorial revision on the strength of the knowledge we have of other authorial and non-authorial revisions of the time. Whereas authors who revise their own work tend to make small additions and cuts, those who revise the work of others tend to insert or remove sizeable sections of the text "without altering the details of his precursor's dialogue"[47]. The most substantial differences between Q and F affecting the Fool are found in his first appearance with Lear and Kent in I.iv. Some of these variants appear to be minor, at times just one-line attributions, and therefore comply with Kerrigan's theory, but there are also about 12 lines missing in F. Two other significant changes are the previously mentioned prophecy by the Fool, present only in F, and his famous farewell line "And I'll go to bed at noon" (III.vi.45) with which he takes leave from this play – and from Shakespeare's stage – is absent from Q. Generally

[44] Cantor, p. 451.
[45] Cantor, p. 452.
[46] John Kerrigan, "Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*", in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, pp. 195-239; p. 230.
[47] Kerrigan, p. 95.

speaking, as other critics have remarked, the Q Fool is more a "sweet", "natural" figure, while in F the more "bitter" aspects emerge and his role as a social commentator is enhanced. Kerrigan believes there are literary motives that justify these alterations and produce a superior Fool in the superior F text, but he mentions – and agrees with – Gary Taylor's position concerning the possible role of censorship in the cuts. Like Taylor, though, he concludes that even if the cuts originated in censorship "Shakespeare may not have resisted the change too vehemently; in fact, once it was suggested he may have welcomed the deletion"[48].

Taylor's exhaustive account of censorship enforced by the Master of the Revels in this play reminds us of the re-institution of a licensed royal fool by James I and points out that this would have made exchanges between Lear and his Fool particularly resonant to a contemporary audience: "In early 1606, it would have been hard not to see the Fool's jibe at Lear as a reflection of King James's own royal fool commenting on the folly of James himself"[49]. Nevertheless, when analysing the omission of those lines from I.iv Taylor, like Kerrigan, insists also on the "laudable dramatic function of abbreviating a fairly repetitive exchange between Lear and the Fool"[50]. Again, in the absence of documentation, other critics have felt entitled to challenge these positions: Howard-Hill, for instance, has argued that if the lines excised from F were objectionable in 1605-6, they would have been equally offensive in 1608 when Q was licensed for publication, because the censor would have been the same person, Sir George Buc[51]. With regard to the "laudable dramatic function" of the cuts Kerrigan explains:

> F is Q's superior because it decisively marks the Fool's first appearance in the play by establishing a King-jester duologue which runs unbroken for 32 lines, while (by placing Kent's interjection centrally in an altogether shorter sequence) ensuring that the exchange does not become monotonous.[52]

Limiting ourselves to these observations concerning I.iv – Kerrigan's long paper addresses most instances of changes between the Q Fool and F Fool which need not be dealt with here – and in order to illustrate the difficulties

[48] Gary Taylor, "Monopolies, Show Trials, Disaster, and Invasion: *King Lear* and Censorship", in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, pp. 75-119; p. 108.

[49] Taylor, "Monopolies", p. 105.

[50] Taylor, "Monopolies", pp. 108-9.

[51] Trevor H. Howard-Hill, "The Challenge of *King Lear*", *The Library*, Sixth Series, 7:2 (1985), pp. 161-79; p. 168, quoted by Clara Calvo, "Authorial Revision and Authoritative Texts: A Case for Discourse Stylistics and the Pied Bull Quarto", in Santiago Gonzáles Fernández-Corugedo, ed., *Proceedings of the II Conference of SEDERI*, 1992, Universidad of Oviedo, Servicio de Publicaciones, Oviedo, 1992, pp. 45-63; p. 54.

[52] Kerrigan, p. 219.

that arise when value judgements are introduced, it is useful to turn to the analysis of stylistics and discourse applied to this scene by Clara Calvo, the Spanish linguist. Calvo claims that Kerrigan and Taylor are mistaken in attributing superiority to F and in trying to demonstrate that Shakespeare is the reviser. In her analysis of the text she notes a series of incongruities in I.iv in F; Lear is with Kent (in disguise) when the Fool enters:

FOOL
Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb.
LEAR
How now, my pretty knave, how dost thou?
FOOL
Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.
KENT
Why, fool? [In F, LEAR – Why, my boy?)
FOOL
Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour. Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow hath banished two on's daughters and done the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.
LEAR
Why, my boy?
FOOL
If I gave them my living I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters. (I.iv.91-105)

Unlike Kerrigan, who sees "Kent's interjection" as disturbing, Calvo suggests that attributing this line to Lear in F "stands at odds with its surrounding dialogic context"[53]. Since the Fool has just addressed Kent to offer him his coxcomb[54], it is more reasonable that Kent and not Lear should answer. The Fool's reply to Kent's "Why, fool?" – rather than to Lear's "Why, my boy?" in F – makes better sense because the Fool continues his reply, referring to Lear in the third person as though the king were not there: "this fellow hath banished two daughters...". And in the last line of this reply the Fool addresses Lear with "How now nuncle?", a greeting normally occurring at the beginning of a conversation – Lear himself uses it at the beginning of this interchange: "How now my pretty knave?" – and it seems awkward to imagine it being used when a conversation is well on its way. These arguments speak in favour of a Q reading, whereas:

By contrast, what we have in the Folio is the Fool addressing Kent, Lear replying to the Fool in place of Kent, the Fool answering Lear's question but addressing it to Kent and then greeting Lear as if the

[53] Calvo, p. 57.

[54] That the Fool is addressing Kent and not Lear is proved, according to Calvo, by the fact that "in perfect harmony with a long tradition of court jesters [the Fool] is mocking Lear's hiring of Kent as a servant: the Fool pretends that he wants to employ Kent as his own fool" (p. 57). He also uses the pronoun *you* with which he hardly ever addresses Lear, preferring *thou*.

king had just turned up on stage. It does not make good conversational sense. It is not too far-fetched to suggest, I think, that the Folio compositor may have made a mistake here and instead of setting Kent's line 'Why Fool?', he simply set Lear's 'Why my boy?' twice.[55]

Calvo also objects to Taylor's view that the 12 lines suppressed in F later in this scene improve the dialogue, because the result of this omission leaves the Fool's question "Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?" (I.iv.136-37) virtually unanswered: "The only thing the Folio achieves by suppressing these lines is to deprive the audience of a punch-line"[56]. Hence the study of *intentio operis* is for Calvo more fruitful than that of *intentio autoris* and textual criticism can only benefit from linguistic analysis, which because of its very nature, merely examines the words of the text. Similarly, computational stylistics have recently been used to ascertain authorship and have been applied to Shakespeare and to *King Lear*, though it too has led to disagreements as we shall see.

The Fool's prophecy has always attracted much critical debate even before revisionism: it is deemed spurious by some and ineffectual by others. Even a revisionist like Stone has criticised it, saying that "it has little poetic merit and absolutely no dramatic relevance"[57]; and in arguing that F revisions are not Shakespeare's he focuses on the prophecy, pointing out that it contains contemporary references to events that occurred after Shakespeare's death. Kerrigan, however, questions this and disputes the irrelevance of the speech: he claims that it is particularly significant in a play preoccupied with prophecy to the same degree as *Macbeth*, both plays using "prediction ironically". Kerrigan is in no doubt: "the changes in the Fool's part are Shakespearian"[58]. But more issues are always raised concerning the Fool. Hornback, for instance, proposes that:

> the F revision to the Fool part may [...] have been undertaken for Armin's apparent successor, the actor John Shank (or Shanke) [...] It becomes increasingly possible that the reviser was not Shakespeare at all [...] with the Fool's part subsequently revised for Shank (perhaps as late as after 1619, three years after Shakespeare's death, when Shank first begins to appear in company records), it is most likely that Fletcher, who would then have been the King's Men chief playwright, undertook the revision alone.[59]

So revision may have occurred not as a result of authorial intention but merely to suit a

[55] Calvo, p. 57.
[56] Calvo, p. 58.
[57] Stone, p. 111.
[58] Kerrigan, pp. 224, 230. For a full account of Kerrigan's position, cf. pp. 218-30.
[59] Robert B. Hornback, "The Fool in Quarto and Folio *King Lear*", *English Literary Renaissance*, 34 (2004), pp. 306-38; pp. 336-37.

different actor and, more importantly, may not even correspond to Shakespeare's hand.

These are only some of the interpretations of the amended Fool's role and what emerges is a series of strongly substantiated opinions that nonetheless only highlight the current impossibility of reaching a single stance. In much the same way, after centuries of bidding farewell to the Shakespearian Fool after hearing his final quip "And I'll go to bed at noon" – which at least rounds off his premature disappearance from the play – to adopt Q, which does not contain it, would probably give us a feeling of incompleteness, yet no philological argument has, to my knowledge, illuminated us as to Shakespeare's 'intentions'.

As noted at the outset of this brief study, and as the necessarily limited examples given attempt to demonstrate, individual scholars have advanced their own theses in the 'Lear debate' and often met with equally cogent counter-arguments. Some, like Foakes, have themselves changed or adjusted their positions, possibly as a result of the debate or by rethinking their points of view. The work of Richard Knowles, who has written extensively and convincingly on the textual history of *King Lear*, and to whom we shall return, and that of Kiernan Ryan, who reviewed the treatment of the text between 1980 and 2000 in his introduction to the issue of *Shakespeare Survey* dedicated to *King Lear*[60], seem to have contributed to Foakes' partial reassessment of his position, as he chooses to revisit the text in 2008:

> Kiernan Ryan takes the side of those who reject the idea of deliberate revision, and indeed says that the revisionist hypothesis has been dealt 'a series of body blows from which it looks unlikely to recover'; he thinks changes found in the Folio might have been made by anyone, and 'most of the cuts and revisions are not convincing on artistic or theatrical grounds anyway' (Ryan 3). This dismissive assertion led me to reconsider the evidence here, with, I trust, greater sharpness and clarity.[61]

Foakes' analysis of the modified role of the king in F brings together some of the elements seen so far. Two different kinds of alteration detectable in the progress between Q and F are clearly marked in his study: one type, he contends, is less significant to the overall meaning of the play because it consists in single words or variant spellings and may be attributed to corrections made by scribes or compositors, or even proposed by actors. The second type is of a different nature: it qualifies the action and affects characterisation and strongly suggests deliberate reworking. In the opening scene of the play, for instance, Foakes counts "39 indifferent changes that could easily have been made by an

[60] Kiernan Ryan, "*King Lear*: A Retrospect, 1980-2000", *Shakespeare Survey*, 55 (2002), King Lear *and its Afterlife*, ed. Peter Holland, pp. 1-11.

[61] Foakes, p. 104.

author in copying his text and usually do very little to vary the sense (e.g. "shady" and "shadowy"; "betwixt" and "between")." Indeed some could be seen as improvements such as "Covered with our curse" to "Dowered with our curse" when Lear dismisses Cordelia, some could be transpositions, some instances in which one text is obviously correct and the other wrong, others in which both texts are obviously in error, and differences in stage directions. But the lines actually added in F, he maintains, "significantly affect the role of Lear"[62]. In Lear's first long speech, F-only lines are indicated in italics (what Foakes considers "indifferent" differences are not italicised):

Meanwhile we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, *while we*
Unburdened crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes France and
Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters,
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,
Which of you shall we shall we say doth love us
most. (I.i.35-50)

These added lines, Foakes observes, make Lear's intentions clearer: he wants to retire in order to prevent "future strife" and this is a patent hint as to his "blindness" in that he does not realise that the division will produce the opposite effect. The idea of unburdening himself will also prove ironic since he "is burdened by the body of the dying or dead Cordelia as he approaches his own death"[63] and the use of "divest" opportunely introduces the clothing imagery that punctuates the play.

Further on in this scene, when it is Cordelia's turn to express her love for her father, F adds a few lines (in italics):

LEAR
Now our joy,
Although our last and least, *to whose young love*
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interessed, what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
CORDELIA
Nothing, my lord.
LEAR
Nothing?
CORDELIA
Nothing.
LEAR
Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again. (I.i.82-89)

[62] Cf. Foakes, pp. 108-9.
[63] Foakes, p. 111.

Here Foakes observes that the mention of France and Burgundy is helpful to the audience in that it makes it clearer why they have been summoned. Also "the repetition of 'Nothing' both enhances Lear's incomprehension that anyone could confront his authority in this way, and points up Cordelia's inflexibility, as well as emphasising the negatives that echo through the play and culminate in Lear's last speech: 'Thou'lt come no more. / Never, never, never, never, never' (V.iii.282-83)"[64]. These changes and others occurring elsewhere in the play, some of which have emerged in our treatment of other modifications, confirm in Foakes' opinion a sense of reworking and deepening of Lear's character.

The two examples presented by Foakes are certainly noteworthy and invite interpretation. It is, for instance, difficult not to recognise that Lear's first long speech is more effective in the F version, though we may be influenced by centuries of reading it that way: but whether his open acknowledgement of "crawling unburdened" to death fundamentally modifies his personality is open to debate. As regards the helpfulness to the audience of adding the reference to France and Burgundy in the second quoted passage, it can be argued that their role has already been made clear in the first quoted speech: "France and Burgundy, / Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love / Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn"; and if, for argument's sake, we were to apply the same logic used by other revisionist critics in discussing the benefits of F cuts such as streamlining, condensing, eliminating duplication of information, we might even question their efficacy on artistic grounds.

One final example affecting Lear and the Fool proposed by Foakes is the attribution of the answer to Lear's own question after Goneril's harsh treatment of him: "Who is it can tell me who I am?" (I.iv.214). In Q the answer "Lear's shadow" is given to Lear himself as he questions his own identity; in F it is attributed to the Fool. The difference, according to Foakes, is that in Q Lear's answering his own rhetorical question makes him "conscious of a split in himself", and in F "the question is left hanging by Lear, marking his incomprehension and is mockingly answered by the Fool, expressing his own awareness and not Lear's". Hence "the change in F shows a more gradual development in Lear's understanding of his folly and his descent into madness"[65]. Apart from the frequent problems of compositors' misalignments, which are difficult to disentangle in the case of consecutive lines, arguments for and against the attribution of these two words will depend on an overall interpretation of the play. That the Fool should answer Lear is perfectly coherent with the Fool's role – especially once we decide whether we prefer the Q Fool or the F Fool – but it is more difficult to decide through philological investi-

[64] Foakes, p. 111.
[65] Foakes, p. 112.

gation. There can be no certainty that deliberate revisions were made, and even if we accept the reasoning in Foakes' re-reading of the Q and F texts it is difficult to disagree with Knowles' statement that, to a certain extent, provoked this re-reading which reassesses the play as representing deliberate "reshaping":

> No speech of any length is rewritten to make it substantially different in content or style, no new scenes or episodes are added, no changes made in the order of existing scenes or episodes or speeches, no new characters are added, no named characters are omitted (or renamed), no new speeches are made to introduce or elaborate upon themes or to provide new and different motives. The reassignment of speeches may represent no more than normal scribal or compositorial error. If F *Lear* represents a new 'concept' of the play, it is remarkably limited in its means of revision.[66]

Apart from Knowles and Ryan, many refutations of the claim that Shakespeare revised his *King Lear* appeared in the mid-1990s. Ann R. Meyer[67] argued that the most likely explanation of the differences between the Quarto and the Folio is that they are the result of non-authorial interference. Robert Clare[68] assumed that the differences in the roles of Edgar, Albany and Kent depended on the choice of the actors who were to interpret the roles. Sidney Thomas believed the revision hypothesis was fuelled by theoretical prejudice:

> The two text theory has flourished because it has lent support to, and been supported by, the deconstructionist emphasis on textual indeterminacy and the virtual disappearance of the creative autonomy of the author.[69]

Similarly, though less polemically, Michael Payne sees the challenge to the composite text as the inevitable "postmodernist fate of a classic" and the various critical positions as having wider implications for textual studies generally. He finds that where New Criticism required a settled text to satisfy its commitment to aesthetic unity, "recent studies in dialogism, semiotics, and deconstruction have celebrated textual plurality and conflicting processes of signification within individual texts"[70].

Paul Cantor, on the other hand, takes a polemical view of revisionist theory: given the absence of manuscripts or promptbooks, he main-

[66] Richard Knowles, "Two *Lears*? By Shakespeare?", in James Ogden and Arthur H. Scouten, eds, Lear *from Study to Stage*, pp. 57-78; pp. 63-64, quoted in Foakes, p. 109.

[67] Cf. Ann R. Meyer, "Shakespeare's Art and the Texts of *King Lear*", *Studies in Bibliography*, 47 (1994), pp. 128-46.

[68] Cf. Robert Clare, "'Who is it can tell me who I am?': The Theory of Authorial Revision between the Quarto and Folio texts of *King Lear*", *The Library*, 6th series, 17 (1995), pp. 34-59.

[69] Sidney Thomas, "The Integrity of *King Lear*", *Modern Language Review*, 90 (1995), pp. 572-84; p. 584, quoted in Egan, p. 194.

[70] Michael Payne, "What Happened to *King Lear?* The Postmodernist Fate of a Classic", *CEA Critic*, 55:2 (1993), pp. 2-14; p. 13.

tains, any theory is purely conjectural. He proceeds to show the limitations, ambiguities and at times contradictions in the various attempts to qualify F modifications as deliberate revisions, but admits that the work is useful and has led to serious reconsideration of the play. There are two aspects to what Cantor considers the wider implications of the theory. One is purely economic – the 'discovery' that *King Lear* exists in two separate texts is convenient since it allows publishers to bring out new editions and, he implies, make more money. The second, which is more in line with the ones we mentioned above, may be termed 'political' and connected with the general mood of literary studies (Cantor wrote in the 1990s), which favours the new editorial approach because "the generation of critics raised on deconstruction as a critical theory has chosen to decompose the greatest single masterpiece of Western literature"[71]. In other words, Cantor believes that whereas a unified text reflected the underlying admiration for the artistic genius of the author and a wish to see it take shape in an integral version of the play, in the post-deconstruction era there is a desire to attack the wholeness of works of literature and to demystify the idea that the "author's consciousness stands behind and undergirds the text, supplying it with the integrity and coherence of an intentional artifact"[72]. Cantor pointedly accuses revisionists of undermining the stability of the text and of claiming, under the banner of apparently unbiased activity such as textual editing, that they are trying to restore Shakespeare's artistry, and emphasises that "the real effect of their arguments is to cut Shakespeare down a peg or two [and to establish] a hegemony of the critic over the author and the literary text"[73].

In the 1990s then, attention appears to have shifted from 'authorial intention' to 'critical' or 'editorial intention', and the more technical textual analyses seem to have been relegated to second place. The more recent work of Richard Knowles, among others, has brought the focus back to the text of *Lear* and has rationalised and clarified the terms of the debate. In his study *The Evolution of the Texts of* King Lear[74], Knowles puts yet another spanner in the already complex works involved in the reconstruction of the play. He observes that it is likely "that *none* of these versions was ever seen on the stage in Shakespeare's day"[75], and that all we have are approximations; the play probably changed, maybe even with every performance. The reason for this lies in the documented evidence – evidence that has been with us for decades but which has curiously been

[71] Cantor, p. 452.
[72] Cantor, p. 453.
[73] Cantor, pp. 454-55.
[74] Richard Knowles, "The Evolution of the Texts of *Lear*", in Jeffrey Kahan, ed., pp. 124-54.
[75] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 124.

discarded: this evidence tells us that most Elizabethan and Jacobean plays had an average of two or two-and-a-half hours playing time (the famous "two hours traffic"), and that Shakespeare's longer plays, *Lear* included, are about half as long again in their Folio versions. It can therefore be inferred that the longer Folio versions were created to preserve all of Shakespeare's words rather than to constitute 'acting versions', and that Shakespeare often presented his company with longer plays than he could have expected to see performed. Speculations as to why this may have happened are manifold: one is that Shakespeare wrote "with an eye not simply on contemporary playing but on immortality in print"[76]. Supporters of this theory are Giorgio Melchiori[77], Richard Dutton[78] and more recently Lukas Erne. The latter asserted that the fact that the length of Shakespearean tragedies and histories exceeds normal playing time means that "Shakespeare simultaneously conceived of them as literary drama with which he hoped to increase his reputation"[79]. These are, as Knowles himself admits, mere suppositions and, if they were correct, they would render the undying question of why Shakespeare was so careless with the printed fate of his scripts even more puzzling. Nonetheless, the fact that playwrights submitted longer texts than were playable is documented, which further complicates the case of *Lear*. Knowles provides the most comprehensive study of the evolution of the text(s) so far, distinguishing facts from hypotheses and delving into issues such as the troubles of inexperienced compositors and piratical publishers. Concerning the changes from Q to F considered here, he proposes that it was most likely a hired professional scribe who provided correct lineation, distinguished verse from prose, improved punctuation and possibly made verbal changes – the type of modification that Foakes termed "indifferent" – and that normally do not constitute controversy. But the major alterations, Knowles himself admits, are a matter of conjecture: attempting to recover what Shakespeare meant to be performed is impossible:

> The *Lear* that the King's Men audiences saw may have been much shorter than that in F, and may have been changed from one revival or even one week to the next, by different hands for different occasions. Shakespeare may have been responsible for some or all of these cuts, or he may, from his remove in Stratford, have trusted his company as usual to trim down his overlong play.

[76] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 127.

[77] Giorgio Melchiori, "*Hamlet*: The Acting Version and the Wiser Sort", in Thomas Clayton, ed., *The* Hamlet *First Published (Q1, 1603): Origins, Form, Intertextualities*, London and Toronto, Associated University Presses, 1992, pp. 195-210. In this volume, pp. 287-301.

[78] Richard Dutton, "The Birth of the Author", in R. B. Parker and Sheldon P. Zitner, eds, *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, Newark and London, Associated University Presses, 1996, pp. 71-92.

[79] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 143, quoted in Knowles, "Evolution", p. 128.

No one can identify the author or authors of the cuts nor do more than infer their causes.[80]

We do not even know whether F additions were staged; and if any additions were staged, they may not have found their way into the Folio. Knowles reiterates his thesis – to which Foakes had reacted – that the changes do not justify "a thoroughgoing attempt to revise the play by the author or a hired playwright; most or all of the additions could have been local improvements, added piecemeal by several hands on several occasions for a variety of reasons"[81]. Knowles is refuting the fundamental revisionists' position of a conscious authorial revision having taken place at one time with a precise target – to streamline, accelerate the pace, change the personality of a character – and supporting the idea of ongoing theatrical amendment. Shakespeare may well have made some or many of the changes, but no persuasive reason has yet been given for believing that he was responsible for any of them. And those alterations that consist in the "smoothing and polishing of the rhythm", Knowles continues, are inconsistent with Shakespeare's later style in which verses are freer and more irregular: it is more probable that they were made by a hired reviser than that "Shakespeare late in his career, working so contrarily to his own recent habits in order to undo his own characteristic vigorous verse"[82]. Knowles' "inconclusion" (*sic*) is that if a conflated version is editorial fiction, the same can be said for both the Q and F texts, which were probably never staged in their entirety; the play has been in constant flux ever since its birth, and even if Shakespeare had a hand in its revision he was certainly not alone. Though the composite text is an editorial construct it is not arbitrary, and it reveals more of what has remained unchanged than changed: "Almost 90 percent of the lines and their sequence are virtually the same"[83]. If Q and F represent a "maximal" playbook from which to extract a "playable play", Knowles implies, the conflated version does the same: it provides an "archive of possibilities" from which to make a selection.

This may sound like making the best of a bad job, and it does not solve the intricacies behind the question of authorial or non-authorial revisions. We can only surmise as to voluntary modifications, but at least we can distinguish what is provable from what is inferred. The latest attempt at a 'scientific' examination of the play makes use of computational stylistics with which to scan the text with a view to identifying

[80] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 137.
[81] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 138.
[82] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 144.
[83] Knowles, "Evolution", p. 150.

'Shakespearian language', and it provides us with the answers we seem to be seeking. In 2009, Hugh Craig and Arthur Kinney published a volume entitled *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*[84] in which they used computers and statistics to determine attribution. In one of the chapters they apply their method to *King Lear*, asking themselves if computational stylistics can shed new light on the *vexata quaestio* of whether Shakespeare and/or others were responsible for the changes from Q to F. The first question addressed was whether F was a coherent alternative to Q rather than a haphazard one – that is, if there was consistency in the changes that might suggest a single person, or group of people, at work; in this sense, "coherency would argue against corruption"[85]. The result – obtained by analysing the distribution of "common function words" such as the changes from *that* or *thy* in Q, which become *which* or *thine* in F – demonstrated that F variants are not random but the work of a single entity. The next step was to identify this 'entity' or reviser. A body of evidence was selected consisting in the passages occurring in F and not present in Q; this was set against Shakespeare's work and that of other possible candidates for the revision such as Fletcher, Chapman, Massinger, Middleton and Webster. The result was that comparison of function words and lexical words – words carrying semantic content – showed that the 'F passages' were invariably closer to Shakespearean norms than to any of the others. Though Kinney himself admits that the *Lear* material was relatively slender, the outcome gives "strong support to the idea that F is an authorial revision"[86]. Computational stylistics, he concludes, confirm what other scholars had suspected by basing themselves on more impressionistic responses.

But even this was not the end of it.

In his review of the book, Brian Vickers appreciated the advantages of computer-based textual analyses but believes that they are hardly satisfactory when applied to the question of authorship. One of the main problems with what he calls "non-traditional authorship studies"[87] is the division of text into function-words and lexical-words; he believes that these categories should be considered in combination: "This basic flaw, fragmenting language into a few separate items, weakens the whole basis of computational stylistics"[88]. The other problem is the influence of the

[84] Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney, eds, *Shakespeare, Computers and the Mystery of Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[85] Craig and Kinney, p. 194.

[86] Craig and Kinney, p. 201.

[87] Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare and Authorship Studies in the Twenty-First Century", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62:1 (2011), pp. 106-42; p. 106.

[88] Vickers, p. 117.

amount of text selected: if it is too small, the results are unreliable. When commenting on Kinney's analysis of *King Lear*, he detects the effect of both these flaws. Vickers begins with a general complaint that the alleged superficiality of the survey of textual scholarship on the play reflects some serious omissions, and more specifically objects to the choice of function-words as markers because they were subject to linguistic change at the time and are "the least suited to settling authorship issues"[89]. He also comments on the size of the examined text – "a mere 902 words" – which is far too small to provide general and reliable conclusions, and disputes the assertion that "coherence would argue against corruption" if by corruption we intend non authorial intervention. He concludes that apart from detecting illogical arguments in Kinney's work the linguistic markers are inappropriate for attribution purposes. Against this scepticism for computational stylistics, Vickers places his faith in the innovative potential of corpus linguistics: by examining groups of words, or combinational grammar, more reliable results can be reached because "chunks" or word strings can identify an author's style better than a counting of individual word recurrences. Perhaps the attempt to recognise a "verbal fabric", which Vickers endorses, for which computers and software are essential, can be seen as a compromise between "traditional" and "non-traditional" authorship studies, where "close reading", "analytical acumen" and "historic sense"[90] provide the basis for computer-based analysis. Vickers has announced the publication of his *The One* King Lear, which promises to give a selection of the most significant studies on the topic along with new material. We may hope that this new enterprise may finally offer more solutions than new questions.

What emerges from these diverging points of view is that often diametrically opposed readings of the effects of Q/F variants prove to be plausible. This brief study is also just an "archive of possibilities", to use Knowles' term, for interpretation: any neat solution is invariably deceptive. Critical views often occupy extreme positions in the spectrum of opinion, from those who believe that a conflated edition produces an inconsistent treatment of the most important themes in the play – war, familial conflict – to those who find that it does not significantly alter the overall intention, especially when staged. Even the generally accepted superiority of the Folio is seen as unsatisfactory when deprived of at least some Quarto integrations. The argument for deliberate revision by the author – such as we find in most studies included in *The Division of the Kingdoms* – would, I believe, involve making choices in the 'archive of possibilities' offered by the critics: if we accepted just the theories we have mentioned, we would need to assume that Shakespeare chose to revise his play and

[89] Vickers, p. 133.
[90] Cf. Vickers, p. 112.

changed just about everything: the character of Lear, the role of the Fool, the moral fibre of Albany, the personality of Edgar, the function of Kent, the temperament of Cordelia and the concept of the war. In other words it was not a simple revision or reshaping, but a substantial rethinking. There can be no doubt that the conflated text is inherently not authentic, like any modernised version of the play: such a text must signal all variants and attempt to explain them. But at this stage it seems to be the only way to respect Shakespeare's achievement.

It is interesting that such a specific textual debate has brimmed over, calling into question issues such as critical theory, artistic geniality, demystification of the author and critical hegemony that strictly speaking lie outside attribution studies. Once again, Shakespearean studies have become a touchstone for the broader debate about literary interpretation.