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AND MODERN
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Introduction by

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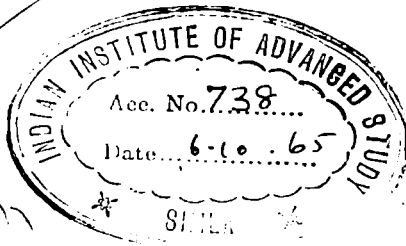
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It is always pleasant to see honour done to the worthy efforts of men of the past, and for that reason alone Mr. Sen's essay on Capell and Malone deserves a welcome. At first glance, it might seem as though it would be impossible to find any valid adumbrations in the eighteenth century of what has constantly been acclaimed the most important development in modern Shakespearian scholarship—the science and art of critical bibliography; but Mr. Sen goes far towards demonstrating that Capell and others were at least groping towards the method which, a century and a half after their time, has revolutionised the editing of Elizabethan texts. Certainly their gropings did not take them very far, but we may well agree that for their painstaking devotion and their flashes of understanding at a time when conditions were not yet ripe for the successful pursuit of the task to which they applied themselves, they well deserve to have their achievements thus recorded.

ALLARDYCE NICOLL

The Shakespeare Institute
Stratford-upon-Avon
26th September, 1960

PREFACE

The present essay was written some four years ago, when I was making a general study of English literary criticism in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is being published in the belief that it seeks to draw attention to facts which, besides suggesting a new evaluation of the editorial theory of Capell and Malone, have some interest for modern Shakespearian editorial theory. This, with reservations, is the kind of interest one feels on knowing that one's new thoughts had been thought by others before.

SAILENDRA KUMAR SEN

Presidency College, Calcutta
October, 1960

CAPELL AND MALONE, AND MODERN CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

In handling such texts as they had knowledge of, Shakespeare's early editors failed to make a necessary distinction between first editions and reprints, and as a result were inclined to attach equal authority to both. This, as R. B. McKerrow pointed out—first in a British Academy Lecture, then in the famous *Prolegomena*—was due to the bias given to their minds by the classical education they had received and the methods which were followed, and rightly followed, in editing the classics. The problems of editing printed books are not the same as the problems in regard to works which had come down to us in manuscript. As a rule, the different editions of a printed book constitute a “‘monogenous’ series of texts,” each edition after the first being a reprint, and all ultimately deriving from a single source, the first edition; any edition later than the first cannot therefore have any authority, unless it used as copy a text which had been corrected from a manuscript. The position is different with the manuscript texts of a classical work, which generally form a “‘polygenous’ group,” since the manuscripts as a rule do not derive from a single ancestor, but have descended through intermediate members from different ancestors, now lost but all deriving from the author's original copy. The extant manuscripts, “each of which may represent the end of a separate line of descent,” have all the character of authoritative texts; hence, the necessity of collating

all the available manuscripts. But the extension of the practice to the texts of a play of Shakespeare, which ordinarily constitute "successive members of a single line," was illogical. It was through failure to note the "essential difference between printed texts and manuscripts," says McKerrow, that Pope and other early editors of Shakespeare collated indiscriminately all the folios and quartos, when they should have recognized the superior authority of those which came first.¹

There is a passage in Theobald's Preface to his edition, which is of interest as it proves that the early editors of Shakespeare adopted deliberately the methods of textual criticism applied to the classics—deliberately, and in the belief that this was obviously the right thing to do. As McKerrow has not drawn attention to this passage, we shall give it in full:

"Shakspeare's case has in a great measure resembled that of a corrupt classick; and, consequently, the method of cure was likewise to bear a resemblance. By what means, and with what success, this cure has been effected on ancient writers, is too well known, and needs no formal illustration. The reputation, consequent on tasks of that nature, invited me to attempt the method here; with this view, the hopes of restoring to the publick their greatest poet in his original purity, after having so long lain in a condition that was a disgrace to common sense."

A little later, he tells us:

"As there are very few pages in Shakspeare, upon which some suspicions of depravity do not reasonably arise; I have thought it my duty in the first place, by a diligent and laborious collation, to take in the assistances of all the older copies."²

The Second Folio was reprinted from the First, the

Third Folio from the Second, the Fourth from the Third: the Fourth Folio thus stood at three removes from the First. Yet it continued to provide the basis for the text of all editions of Shakespeare down to the time of Johnson. Rowe printed his text from it, and Rowe's text was used by Pope, while Pope's text was used both by Theobald and Hanmer; finally, Warburton based his text on Theobald's and Dr. Johnson on Theobald's and Warburton's.³ In taking over from a predecessor his text, each editor corrected it, when and where it seemed suitable, from various texts older than the Fourth Folio. At the same time, as has been stressed by both Pollard⁴ and McKerrow,⁵ it was Dr. Johnson who first perceived, in relation to the Folios, the fundamental principle of Shakespeare editing: namely that since the First is the parent of all the others, it alone should be collated. McKerrow quotes from Johnson's Preface the following passage, where Johnson explains that his editorial practice differs from Theobald's:

"In his enumeration of editions, he mentions the two first folios as of high, and the third folio as of middle authority; but the truth is, that the first is equivalent to all others, and that the rest only deviate from it by the printer's negligence. Whoever has any of the folios has all, excepting those diversities which mere reiteration of editions will produce. I collated them all at the beginning, but afterwards used only the first."⁶

McKerrow considers Johnson to be an exception, and stops at Capell and dismisses him with words few and unkind. But in the eighteenth century did not any editors after Johnson perceive—and *more clearly, more steadily, than Johnson did*—what the present age considers to be basic principles in Shakespeare editing?

In more ways than one Capell's achievement in editorial theory was original and of permanent value. For correlation of his and present-day work, it would be useful, even at the risk of drawing attention to what is commonly known, to cite here some of the important formulations attempted in this century of the essentials of Shakespearian textual criticism. "An editor's first business is to select his text" which will be the one which he has reasons to think to be more authoritative than any other, says Dover Wilson in the Textual Introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare. Capell did make this his first business, instead of following the practice of taking over the text of a predecessor and then tinkering with it. "Our first task in the case of each play," says McKerrow in *Prolegomena*, "will then be to determine the most authoritative text, the one which, on the evidence available, we must suppose to come nearest to what Shakespeare wrote, and for this purpose we must of course take into account the history and interrelationship of the early printed editions." Also W. W. Greg: "It may be taken that the most authoritative edition will be a substantive one" (that is, one "not derived as to essential character from any other extant edition"). "The choice between substantive editions, in the event of there being more than one, is a matter for critical judgement of the general authority of the texts, based in the first instance upon a consideration of their probable relationship, character, and derivation."⁷ When making an effort to determine the most authoritative text, Capell did take into account the history and interrelationship of the early printed

editions; and he did this with an awareness of the different elements of the problem, whereas Dr. Johnson had done so casually, and restricted his enquiries to the Folios.

Having enumerated the quarto editions which he has been able to get together, Capell proceeds to distinguish the group which comprises the first editions from the reprints, and recognizes the superiority of the former group over the latter. The "condition of these first printed plays . . . bad as it is, is yet better than that of those which came after." Again: "the quarto's went through many impressions, as may be seen in the Table: and, in each play, the last is generally taken from the impression next before it, and so onward to the first; the few that come not within this rule, are taken notice of in the Table: and this further is to be observ'd of them: that, generally speaking, the more distant they are from the original, the more they abound in faults; 'till, in the end, the corruptions of the last copies become so excessive, as to make them of hardly any worth."⁸ He makes the same point about the Folio and its three reprints. This brings him to a consideration of the question of selecting a text, the one which is the closest approximation to the author's manuscript. He sees, as we do, that his predecessors had not attended to this fundamental question; and since Dr. Johnson, in spite of what he says in the Preface, used Warburton's text (or changed it for Theobald's), we cannot blame Capell for not specially excluding Dr. Johnson from his strictures. In reference to Rowe he writes: "in 1709, he put out an edition in six volumes octavo, which, unhappily, is the basis of all the other

moderns; for this editor went no further than to the edition nearest to him in time, which was the folio of 1685, the last and worst of those impressions." He returns to the point, when he has considered the editors after Rowe: "the superstructure cannot be a sound one, which is built upon so bad a foundation as that work of Mr. Rowe's." Finally, explaining the principles, which he has held to in selecting the text for each play, he remarks as follows on both quartos and folios:

" . . . our first business then, was—to examine their merit, and see on which side the scale of goodness preponderated; which we have generally found, to be on that of the most ancient: it may be seen in the Table, what editions are judg'd to have the preference among those plays that were printed singly in quarto; and for those plays, the text of those editions is chiefly adher'd to: in all the rest, the first folio is follow'd; the text of which is by far the most faultless of the editions in that form; and has also the advantage in three quarto plays, in 2 Henry IV. Othello, and Richard III."⁹

Capell here indicates his resolution to stick to a single text for each play, the one which he has reason to believe the most authoritative. Is this not what our textual critics have been insisting upon as the obvious course to be adopted, since the commencement (with Pollard's studies) of critical bibliography? But, argues Capell, since it is evident that the text, even when selected after careful consideration (being "generally" the one which is "the most ancient"), comes nearest to what Shakespeare wrote and is not what Shakespeare wrote, collation of the less authoritative texts becomes necessary. " . . . it therefore became proper and necessary to look into the other old editions, and to

select from thence whatever improves the author, or contributes to his advancement in perfectness, the point in view throughout all this performance: that they do improve him, was with the editor an argument in their favour; and a presumption of genuineness for what is thus selected, whether additions, or differences of any other nature; and the causes of their appearing in some copies, and being wanting in others, cannot now be discover'd, by reason of the time's distance, and defect of fit materials for making the discovery."¹⁰ McKerrow, considering only part of this passage, concluded that Capell failed to profit by Dr. Johnson's insight and reverted to Pope's selective theory of editing: the theory that a reading, merely because it seemed attractive, was genuine. But this is to sacrifice Capell to Johnson. Let us first restate the points we have already made about him: (1) that he correctly determines the mutual relationship of the old editions, both Folios and Quartos; (2) that he draws the logical conclusion about what appears to be the most authoritative text for each play separately considered; (3) that he sees the necessity of adhering to that text for that particular play; and having done this, we shall consider the passage now before us—a passage where he explains that he has, where necessary, incorporated into his selected text readings from "other old editions." Do these "other old editions" include the later Folios? It matters a great deal how we answer that question. The whole drift of Capell's Introduction is that his predecessors have erred in deriving their text, directly or mediately, from the Fourth Folio, and that he sees hope only in going back to the old texts. It seems that in choosing

readings from the pre-Rowe texts he means to confine himself to the Folio of 1623 and the quartos preceding it; and this is what the present-day textual critics also on the whole want to be done. That the adoption of the most authoritative text does not relieve the editor of the necessity of consulting its reprints, either in the form of a separate quarto or in the Folio of 1623, is admitted by them. In *Prolegomena*, McKerrow himself points out that while reprints ordinarily vary from the first edition through the compositor's negligence and the proof-reader's presumption, there are three principal ways "in which variant readings in a later number of a series *may* be genuine." For instance, it is not impossible that Shakespeare should have corrected a copy of a first quarto edition, and that a subsequent edition should have been printed from that corrected copy.¹¹ The possibilities of corrected readings occurring in reprints are also pointed out by Pollard.¹² Further, Dover Wilson tells us that variations in later folios and quarto reprints even when clearly attributable to the compositor or proof-reader, should not be rejected out of court. "As the work of craftsmen accustomed to proof-reading in Shakespeare's day, they are of interest," because they are likely to be nearer the correct reading than conjectures made by editors in later ages.¹³ To sum up, modern editors differ as to the relative value of the reprints of a first edition and as to the extent and manner in which readings from them can be incorporated in it. But there is agreement on fundamental points, where however Capell has anticipated them.

Why should Capell have thought it necessary, one

may ask, to collate the quarto reprints when he knew that as a class they were of inferior authority compared with the first editions and that many of them were absolutely worthless? He accepts a good reading from a reprint, but it is not just because its goodness is for him proof of its genuineness. He is *convinced that it was possible for reprints to have genuine readings*; and it is *because this possibility has to be reckoned with*, that he is inclined to accept good variant readings in a reprint as genuine. To remind ourselves of what he says: "the causes of their appearing in some copies, and being wanting in others, cannot now be discover'd, by reason of the time's distance, and defect of fit materials for making the discovery." Capell could not see—in fact, how could he at his time and with his opportunities?—the various ways in which a reprint could come to have authentic readings, originating from corrections made after the appearance of the first edition. But he foresaw that the possibility exists.

Malone in some matters is as clear-sighted as Capell; in a way indeed his work is of superior value, for while Capell is long-winded and repetitious—he "doth gabble monstrously," Dr. Johnson said—Malone is forthright and precise. He formulates the primary issues before proceeding to his task. An editor of Shakespeare must know "the comparative value of the various ancient copies," for to ascertain the "genuine text" is his "first and immediate object: and till it be established which of the ancient copies is entitled to preference, we have no criterion by which the text can be ascertained." One fancies, as one reads this passage, that one is being introduced to Shakespearian textual criticism by Greg

or Dover Wilson or McKerrow. Malone is quite explicit on the point that a printed work degenerates with each successive reprint, except where the author "corrects and revises" his work; and consequently every such reprint "is more or less correct, as it approaches nearer to or is more distant from" the first edition. This process of progressive degeneration is illustrated by him with copious quotations from quarto reprints, and also from the First Folio for those plays which had first appeared in quarto editions. The inference is then drawn:

"The various readings found in the different impressions of the quarto copies are frequently mentioned by the late editors: it is obvious from what has been already stated, that the first edition of each play is alone of any authority, and accordingly to no other have I paid any attention. All the variations in the subsequent quartos were made by accident or caprice."

In a footnote Malone refuses the 1597 edition of *Romeo and Juliet* the authority which it can claim by virtue of its being a first edition—a fact which shows that he is, like Capell, on the way to make a distinction between the Good and the Bad Quartos. (Elsewhere, he recognizes the 'badness' of the Quartos of *King Henry V* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*). A more important point, however, is that he considers quarto reprints absolutely worthless—those which are clear cases of reprint, not "editions printed in the same year,"—and therefore does not approve of the practice of collating them with what, on available evidence, seems to be the authoritative edition.¹⁴ In arriving at this value of the quarto reprints, he must have missed a crucial passage in Capell's Introduction, where the possibility of genuine

readings being found in them is indicated; and indicated, without ignoring the basic relationship of a first edition and its reprints. How this could at all happen, says Capell, cannot "be discover'd" at the great distance of time separating him from Shakespeare, but he is very clear on the point that this has happened. If anything Malone here shows himself to be more fastidious than the most fastidious modern editors who do not reject quarto reprints altogether. But there is common ground between them and him, and between Capell and him, for what use they make or do not make of quarto reprints is *determined* by their respective opinions of their character.

Malone's views on the character and value of the First Folio coincide with those of modern editors. First, there is the relatively uncontroversial point: "Of all the plays of which there are no quarto copies extant, the first folio, printed in 1623, is the only authentick edition."¹⁵ The point was not so uncontroversial then as it is now, for Steevens, whom Malone quotes, had differed from Johnson and claimed that "the edition of 1632 is not without value," having over the Folio of 1623 "the advantage of various readings, which are not merely such as reiteration of copies will naturally produce."¹⁶ It is not necessary to follow Malone in the case he makes out, elaborately supported by quotations from the two Folios, but we cannot forgo the pleasure of quoting his pithy observation that Pope and the editor of the Second Folio are "the two great corrupters"¹⁷ of Shakespeare's text. As for the plays already existing in quarto, the folio editors printed the text from them "to save labour, or from some

other motive," and "frequently from a late, instead of the earliest, edition"; as a consequence, the First Folio, in regard to a large number of plays, "labours under the disadvantage of being at least a second, and in some cases a third, edition of these quartos." In spite of this Malone insists that collation of the Quarto copy with the Folio is necessary, line by line. He recognizes that "many valuable corrections of passages undoubtedly corrupt in the quartos" are "found in the folio copy."¹⁸ Why he should tend to think that the Folio text of these plays, though mainly reprinted from the quartos, has an independent value, he does not explain; and it was not till Pollard disclosed the results of his bibliographical analysis of the Quartos and Folios that a substantive basis could be found for this opinion—that one learnt, for instance, that when reprints instead of the Good Quartos were used as 'copy' for the Folio edition, they "were read with prompt-copies or other sources at the playhouse" which were sometimes of as high authority as the copies from which the first Quarto editions had been set up.¹⁹ Speaking generally: these eighteenth-century editors had not been able to substantiate their views as *completely* as we would have perhaps liked, but their conclusions have been in the main proved to be correct by modern research.

It appears also from the following passage where Malone explains the procedure he followed in checking his work after it had been completed, that in his opinion the Folio of 1623 and the First Quartos have not only high but exclusive authority, and that a modern editor should select his copy-text individually for each play and in the main adhere to it subject to the reservation

that the text of a play which first appeared in quarto should be collated with the Folio text. "I determined, after I had adjusted the text in the best manner in my power, to have every proof-sheet of my work read aloud to me while I perused the first folio, for those plays which first appeared in that edition; and for all those which had been previously printed, the first quarto copy, excepting only in the instances of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *King Henry V.* which, being either sketches or imperfect copies, could not be wholly relied on; and *King Richard III.* of the earliest edition of which tragedy I was not possessed. I had at the same time before me a table which I had formed of the variations between the quartos and the folio."²⁰

In this essay we have suggested a reconsideration of the present view that the eighteenth century had failed to rise above the selective theory of editing. McKerrow's British Academy Lecture, "The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors," allows Dr. Johnson alone to have an idea of the problems involved; and though the lecture comes to an end with Capell, there are indications in it that McKerrow was of opinion that the later editors, including Capell, not only failed to follow up Johnson but failed to conserve the little that he had done. Again, with McKerrow's *Prolegomena* particularly in mind, Greg speaks of the modern "reaction against the eclectic methods of the great Shakespearian editors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."²¹ To speak thus seems to be less than just to some of the eighteenth-century editors. While the editors of the first half of the century had been unabashed eclectics, those of the

second half perceived some of those principles on which the great textual critics of the present age have acted in establishing the foundations of Shakespeare's text. At the risk of repetition, let us say that Johnson (in a *limited* field and in a *limited* way²²), Capell and Malone grasped the history and interrelations of the old printed editions and arrived at the idea of the authoritative text; and that Capell and Malone clearly perceived that the most authoritative text has first to be decided upon separately for each play and then adhered to. They both perceived also that the question of accepting variant readings from other texts has to be decided critically, and not in defiance of their character and derivation.

It will not be fair to expect the precision and completeness of modern scholarship in the first formulation of a difficult position. But its essentials they had indicated in their exposition of the editorial problem in Shakespeare, though their actual editorial practice had sometimes left room for criticism. The opportunities of later scholars, who can draw upon a vast store-house of accumulating bibliographical knowledge, have to be considered.

The charge of eclecticism cannot for a moment be maintained against Malone who, convinced that reprints can pretend to no original authority, rejected them all without ceremony; nor for that matter against Capell, prepared as he was to introduce into his copy-text readings from derivative quarto editions. He consulted them, convinced that they contain many *genuine* readings. It is possible that we would expect a fuller consideration of this matter from him (he himself says that he would

“gladly have dilated” on it, if space permitted²³) or from Malone. But to the extent that they explored this or any other matter—and wide is the area which they opened up—they were guided by critical considerations. *Each* element in their editorial theory derived from a critical conclusion about the character and derivation of this or that group of texts. To pursue a point made earlier in this discussion: though modern scholarship has given full consideration to the matter of accepting readings from quarto reprints, one is not certain that it has advanced in the direction of positive, agreed conclusions. Pollard is in favour of rejecting all of them, except a very small group of *first* reprints for plays of which “we possess only one or two copies of the First Edition.”²⁴ McKerrow, while he does not restrict himself so narrowly, enunciates a principle governing the use of derivative editions. In criticising “the eclectic method” of accepting readings from various sources for no other reason than that they seem good to the editor, McKerrow says: “We are not to regard the ‘goodness’ of a reading in and by itself, or to consider whether it appeals to our aesthetic sensibilities or not; we are to consider whether a particular edition taken *as a whole* contains variants from the edition from which it was otherwise printed which could not reasonably be attributed to an ordinary press-corrector, but by reason of their style, point, and what we may call inner harmony with the spirit of the play as a whole, seem likely to be the work of the author: and once having decided this to our satisfaction we must accept *all* the alterations of that edition, saving any which seem obvious blunders or misprints.”²⁵

This argument, after the publication of Greg's *Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, seems to be less conclusive than it once did. In the absence of external evidence that a whole set of variant readings originated with the author—and in regard to Shakespeare's plays such evidence is "negligible"—we cannot, says he, agree to "any general acceptance of the corrections and alterations of a reprint." While it is possible that some of the corrections were made by the author or from some manuscript source, they may have "become intermingled with others of a doubtful character." Therefore, "each individual reading will have to be considered on its merits subject to any opinion we may be able to form of its probable source"; subject, that is, to our opinion of it whether it is to be ascribed to a compositor or press-reader, a literary reviser, a play-house source, or the playwright himself.²⁶ In another place Greg recalls having written about the great 18th-century and 19th-century editors: "Their fundamental mistake was not so much that they were prepared on occasion to introduce into the copy-text (or into what they on the whole treated as such) readings from other sources, as that in doing so they relied upon personal predilection instead of critical analysis."²⁷ It may be said that in the matter of accepting variant readings from a reprint the present-day textual critics have just this in common among them, that they depend on critical analysis instead of personal predilection. We have tried to show that two eighteenth-century editors foresaw the importance of judging this and other matters critically.

It is the emergence of the idea of the most authoritative text consequent upon a study of the

historical relationships of various texts extant, further it is the recognition of the importance of this idea, which makes all the difference between the editorial theory of the second half of the eighteenth century and that of the first half.

Two instances from outside Shakespearian criticism will perhaps persuade us that the later eighteenth century really attained to that 'critical' consideration of texts, which is to-day held to be the *sine qua non* of editing.

Tyrwhitt declares, in the Preface to his edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (1775-78), that he "has formed the text throughout from the MSS. and has paid little regard to the readings of any edition, except the two by Caxton, each of which may now be considered as a Manuscript."²⁸ The reasons why he ignores the printed texts (after Caxton's) are given separately, in a complete account of former editions, which forms part of the Appendix to the Preface. This critical history of the text—for such it is—has great clarity. Caxton's first edition was printed from a very defective manuscript, but when this fact was pointed out to him, he undertook a second, by collating a superior manuscript text which was placed at his disposal. The circumstances are narrated in Caxton's own preface to the second edition, which impresses Tyrwhitt by its candour, and he gives nearly the whole of it. Pynson's first and second editions (1491? and 1526) were both copies of Caxton's. William Thynne's edition of 1532 included many of Chaucer's works "never before published," but, in so far as *The Canterbury Tales* is concerned, "its material variations from Caxton's *second* edition are all, I think, for the

worse." For instance, it "produces for the first time two Prologues, the one to the *Doctour's*, and the other to the *Shipman's* tale, which are both evidently spurious" (but retained, as Tyrwhitt points out in a note "in all the Editt. since 1532"); and it "brings back the lines of ribaldry in the *Merchant's* tale, which Caxton, in his *second* Edition had rejected upon the authority of his good MS." It happened however to be the one which was for long "considered as the standard edition, and to be copied, not only by the Booksellers, in their several Editions of 1542, 1546, 1555, and 1561, but also by Mr. Speght, (the first Editor in form, after Mr. Thynne, who set his name to his work,) in 1597 and 1602." A careful examination of Speght's text does not support his claim, Tyrwhitt goes on to say, that he "consulted any good MS." Finally, to the errors multiplying through the successive members of a line of derivative texts were added the evils of arbitrary emendations and additions, when Urry's edition appeared in 1721.²⁹ (We may here add that in his letter to Lord Harley (1712), Urry spoke of settling the text of Chaucer "by the help of MSS. and several printed editions,"³⁰ thus showing how little notion any one had before Tyrwhitt of their history and inter-relations—consequently, how little notion of their relative value.)

The other "instance" from outside Shakespearian criticism of the successful determination of the genealogy of a family of texts is Capell's own *Prolusions; or Select Pieces of Antient Poetry* (1760). The short Preface tells us: "From what editions the several pieces were taken, is very faithfully related at the end of each piece;

and the editor thinks he may with confidence affirm, that they are the first, and best, and only ones worth consulting." Though the editor started by collating for each "piece" all the texts, he soon perceived that the text of "some one edition was to be prefer'd to the others," and he therefore made that text "the groundwork of what is now publish'd." The importance of this as a principle of editing appears to him to justify its reiteration. "Upon this plan, (the merit of which the publick is now to judge of) the text of one edition, the best that could be found, is made the establish'd text of that particular poem." Further, attention is drawn to "every departure from it," by giving its reading, when rejected in favour of another text, either at the bottom of the page or at the end of the piece." Where this three-page Preface comes short of being a complete theory of editing is that it lays down no principle governing the acceptance of variant readings. The editor is not clear when he can reject the reading of the adopted text for another "most apparently better" in a different text; this particular insight was not vouchsafed to him before he wrote his Shakespeare Preface. But he had already reached the position that one has to decide upon the most authoritative text—which is generally the oldest—and adhere to it; and he held this position very firmly.³¹

But to return to Shakespeare editing. Bibliographical analysis has given direction to modern textual criticism as much by taking note of the interrelations of the early printed texts as by engendering confidence in the character of the First Quartos and the Folio of

1623. By establishing a presumption in favour of their authenticity, it has provided additional reasons why the first editions of Shakespeare's plays should, ordinarily, be made the basis of a modern edition. Pollard's work grew in conscious, steadfast opposition to the view commonly accepted before him and stoutly expressed by Sidney Lee, the view that condemned all the quartos as stolen and surreptitious and therefore undependable and the First Folio as at least equally undependable. Without denying that piracy existed, Pollard held that its prevalence had been "somewhat exaggerated."³² He constituted fourteen quartos into a separate class, the "good" quartos, distinguishing them from a group of five which he called the "bad" quartos which alone of the first quarto editions can be confidently presumed to have an origin justifying the description "stolen and surreptitious." In regard to the First Folio, he was concerned to show that its editors exercised considerable care in collecting the copy-text for most of the plays and that they had usually reliable sources from where to get it.

Our excuse for referring to these matters here is that Capell and Malone—the former clearly and confidently — had discussed the question of authenticity of the quartos and anticipated Pollard's answer to this question. Pollard had to contend with a strong body of pessimistic opinion; so had Capell and Malone, for the traditional view then, as at the beginning of this century, exaggerated the corrupt character of the quartos and the First Folio. Traditional opinion is represented by Theobald and Johnson. This is Theobald on the quartos:

“And it was the custom of those days for the poets to take a price of the players for the pieces they from time to time furnished; and thereupon it was supposed they had no farther right to print them without the consent of the players. As it was the interest of the companies to keep their plays unpublished, when any one succeeded, there was a contest betwixt the curiosity of the town, who demanded to see it in print, and the policy of the *stagers*, who wished to secrete it within their own walls. Hence many pieces were taken down in short-hand, and imperfectly copied by ear from a representation; others were printed from piecemeal parts surreptitiously obtained from the theatres, uncorrect, and without the poet’s knowledge. To some of these causes we owe the train of blemishes, that deform those pieces which stole singly into the world in our author’s life-time.”³³

Better known is the passage in Johnson’s *Proposals for printing, by subscription, the Dramatick Works of William Shakspeare* (1756), quoted by Malone:

“But of the works of Shakspeare the condition has been far different: he sold them, not to be printed, but to be played. They were immediately copied for the actors, and multiplied by transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player; perhaps enlarged to introduce a jest, or mutilated to shorten the representation; and printed at last without the concurrence of the author, without the consent of the proprietor, from compilations made by chance or by stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre: and thus thrust into the world surreptitiously and hastily, they suffered another depravation from the ignorance and negligence of the printers, as every man who knows the state of the press in that age will readily conceive.”³⁴

When one is reading Pollard’s *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, one is being always referred by the author to

Sidney Lee whose views—at that time and for long before that time, the accepted views—he combated. In the same way when one reads Capell and Malone one perceives their strenuous resistance to traditional opinion as an important element in their work. Capell quotes from Theobald “a modern editor, who is not without his followers,” and observes that his arguments are “not conclusive” and are sometimes “without foundation.” Capell’s own views are expressed with great firmness: “Let it then be granted, that these quarto’s are the poet’s own copies, however they were come by; hastily written at first, and issuing from presses most of them as corrupt and licentious as can any where be produc’d, and not overseen by himself, nor by any of his friends.”³⁵ We have to remember that Capell has here in mind not all the quarto plays—not, for instance, the quartos of *Henry V*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *King John*, and the earlier *Romeo and Juliet*, which are “no other than either first draughts, or mutilated and perhaps surreptitious impressions of those plays,”³⁶—and then set beside this the following sentence from Pollard which embodies his conclusion on the quartos. “But the texts of these fourteen quartos are not worse than we should expect to result from hastily written playhouse transcripts placed in the hands of second and third-rate printers in that far from flourishing typographical period 1594–1622, and there seems no reason for denying to this group of fourteen editions some such humble but not disreputable origin.”³⁷ The quartos (of course, those fourteen which Capell considered to be the good quartos³⁸) were according to him printed from Shakespeare’s copies,

and Pollard admits the possibility that *some* of the Good Quartos may have been "set up from Shakespeare's autograph manuscripts."³⁹ At one point, in explaining Heminge and Condell's much-discussed reference to the quartos, Capell indeed appears to concede that some of them may have been printed from surreptitious copies. But he does not yield on the fundamental point of genuineness and dependability: "it may be true that they were 'stoln'; but stoln from the author's copies, by transcribers who found means to get at them." In a footnote he explains that he suggested the possibility that they might have been 'stoln', to explain what Heminge and Condell might have meant. (He realizes, as Pollard does, that a satisfactory explanation of Heminge and Condell's phrase about the quartos as being "stolen and surreptitious" must precede any attempt to vindicate their genuineness.) His personal opinion is that the copies "were fairly come by."⁴⁰ The reader is then referred to relevant entries in *The Stationers' Register*: and though the point is dealt with in another small footnote, it is undoubtedly of great interest, as it shows that he anticipated the use of the evidence of *The Stationers' Register* to throw light on the question of the authenticity of the quarto editions.

(It struck Capell that in the entry for the First Folio only those plays which were first published in it are entered to the names of the two editors; the plays previously published in quarto "are enter'd too" in the Register, but "under their respective years." This, it appears from his own statement, he considered to be proof of their authenticity.⁴¹ Pollard's demonstration that the Good Quartos were all *regularly* entered in

The Stationers' Register, and that the Bad Quartos were not, is rightly regarded as a piece of fundamental work.⁴² Capell, though not making this particular point, at least drew before Pollard the important conclusion, on an analysis of contents, that the books of the Stationers' Company are reliable.)

Malone gives the text of Dr. Johnson's *Proposals for printing, by subscription, the Dramatick Works of William Shakspeare*, in which occurs the passage containing Dr. Johnson's gloomy observations on the origin and character of the quartos and the Folio. Having then observed that it is not true that Shakespeare's plays "were more incorrectly printed than those of any of his contemporaries," he tells us: "Nor is it true, in the latitude in which it is stated, that 'these plays were printed from compilations made by chance or by stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre:' two only of all his dramas, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry V.* appear to have been thus thrust into the world, and of the former it is yet a doubt whether it is a first sketch or an imperfect copy." He reviews the work of Pope and his immediate successors, and sums up the whole matter in these words: "our poet's text has been described as more corrupt than it really is."⁴³ On the whole, he is on the right side—that is, with Capell, though he does not mention him, and perhaps not as firmly as we would wish.

NOTES

1. "The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. XIX (1933), 106-107, *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1939), p. 36.

2. Theobald's Preface to his edition, Boswell's Variorum edition (1821), I, 33, 35.

3. *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* (London, 1909), p. 153; G. B. Evans, "The Text of Johnson's Shakespeare (1765)," *Philological Quarterly*, XXVIII (1949), 425-426; A. M. Eastman, "The Texts from Which Johnson Printed His Shakespeare," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XLIX (1950), 182-191.

4. *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, p. 153.

5. "The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors," pp. 113-114.

6. Johnson's Preface. Boswell, I, 94.

7. Dover Wilson, Textual Introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare published in the edition of *The Tempest* (1921), p. xxxii. McKerrow, *Prolegomena*, p. 7. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1942), pp. xiii, xxi-xxii.

8. Capell's Introduction (Boswell, I, 121, 122, 129). The Table gives, to quote Capell, "the date of all these quarto's, and that of their several re-impressions" (p. 121).

9. Capell's Introduction, Boswell, I, 130-131, 132-133, 134.

10. *Ibid.* pp. 134-135.

11. *Prolegomena*, pp. 16-17.

12. "The Foundations of Shakespeare's Text," 1923, in *Aspects of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1933).

13. Dover Wilson, Textual Introduction, p. xxxii.

14. Malone's Preface. Boswell, I, 202-204, 207-208.

15. *Ibid.* p. 208.

16. Quoted by Malone, Preface, p. 208. After the publication of M. W. Black and M. A. Shaaber's *Shakespeare's Seventeenth-Century Editors* (New York, 1937) the point, it will be alleged perhaps, has ceased again to be uncontroversial. The two authors have put forth a particularly vigorous plea for the Second Folio which

made 1679 "deliberate" changes in the text of F_1 , of which 836 have been "adopted" in modern editions (p. 32). Their conclusion stated simply is: the three later folios are not "simply publishers' reprints" but editions like Rowe's and Pope's making conscious emendations (pp. 95-96). This conclusion is different from that of Dr. Johnson—that the First Folio "is equivalent to all others, and that the rest only deviate from it by the printer's negligence"—but not, as it seems to us, different from that of Malone on the fundamental point involved. Malone too made it clear that F_2 deviated from F_1 not only by the printer's negligence but by editorial interference; his opinion being that the alterations made were all "capricious," worthless. There, and not on the important point whether F_2 is a publisher's reprint or an "edition," Malone's position can be said to have been challenged.

It has been admitted by M. W. Black and M. A. Shaaber that their work does not "disturb the long-accepted view that the later folios have no authority in determining the text of the plays. There is no clear proof that the revisers had recourse to any printed or manuscript text other than that of the last preceding folio, or to play-house tradition" (p. 96). The three later folios therefore do not come within the meaning of the now common phrase 'authoritative texts' or Malone's phrase "authentick edition": here again Malone's position has not been disturbed.

Black and Shaaber's book has revived an 18th-century controversy on the merits and character of the Second Folio. On its merits, the work has inclined towards Steevens' opinion; on its character as a text and its history—that is, its relationship to the preceding texts—it has, in our opinion, restated Malone's views. Another eighteenth-century controversy that has been revived in our days, to be waged long and bitterly, is that which concerns the authenticity of the three parts of *King Henry VI*, and Dover Wilson has recently shown that Malone's Dissertation on the subject has *not* been superseded (Malone, "A Dissertation on the Three Parts of King Henry VI: Tending to Show that those Plays were NOT *written* Originally by Shakespeare," Boswell, Vol. XVIII; Dover Wilson, "Malone and the Upstart Crow," *Shakespeare Survey*, 4). What is of interest to us is that our times should revive so many eighteenth-century

controversies, and then arrive at almost the same conclusions as the elder editors.

17. Malone's Preface, Boswell, I, 208.

18. *Ibid.* p. 203.

19. "The Foundations of Shakespeare's Text," pp. 20-21.

20. Malone's Preface, p. 227. Consider also the following passage: "Whenever I mention *the old copy* in my notes, if the play be one originally printed in quarto, I mean the first quarto copy; if the play appeared originally in folio, I mean the first folio; and when I mention the old copies, I mean the first quarto and first folio, which, when that expression is used, it may be concluded, concur in the same reading. In like manner, *the folio* always means the first folio, and *the quarto*, the earliest quarto, with the exceptions already mentioned" (p. 234).

21. *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, Preface, p. v.

22. We would therefore put the rise of critical bibliography in the later eighteenth century not so much with as after Johnson. Johnson's contribution was to have perceived the relationship of the First Folio with the later folios, but he benefited by this perception only to the extent of using for collation the First Folio, not the other folios: the valuable distinction that he made between a first edition and its reprints did not appear to him to have a bearing on any question except that of collation. The reason of this, almost certainly, is that he *could* make the distinction only in regard to the folios. It was not till the Shakespearian textual situation could be grasped in its entirety that the idea that there is for each play a text more authoritative than any other which by reason of this is to be made the basis of a modern edition, could emerge. Whereas editors before Capell collated this or that derivative modern edition with various old texts, Capell himself, as he explains, did not only do this, but collated old texts with others which were older (Boswell, I, 133); he therefore succeeded, where Johnson failed.

An interesting point is, What use did or could Capell make of Johnson's brilliant idea that the three later Folios, being reprints, are valueless—that reprints are valueless? Capell mentions Johnson's edition in a footnote, and adds that his own edition had been nearly "printed off" by August 1765; he must have inserted the note in the

printer's proofs when Dr. Johnson's edition appeared, and at the time of making the insertion he claimed not to know much of the edition except that its text was based on "that of its nearest predecessor." We do not know if he noticed that Dr. Johnson's Preface had broken new ground. It is possible that he did, and we regret that he does not mention the fact in the footnote in question. At the same time, it is incontestable on a comparison of dates that his fairly elaborate theory did not grow out of Johnson's perception but wholly out of his own patient labours. (His *Prologions* had appeared as early as 1760.)

23. Capell's Introduction, Boswell, I, 135.

24. "The Foundations of Shakespeare's Text," p. 4.

25. *Prolegomena*, p. 18

26. *Editorial Problem*, pp. xlii-xliv.

27. Greg, p. liv, note 2, referring to an article in *RES*, XVII (1941).

28. See *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. With an Essay on his Language and Versification, and an introductory Discourse, with Notes by Thomas Tyrwhitt* (London, 1847), p. i.

29. "An Account of the Former Editions of the Canterbury Tales," in edition of Chaucer above cited, pp. iii-viii.

30. See Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion*, Part I (London, 1914), p. 325. Timothy Thomas, in expounding the genesis and plan of Urry's Chaucer in a Preface, approvingly referred to the "careful Collation of the best printed Editions and good MSS" (Spurgeon, Part I, p. 357). A French critic writing in 1715, in *Journal Littéraire*, also praised Urry for having laid under contribution both manuscripts and *all* printed editions. (Il a examiné non seulement toutes les autres Editions de ce Poëte, mais aussi diverses anciennes copies manuscrites; & par ce moyen il a corrigé un grand nombre de passages corrompus, rétabli quantité de vers omis." Spurgeon, edition of 1925; Vol III, Appendix B, p. 21.) Tyrwhitt generously recognized that the text of an edition of *The Prologue and The Knight's Tale* published in 1737 was set up from a collation of "the best MSS" only.

31. *Prologions* (1760), Preface, pp. i-iii.

32. *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, pp. 2-3, 79-80, 117-122.

33. Theobald's Preface, Boswell, I, 32-33.
34. Quoted by Malone, Preface, Boswell, I, 196.
35. Capell's Introduction, Boswell, I, 126-127.
36. *Ibid.* p. 121.

37. *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, p. 80. Capell pointed out that the text of these first quarto editions was not inferior compared to that of most Elizabethan plays of which it could not possibly be said that "they are all clandestine copies" (Boswell, I, 128).

38. Capell's fourteen good quartos are: *Hamlet* ("the copy of 1605"), *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, the 'good' *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Othello* (Boswell, I, 121, 127 note). He puts them in a separate class referring to them as "the other fourteen" when considering them, 'bad' first quarto editions being characterized as the "spurious ones" (I, 122, 123). Two of Capell's 'fourteen', *Richard III* and *King Lear*, will now probably not be regarded as 'good' without reservation; but whatever their origin they are allowed to have good texts, texts which are much better than, and different in kind from, those of the recognized 'bad' quartos. Capell (though he did not enter into details) saw that the 'goodness' of the 'good' quartos is not of the same degree (p. 122).

39. "The Foundations of Shakespeare's Text," p. 6.

40. Capell's Introduction, p. 127.

41. *Ibid.* pp. 123 & 127, notes.

42. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, pp. 64-65; Greg, *Editorial Problem*, p. 10.

43. Malone's Preface (Boswell, I, 201-202). This was written before I had the opportunity of reading and profiting by Greg's recent work, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (Oxford, 1955). This great critic, after quoting Theobald and Johnson, says that Capell "was of a different opinion" but unfortunately (as it seems to us) adds; "this was partly prompted by a desire to differ from previous editors, and it was certainly disregarded by subsequent ones." Malone shows no acquaintance with Capell's views on the point, but he demurred at Johnson's verdict—demurred "in part," says Greg (p. 85). However, the following considerations can be pressed. (1) Malone,

in the passage quoted by Greg, appears to say that thirteen quartos are surreptitious only in the sense that they were "stolen from the playhouse, and printed without the consent of the author or the proprietors"; it would seem that he is not in doubt about *the value of the copies used*, though he feels unhappy about the way in which they were obtained. Further, notice should also be taken of the passage which we cited from Malone, where he specifically deals with Dr. Johnson's points. (2) And what about Capell? Can we, by convicting him "of a desire to differ from previous editors," ignore the fact that he arrived at the correct position? It would be presumptuous to differ from Greg, and to underrate the originality of Pollard's work on the quartos; but we plead recognition for the fact that Malone and Capell discriminated between the first quarto editions not just in a negative sense in that they saw that a few are bad, but also in the positive sense in that *the majority were regarded by the former as reliable and by the latter as authentic.*

APPENDIX

This Appendix gives only such portions from relevant critical texts as could be presented in fairly continuous, compact form.

A. Capell: From the introduction to his edition of Shakespeare (1768).

[After giving a description of the condition of the first quarto editions (which he constitutes into two well-differentiated groups before confining his attention to the group of fourteen 'good' quartos) and of the Folio of 1623, Capell says:]

Having premis'd thus much about the state and condition of these first copies, it may not be improper, nor will it be absolutely a digression, to add something concerning their authenticity: in doing which, it will be greatly for the reader's ease,—and our own, to confine ourselves to the quarto's: which, it is hop'd, he will allow of; especially, as our intended vindication of them will also include in it (to the eye of a good observer) that of the plays that appear'd first in the folio:¹ which therefore omitting, we now turn ourselves to the quarto's.

We have seen the slur that is endeavour'd to be thrown upon them indiscriminately by the player editors, and we see it too wip'd off by their having themselves follow'd the copies that they condemn. A modern editor, who is not without his followers, is pleas'd to assert confidently in his preface, that they are printed from "piece-meal parts, and copies of prompters:" but his arguments for it are some of them without foundation, and the others not conclusive; and it is to be doubted, that the opinion is only thrown out to countenance an abuse that has been carry'd to much too great lengths by himself and another editor,—that of putting out of the

[¹ Capell's belief that the First Folio is a substantive edition is here plainly expressed. The points he makes earlier in the Introduction about the First Folio are : (i) that "the editions of plays preceding the folio, are the very basis of those we have there, which are either printed from those editions, or from the copies which they made use of," but that the bad quartos were not used, their places having been "supply'd by true and genuine copies"; (2) that though the Folio used the quartos as 'copy-text', it showed "somewhat a greater latitude" in respect of some of the plays than others; (3) that the text of plays first published in the Folio is just as good and just as bad as the text of the good quarto editions (Boswell, I, 123-124).]

text passages that they did not like. . . . When the number and bulk of these pieces [Shakespeare's works], the shortness of his life, and the other busy employments of it are reflected upon duly, can it be a wonder that he should be so loose a transcriber of them? or why should we refuse to give credit to what his companions tell us, of the state of those transcriptions, and of the facility with which they were pen'd? Let it then be granted, that these quarto's are the poet's own copies, however they were come by; hastily written at first, and issuing from presses most of them as corrupt and licentious as can any where be produc'd, and not overseen by himself, nor by any of his friends: and there can be no stronger reason for subscribing to any opinion, than may be drawn in favour of this from the condition of all the other plays that were first printed in the folio; for, in method of publication, they have the greatest likeness possible to those which preceded them, and carry all the same marks of haste and negligence; yet the genuineness of the latter is attested by those who publish'd them, and no proof brought to invalidate their testimony. If it be still ask'd, what then becomes of the accusation brought against the quarto's by the player editors, the answer is not so far off as may perhaps be expected: it may be true that they were "stoln;" but stoln from the author's copies, by transcribers who found means to get at them* : and "maim'd" they must needs be, in respect of their many alterations after the first performance . . . It were easy to add abundance of other arguments in favour of these quarto's;—Such as, their exact affinity to almost all the publications of this sort that came out about that time; of which it will hardly be asserted by any reasoning man, that

* But see a note at p. 123, which seems to infer that they were fairly come by: which is, in truth, the editor's opinion, at least of some of them; though, in way of argument, and for the sake of clearness, he has here admitted the charge in that full extent in which they bring it.

[The "note at p. 123" is:] There is yet extant in the books of the Stationers' Company, an entry bearing date—Feb. 12, 1624, to Messrs. Jaggard and Blount, the proprietors of this first folio, which is thus worded: 'Mr. Wm. Shakespear's Comedy's History's & Tragedy's so many of the said Copy's as bee not enter'd to other men:' and this entry is follow'd by the titles of all those sixteen plays that were first printed in the folio: The other twenty plays (Othello, and King John, excepted; which the person who furnish'd this transcript, thinks he may have overlook'd,) are enter'd too in these books, under their respective years. . . . [*The Troublesome Reign of King John*, which is now generally thought to be a source-play, was regarded by Capell as "a first draught" (p. 121).]

they are all clandestine copies, and publish'd without their authors' consent. . .

But to return to the thing immediately treated,—the state of the old editions. The quarto's went through many impressions, as may be seen in the Table: and, in each play, the last is generally taken from the impression next before it, and so onward to the first, the few that come not within this rule, are taken notice of in the Table: and this further is to be observ'd of them: that, generally speaking, the more distant they are from the original, the more they abound in faults; 'till, in the end, the corruptions of the last copies become so excessive, as to make them of hardly any worth. The folio too had it's re-impressions, the dates and notices of which are likewise in the Table, and they tread the same round as did the quarto's: only that the third of them has seven plays more, in which it is follow'd by the last; and that again by the first of the modern impressions, which come now to be spoken of.

If the stage be a mirror of the times, as undoubtedly it is, and we judge of the age's temper by what we see prevailing there, what must we think of the times that succeeded Shakspeare? Jonson, favour'd by a court that delighted only in masques, had been gaining ground upon him even in his life-time; and his death put him in full possession of a post he had long aspir'd to, the empire of the drama; the props of this new king's throne, were—Fletcher, Shirley, Middleton, Massinger, Broome, and others; and how unequal they all were, the monarch and his subjects too, to the poet they came after, let their works testify: yet they had the vogue on their side, during all those blessed times that preceded the civil war, and Shakspeare was held in disesteem. The war, and medley government that follow'd, swept all these things away: but they were restor'd with the king; and another stage took place, in which Shakspeare had little share. Dryden had then the lead, and maintain'd it for half a century: though his government was sometimes disputed by Lee, Tate, Shadwell, Wytcherley, and others; weaken'd much by *The Rehearsal*; and quite overthrown in the end by Otway, and Rowe: what the cast of their plays was, is known to every one: but that Shakspeare, the true and genuine Shakspeare, was not much relish'd is plain from the many alterations of him that were brought upon the

stage by some of those gentlemen, and by others within that period.

But, from what has been said, we are not to conclude—that the poet had no admirers: for the contrary is true; and he had in all this interval no inconsiderable party amongst men of the greatest understanding, who both saw his merit, in despite of the darkness it was then wrapt up in, and spoke loudly in his praise; but the stream of the publick favour ran the other way. But this too coming about at the time we are speaking of, there was a demand for his works, and in a form that was more convenient than the folio's: in consequence of which, the gentleman last mentioned was set to work by the book-sellers; and, in 1709, he put out an edition in six volumes octavo, which, unhappily, is the basis of all the other moderns: for this editor went no further than to the edition nearest to him in time, which was the folio of 1685, the last and worst of those impressions: this he republish'd with great exactness; correcting here and there some of it's grossest mistakes, and dividing into acts and scenes the plays that were not divided before.

But no sooner was this edition in the hands of the publick, than they saw in part its deficiencies, and one of another sort began to be required of them; which accordingly was set about some years after by two gentlemen at once, Mr. Pope and Mr. Theobald. The labours of the first came out in 1725, in six volumes quarto: and he has the merit of having first improv'd his author, by the insertion of many large passages, speeches, and single lines, taken from the quarto's; and of amending him in other places, by readings fetch'd from the same: but his materials were few, and his collation of them not the most careful; which, join'd to other faults, and to that main one—of making his predecessor's the copy himself follow'd, brought his labours in disrepute, and has finally sunk them in neglect.

His publication retarded the other gentleman, and he did not appear 'till the year 1733, when his work too came out in seven volumes, octavo. The opposition that was between them seems to have enflam'd him, which was heighten'd by other motives, and he declaims vehemently against the work of his antagonist: which yet serv'd him for a model; and his own is made only a little better, by his having a few more materials; of which he was not a better collator than the other, nor did he excel him in use of them; for, in

this article, both their judgments may be equally call'd in question; in what he has done that is conjectural, he is rather more happy: but in this he had large assistances.

But the gentleman that came next, is a critick of another stamp: and pursues a track, in which it is greatly to be hop'd he will never be follow'd in the publication of any authors whatsoever: for this were, in effect, to annihilate them, if carry'd a little further; by destroying all marks of peculiarity and notes of time, all easiness of expression and numbers, all justness of thought, and the nobility of not a few of their conceptions: The manner in which his author is treated, excites an indignation that will be thought by some to vent itself too strongly: but terms weaker would do injustice to my feelings, and the censure shall be hazarded. Mr. Pope's edition was the ground-work of this over-bold one; splendidly printed at Oxford in six quarto volumes, and publish'd in the year 1744: the publisher disdains all collation of folio, or quarto; and fetches all from his great self, and the moderns his predecessors; wantoning in [e]very licence of conjecture; and sweeping all before him, (without notice, or reason given,) that not suits his taste, or lies level to his conceptions. But this justice should be done him: as his conjectures are numerous, they are oftentimes not unhappy; and some of them are of that excellence, that one is struck with amazement to see a person of so much judgment as he shows himself in them, adopt a method of publishing that runs counter to all the ideas that wise men have hitherto entertain'd of an editor's province and duty.

The year 1747 produc'd a fifth edition, in eight octavo volumes, publish'd by Mr. Warburton; which though it is said in the title-page to be the joint work of himself and the second editor, the third ought rather to have been mention'd, for it is printed from his text. The merits of this performance have been so thoroughly discuss'd in two very ingenious books, *The Canons of Criticism*, and *Revisal of Shakspeare's Text*, that it is needless to say any more of it: this only shall be added to what may be there met with,—that the edition is not much benefited by fresh acquisitions from the old ones, which this gentleman seems to have neglected.*

* It will perhaps be thought strange, that nothing should be said in this place of another edition that came out about a twelve-month ago, in eight volumes,

Other charges there are, that might be brought against these modern impressions, without infringing the laws of truth or candour either: but what is said, will be sufficient; and may satisfy their greatest favourers,—that the superstructure cannot be a sound one, which is built upon so bad a foundation as that work of Mr. Rowe's; which all of them, as we see, in succession, have yet made their corner-stone: The truth is, it was impossible that such a beginning should end better than it has done: the fault was in the setting-out; and all the diligence that could be us'd, join'd to the discernment of a Pearce, or a Bentley, could never purge their author of all his defects by their method of proceeding.

The editor now before you was appriz'd in time of this truth; saw the wretched condition his author was reduc'd to by these late tamperings, and thought seriously of a cure for it, and that so long ago, as the year 1745; for the attempt was first suggested by that gentleman's performance, which came out at Oxford the year before: which when he had perus'd with no little astonishment, and consider'd the fatal consequences that must inevitably follow the imitation of so much licence, he resolv'd himself to be the champion; and to exert to the uttermost such abilities as he was master of, to save from further ruin an edifice of this dignity, which England must for ever glory in. Hereupon he possess'd himself of the other modern editions, the folio's, and as many quarto's as could presently be procur'd; and, within a few years after, fortune and industry help'd him to all the rest, six only excepted; adding to them withal twelve more, which the compilers of former tables had no knowledge of. Thus furnish'd, he fell immediately to collation,—which is the first step in works of this nature; and, without it, nothing is done to purpose,—first of moderns with moderns, then of moderns with ancients, and afterwards of ancients with others more ancient: 'till,

octavo; but the reasons for it are these:—There is no use made of it, nor could be; for the present was finish'd, within a play or two, and printed too in great part, before that appear'd: the first sheet of this work (being the first of vol. ii.) went to the press in September 1760: and this volume was follow'd by volumes viii. iv. ix. i. vi. and vii.; the last of which was printed off in August 1765: In the next place, the merits and demerits of it are unknown to the present editor even at this hour: this only he has perceiv'd in it, having look'd it but slightly over, that the text it follows is that of its nearest predecessor, and from 'hat copy it was printed.

at the last, a ray of light broke forth upon him, by which he hop'd to find his way through the wilderness of these editions into that fair country the poet's real habitation. He had not proceeded far in his collation, before he saw cause to come to this resolution;—to stick invariably to the old editions, (that is, the best of them,) which hold now the place of manuscripts, no scrap of the author's writing having the luck to come down to us; and never to depart from them, but in cases where reason, and the uniform practice of men of the greatest note in this art, tell him—they may be quitted; nor yet in those, without notice. But it will be necessary, that the general method of this edition should now be lay'd open; that the publick may be put in a capacity not only of comparing it with those they already have, but of judging whether any thing remains to be done towards the fixing this author's text in the manner himself gave it.

It is said a little before,—that we have nothing of his in writing; that the printed copies are all that is left to guide us; and that those copies are subject to numberless imperfections, but not all in like degree: our first business then, was—to examine their merit, and see on which side the scale of goodness preponderated; which we have generally found, to be on that of the most ancient: it may be seen in the Table, what editions are judg'd to have the preference among those plays that were printed singly in quarto; and for those plays, the text of those editions is chiefly adher'd to: in all the rest, the first folio is follow'd; the text of which is by far the most faultless of the editions in that form; and has also the advantage in three quarto plays, in 2 Henry IV. Othello, and Richard III. Had the editions thus follow'd been printed with carefulness, from correct copies, and copies not added to or otherwise alter'd after those impressions, there had been no occasion for going any further: but this was not at all the case, even in the best of them; and it therefore became proper and necessary to look into the other old editions, and to select from thence whatever improves the author, or contributes to his advancement in perfectness, the point in view throughout all this performance: that they do improve him, was with the editor an argument in their favour; and a presumption of genuineness for what is thus selected, whether additions, or differences of any other nature; and the causes of their appearing in some copies, and being

wanting in others, cannot now be discover'd, by reason of the time's distance, and defect of fit materials for making the discovery. Did the limits of this Introduction allow of it, the editor would gladly have dilated and treated more at large this article of his plan; as that which is of greatest importance, and most likely to be contested of any thing in it: but this doubt, or this dissent, (if any be,) must come from those persons only who are not yet possess'd of the idea they ought to entertain of these ancient impressions; for of those who are, he fully persuades himself he shall have both the approval and the applause. . . .¹ (Boswell, I, 126-135)

B. Malone: From the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1790).

[After giving the text of Dr. Johnson's Proposals, Malone says:]

Though Dr. Johnson has here pointed out with his usual perspicuity and vigour, the true course to be taken by an editor of Shakespeare, some of the positions which he has laid down may be controverted, and some are indubitably not true. It is not true that the plays of this author were more incorrectly printed than those of any of his contemporaries: for in the plays of Marlowe, Marston, Fletcher, Massinger, and others, as many errors may be found. It is not true that the art of printing was in no other age in so unskillful hands. Nor is it true, in the latitude in which it is stated, that "these plays were printed from compilations made by chance or by stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre:" two only of all his dramas, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry V.* appear to have been thus thrust into the world, and of the former it is yet a doubt whether it is a first sketch or an imperfect copy. I do not believe that words were then adopted at pleasure from the neighbouring languages, or that an antiquated diction was then employed by any poet but Spenser. That the obscurities of our author, to whatever cause they may be referred, do not arise from the paucity of contemporary writers, the present edition may furnish indisputable

[¹ The importance which Capell attaches to this matter is evident. It requires us to put in the context of the belief here expressed his statement regarding the use of good variant readings occurring in the less authoritative old editions: quarto reprints and bad quartos. In regard to the latter he makes the shrewd observation that good variant readings are to be found "in some particular passages of them, where there happens to be a greater conformity than usual between them and the more perfect editions" (Boswell, I, 122).]

evidence. And lastly, if it be true, that "very few of Shakspeare's lines were difficult to his audience, and that he used such expressions as were then common," (a position of which I have not the smallest doubt,) it cannot be true, that "his reader is embarrassed at once with dead and with foreign languages, with obsoleteness and innovation."

When Mr. Pope first undertook the task of revising these plays, every anomaly of language, and every expression that was not understood at that time, were considered as errors or corruptions, and the text was altered, or amended, as it was called, at pleasure. The principal writers of the early part of this century seem never to have looked behind them, and to have considered their own era and their own phraseology as the standard of perfection: hence, from the time of Pope's edition, for above twenty years, to alter Shakspeare's text and to restore it, were considered as synonymous terms. During the last thirty years our principal employment has been to *restore*, in the true sense of the word; to eject the arbitrary and capricious innovations made by our predecessors from ignorance of the phraseology and customs of the age in which Shakspeare lived.

As on the one hand our poet's text has been described as more corrupt than it really is, so on the other, the labour required to investigate fugitive allusions, to explain and justify obsolete phraseology by parallel passages from contemporary authors, and to form a genuine text by a faithful collation of the original copies, has not perhaps had that notice to which it is entitled: for undoubtedly it is a laborious and a difficult task: and the due execution of this it is, which can alone entitle an editor of Shakspeare to the favour of the publick.

I have said that the comparative value of the various ancient copies of Shakspeare's plays has never been precisely ascertained. To prove this, it will be necessary to go into a long and minute discussion, for which, however, no apology is necessary: for though to explain and illustrate the writings of our poet is a principal duty of his editor, to ascertain his genuine text, to fix what is to be explained, is his first and immediate object: and till it be established which of the ancient copies is entitled to preference, we have no criterion by which the text can be ascertained.

Fifteen of Shakspeare's plays were printed in quarto antecedent

to the first complete collection of his works, which was published by his fellow-comedians in 1623. These plays are, A Midsummer-Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, The Two Parts of King Henry IV. King Richard II. King Richard III. The Merchant of Venice, King Henry V. Much Ado About Nothing, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Troilus and Cressida, King Lear, and Othello.

The players, when they mention these copies, represent them all as mutilated and imperfect; but this was merely thrown out to give an additional value to their own edition, and is not strictly true of any but two of the whole number; The Merry Wives of Windsor, and King Henry V.—With respect to the other thirteen copies, though undoubtedly they were all surreptitious, that is, stolen from the play-house, and printed without the consent of the author or the proprietors, they *in general* are preferable to the exhibition of the same plays in the folio; for this plain reason, because, instead of printing these plays from a manuscript, the editors of the folio, to save labour, or from some other motive, printed the greater part of them from the very copies which they represented as maimed and imperfect, and frequently from a late, instead of the earliest, edition; in some instances with additions and alterations of their own. Thus therefore the first folio, as far as respects the plays above enumerated, labours under the disadvantage of being at least a second, and in some cases a third, edition of these quartos. I do not, however, mean to say, that many valuable corrections of passages undoubtedly corrupt in the quartos are not found in the folio copy; or that a single line of these plays should be printed by a careful editor without a minute examination, and collation of both copies; but those quartos were in general the basis on which the folio editors built, and are entitled to our particular attention and examination as *first* editions.

It is well known to those who are conversant with the business of the press, that, (unless when the author corrects and revises his own works,) as editions of books are multiplied, their errors are multiplied also; and that consequently every such edition is more or less correct, as it approaches nearer to or is more distant from the first. A few instances of the gradual progress of corruption will fully evince the truth of this assertion. . . .

So little known indeed was the value of the early impressions of books, (not revised or corrected by their authors,) that King Charles the First, though a great admirer of our poet, was contented with the *second folio* edition of his plays, unconscious of the numerous misrepresentations and interpolations by which every page of that copy is disfigured; and in a volume of the quarto plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, which formerly belonged to that king, and is now in my collection, I did not find a single first impression. In like manner, Sir William D'Avenant, when he made his alteration of the play of *Macbeth*, appears to have used the third folio printed in 1664.*

The various readings found in the different impressions of the quarto copies are frequently mentioned by the late editors: it is obvious from what has been already stated, that the first edition of each play is alone of any authority,† and accordingly to no other have I paid any attention. All the variations in the subsequent quartos were made by accident or caprice. Where, however, there are two editions printed in the same year, or an undated copy, it is necessary to examine each of them, because which of them was first, cannot be ascertained; and being each printed from a manuscript, they carry with them a degree of authority to which a re-impression cannot be entitled. Of the tragedy of *King Lear* there are no less than three copies, varying from each other, printed for the same bookseller, and in the same year.

Of all the plays of which there are no quarto copies extant, the first folio, printed in 1623, is the only authentick edition.

An opinion has been entertained by some that the second impression of that book, published in 1632, has a similar claim to authenticity. "Whoever has any of the folios, (says Dr. Johnson,) has all, excepting those diversities which mere reiteration of editions will produce. I collated them all at the beginning, but afterwards used only the first, from which (he afterwards adds,) the subsequent folios never differ but by accident or negligence." Mr. Steevens,

* In that copy *anoint* being corruptly printed instead of *aroint*,
 "Anoint thee, witch, the rump-fed ronyon cries."
 the error was implicitly adopted by D'Avenant.

† Except only in the instance of *Romeo and Juliet*, where the first copy, printed in 1597, appears to be an imperfect sketch, and therefore cannot be entirely relied on. Yet even this furnishes many valuable corrections of the more perfect copy of that tragedy in its present state, printed in 1599.

however, does not subscribe to this opinion. "The edition of 1632, (says that gentleman) is not without value; for though it be in some places more incorrectly printed than the preceding one, it has likewise the advantage of various readings, which are not merely such as reiteration of copies will naturally produce."

What Dr. Johnson has stated, is not quite accurate. The second folio does indeed very frequently differ from the first by negligence or chance; but much more frequently by the editor's profound ignorance of our poet's phraseology and metre, in consequence of which there is scarce a page of the book which is not disfigured by the capricious alterations introduced by the person to whom the care of that impression was entrusted. This person in fact, whoever he was, and Mr. Pope, were the two great corrupters of our poet's text; and I have no doubt that if the arbitrary alterations introduced by these two editors were numbered, in the plays of which no quarto copies are extant, they would greatly exceed all the corruptions and errors of the press in the original and only authentick copy of those plays. Though my judgment on this subject has been formed after a very careful examination, I cannot expect that it should be received on my mere assertion: and therefore it is necessary to substantiate it by proof. This cannot be effected but by a long, minute, and what I am afraid will appear to many, an uninteresting disquisition: but let it still be remembered that to ascertain the genuine text of these plays is an object of great importance. . . . (Boswell, I, 201-204, 207-209)

C. Capell : From the Preface to *Prolusions* (1760).

From what editions the several pieces were taken, is very faithfully related at the end of each piece; and the editor thinks he may with confidence affirm, that they are the first, and best, and only ones worth consulting. When a poem was to be proceeded upon, the editions that belong to it were first collated; and with what care, let that minuteness speak which may be seen in the various readings: In the course of this collation it well appear'd, that some one edition was to be prefer'd to the others: that edition therefore was made the ground-work of what is now publish'd; and it is never departed from, but in places where some other edition had a reading most apparently better; or in such other places as were very plainly

corrupt, but, assistance of books failing, were to be amended by conjecture; in the first of these cases, the reading that was judg'd best is inserted into the text of the poem, and the rejected reading may be found in it's place at the end; and, in the other, the conjectural reading is inserted likewise, and that upon which it is built is at the bottom of the page: Where the corruption of a passage arose from omissions,—whereby the sense, the versification, or both were defective,—it is endeavour'd to be amended by the insertion of such word, or words, as seem'd most natural to the place; and all such words are printed in a black letter. Upon this plan, (the merit of which the publick is now to judge of) the text of one edition, the best that could be found, is made the establish'd text of that particular poem; and every departure from it, how minute soever, is at once offer'd to the eye in the most simple manner, without parade of notes which but divert the attention. . . .

D. Tyrwhitt : From his Appendix to his Preface to the edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (1775-1778). Edition of Chaucer's *Poetical Works* cited, pp. iii-viii.

AN ACCOUNT OF FORMER EDITIONS OF THE
CANTERBURY TALES

The Art of Printing had been invented and exercised for a considerable time, in most countries of Europe, before the Art of Criticism was called in to superintend and direct its operations. It is therefore much more to the honour of our meritorious countryman William Caxton, that he chose to make the *Canterbury Tales* one of the earliest productions of his press, than it can be to his discredit, that he printed them very incorrectly. He probably took the first MS. that he could procure to print from, and it happened unluckily to be one of the worst in all respects that he could possibly have met with. The very few copies of this Edition, which are now remaining, have no date, but Mr. Ames supposes it to have been printed in 1475 or 6.

It is still more to the honour of Caxton, that when he was informed of the imperfections of his edition, he very readily undertook a second, "for to satisfy the author," (as he says himself,) "whereas tofore by ignorance *he* had erred in hurting and diffaming his book."

His whole account of this matter, in the Preface to this second Edition, is so clear and ingenuous, that I shall insert it below in his own words.¹ This Edition is also without date, except that the Preface informs us, that it was printed six years after the first.

Ames mentions an Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "Collected by William Caxton, and printed by Wynken de Worde at Westmestre, in 1495. Folio." He does not appear to have seen it himself, nor have I ever met with any other authority for its existence; which however I do not mean to dispute. If there was such an Edition, we may be tolerably sure, that it was only a copy of Caxton's.

This was certainly the case of both Pynson's Editions. He has prefixed to both the introductory part of Caxton's Prohemyc to his 2d Edition, without the least alteration. In what follows, he says, that he purposes to imprint his book (in the first Edition) *by a copy of the said Master Caxton*, and (in the second) *by a copy of William Caxton's imprinting*. That the Copy, mentioned in both these passages, by which Pynson purposed to imprint, was really Caxton's second Edition, is evident from the slightest comparison of the three books. Pynson's first Edition has no date, but is supposed (upon good grounds, I think) to have been printed not long after 1491, the year of Caxton's death. His second Edition is dated in 1526, and was the first in which a Collection of some other pieces of Chaucer was added to the Canterbury Tales.

The next Edition, which I have been able to meet with, was printed by Thomas Godfray in 1532. If this be not the very Edition which Leland speaks of as printed by Berthelette, with the assistance of Mr. William Thynne, (as I rather suspect it is,) we may be assured that it was copied from that. Mr. Thynne's Dedication to Henry VIII. stands at the head of it; and the great number of Chaucer's works, never before published, which appear in it, fully entitles it to the commendations, which have always been given to Mr. Thynne's edition on that account. Accordingly, it was several times reprinted as the standard edition of Chaucer's works, without any material alteration, except the insertion of the Plowman's tale in 1542, of which I have spoken in the Discourse, &c. n. 32.

[¹ We have, with Tyrwhitt's other notes, omitted this note which gives Caxton's Preface.]

As my business here is solely with the *Canterbury Tales*, I shall take no notice of the several miscellaneous pieces, by Chaucer and others, which were added to them by Mr. Thynne in his Edition, and afterwards by Stowe and Speght in the Editions of 1561, 1597, and 1602. With respect to the *Canterbury Tales*, I am under a necessity of observing, that, upon the whole, they received no advantage from the edition of 1532. Its material variations from Caxton's *second* edition are all, I think, for the worse. It confounds the order of the *Squier's* and the *Frankleyn's* tales, which Caxton, in his *second* Edition, had set right. It gives the *Frankleyn's* Prologue to the *Merchant*, in addition to his own proper Prologue. It produces for the first time two Prologues, the one to the *Doctour's* and the other to the *Shipman's* tale, which are both evidently spurious; and it brings back the lines of ribaldry in the *Merchant's* tale, which Caxton, in his *second* Edition, had rejected upon the authority of his good MS.

However, this Edition of 1532, with all its imperfections, had the luck, as I have said, to be considered as the standard edition, and to be copied, not only by the Booksellers, in their several Editions of 1542, 1546, 1555, and 1561, but also by Mr. Speght, (the first Editor in form, after Mr. Thynne, who set his name to his work,) in 1597 and 1602. In the Dedication to Sir Robert Cecil, prefixed to this last edition, he speaks indeed of having "reformed the whole work, both by old written copies and by Ma. William Thynnes praise-worthy labours," but I cannot find that he has departed in any material point from those editions, which I have supposed to be derived from Mr. Thynne's. In the very material points above-mentioned, in which those editions vary from Caxton's second, he has followed them. Nor have I observed any such verbal varieties, as would induce one to believe that he had consulted any good MS. They who have read his Preface, will probably not regret, that he did not do more towards correcting the text of Chaucer.

In this state the *Canterbury Tales* remained till the edition undertaken by Mr. Urry, which was published, some years after his death, in 1721. I shall say but little of that edition, as a very fair and full account of it is to be seen in the modest and sensible Preface prefixed to it by Mr. Timothy Thomas, upon whom the charge of publishing Chaucer devolved, or rather was imposed, after Mr. Urry's

death. The strange licence in which Mr. Urry appears to have indulged himself, of lengthening and shortening Chaucer's words according to his own fancy, and of even adding words of his own, without giving his readers the least notice, has made the text of Chaucer in his edition by far the worst that was ever published.

Since this there has been no complete Edition of the Canterbury Tales. A volume in 8vo containing the Prologue and the Knightes Tale, with large explanatory notes, &c. was published in 1737, by a Gentleman, (as I am informed,) who has since distinguished himself by many other learned and useful publications. He appears to have set out upon the only rational plan of publishing Chaucer, by collating the best MSS. and selecting from them the genuine readings; and accordingly his edition, as far as it goes, is infinitely preferable to any of those which preceded it.



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