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> 'It is perhaps relevant that the current reinvestigations of the textual problems of King Lear come at a time in which Shakespeare critics have...become increasingly aware of the need to write about the plays as works to be performed' (Stanley Wells, The Division of the Kingdoms 2).

During the last two decades a widespread and vociferous controversy over the textual integrity of King Lear has arisen. Scholars of Shakespeare have become sharply divided over whether or not the separate Quarto and Folio texts of the play represent a revision of the play and, if so, whether or not Shakespeare oversaw that revision. This essay attempts to heed the good intentions advocated above by Stanley Wells and explore the controversy in the light of performance evidence. This may be found in the second part of the essay, while the first half examines the validity of the contesting arguments as they currently stand.

I

The modern text of Lear derives from three printed versions: the First Quarto (Q1) of 1608, the Second Quarto (Q2), published in 1619 by William Jaggard (also responsible for the First Folio), and the text residing in the Folio (F) collection of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623. Debate over the origins of these various sources has fuelled the recent textual controversy. The debate has centred on the question of whether Q and F represent either variously corrupted versions of a single work, or distinct and authoritative stages in the revision of the play. Alexander Pope's 1723 edition began the tradition of conflating the two extant texts, a convention that held sway until around the last twenty years, when a number of critics challenged so-called eclectic editions. This new generation of

revisionist critics argued that Q and F represent not differing versions of a lost, original Lear, but a distinct early version, Q, revised to produce F. The dispute remains unresolved, although there is amongst some critics a consensus that Q "is based on the author's manuscript, while the Folio is a playhouse revision which may be partly authorial but not exclusively so" (Leggatt 319f).

The cumulative variations between the two texts of Lear are consequential. Around 285 lines from the Quarto do not appear in the Folio, whilst the Folio contains approximately 115 lines not found in the Quarto; Q is therefore some 170 lines longer than F. The most striking differences are that scene 4.3 in Q is entirely cut from F, 3.1 contains separate and exclusive versions of a section of Kent's speech to the Gentleman, Folio 3.6 omits Q's mock trial and Edgar's closing soliloquy, while only F includes the Fool's 'prophecy' at the end of 3.2. Besides numerous other variant readings of individual words or phrases, there are a number of other omissions and additions of short passages.

The effects of these differences are more difficult to illuminate definitively, and have become central to the debate between revisionists and traditionalists. The revisionists' argument is that Q was revised to produce F, probably in the light of rehearsal or early performance. Steven Urkowitz thus asserts that the longer Q "preserves a fuller literary record of obviously Shakespearean writing, but the Folio offers a more vigorous rhythm of speeches and incidents" (50). This raises the question not only of whether F represents a revised-through-performance version of the play, but also the extent to which Shakespeare may have been involved in the revision. The range of opinion is wide here, with the more dogmatic revisionists insisting that the changes are solely Shakespeare's work. Urkowitz, for one, is thoroughly committed to this perspective, asserting that "the vast majority of the changes found in the Folio must be accepted as Shakespeare's final decisions" (129). That Urkowitz concludes thus via assertion rather than any substantial proof is somewhat characteristic of the Lear textual controversy. Likewise, Gary Taylor, without explaining why, asserts that "it would be churlish. . .to attribute [the changes] to anyone but Shakespeare" (34). A number of critics'

arguments may be essentially summarised then, by the position that since we cannot prove that Shakespeare did *not* revise King Lear, it therefore must have been his work. I consider later what ideas are at stake, and why critics might remain so insistent on this issue.

If the revisionists' case is to be perceived as valid, especially if Shakespeare is to be regarded as the principal reviser, then a pattern to the changes between Q and F should be discernible. This has been precisely the argument of many critics, often to a level of incredible ingenuity. Following Taylor's influential early entry into the debate ('The War in King Lear'), the differing portrayals of the War in Q and F have themselves prompted a skirmish over whether or not these changes represent a pattern of revision. Taylor asserts that cuts to the later Acts, not least the omission of 4.3 from F, form a pattern whereby the War in F is less a French invasion, as in the Quarto, than a civil insurrection, and so we see Cordelia "lead not an invasion, but a rebellion like Bolingbroke's or Richmond's" (31). Taylor also argues, albeit not always convincingly, that "the Quarto and Folio treat the nationality of Cordelia's army in consistently different ways," and so any eclectic edition, based on conflating the two, "produces incoherence" (31). Taylor's premise, though, regarding "consistently different" treatments is highly questionable, as other critics have been quick to observe. R. A. Foakes, for example, disagrees with assertions that the French presence is reduced in F, since this text alone actually specifies French colours on stage at various points (New Arden Shakespeare140).

Revisionists have also perceived important patterns in the effects of the differences between Q and F on the play's characters. Kent is perhaps the character most affected by the changes; not only do Quarto and Folio 3.1 contain different versions of Kent's speech to the Gentleman, but 4.3, another short scene between Kent and a Gentleman, is cut in F, as are passages featuring Kent in 3.6 and 4.7. Michael Warren argues that the changes form a distinct pattern, not least in curtailing Kent's moral chorus role and thus making Folio Kent "more objective and more challenging, because less overtly moral" (67). This perception of a more

morally ambiguous Folio echoes Urkowitz, who argues that changes to Albany's role in F have similar results. He claims that cuts to passages where Albany voices moral objections (for example, 4.2.32-51[1]) or justification (5.1.23-27), mean that Folio Albany is a morally shadier figure than his equivalent in Q: "[i]n this drama of sharply defined morality, Albany possesses a unique moral ambiguity. . .variants found in the Folio compound this ambiguity" (86). Randall McCleod perceives the differences between Q and F Albany similarly, discerning audience reaction to 4.2 to be either admiration for his moral correctness in Q, or sympathy for his impotent cuckoldry in F (184-85).

According to revisionist critics, the removal of 4.3 from F contributes not only to the supposed diminution of Kent, but also affects the way an audience might perceive Cordelia. R. A. Foakes, for example, argues that F's omission of Kent's panegyric to Cordelia not only makes her reappearance in 4.4 more abrupt, but also makes her a more ambiguous character: "[b]y diminishing the sense of Cordelia as a saintly emblem of pity, reducing her role and showing her as the enemy, leading an invading force into England, the Folio text makes her role more equivocal, and offers grounds for explaining her death in political terms" (New Arden Shakespeare 74). Again, this somewhat overstates its case and, as will be seen later, these changes, suggestive though they may be, are by no means consistent with others found in the Folio text.

Finally, Lear himself is affected, albeit to an indeterminate degree, by textual variants. Alexander Leggatt argues that while F Lear is generally perceived as faster paced than Q, the opposite is true for the King. Lear in F is, rather, "more inclined to stop, explain, listen and think, more inclined to assert his will" (311). Such an effect is detectable from Lear's first speech, to which F adds around seven, largely explicatory, lines (1.1.39-44, 49-50). For Leggatt, this Lear "stresses the logic of what he is doing," whereas Q Lear is "faster, more impulsive and arbitrary, less given to thinking about his actions" (312). This argument is all the stronger because Leggatt bases it more on performance potentialities than seemingly arbitrary matters of taste. Moreover, Leggatt's argument is supported

by empirical evidence from the experimental Quarto-based production directed by David Richman. He affirms that Q Lear emerges as a more direct, capricious, but no less coherent or playable King, compared to his F counterpart (376-77). Leggatt is also cautious enough to admit that the so-called patterns of revision are by no means consistent. For example, the Q lines omitted from F 1.4, Lear's "I would learn that, for by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters," (223-25) according to Leggatt counteract "the pattern. . .of an impulsive, passionate, unthinking Lear in Q" (315).

Other critics have gone further, disputing whether there is any discernible, or intentional, pattern by which the textual variants are governed. Robert Clare, for example, in discussing the Folio-based 1990 RSC production directed by Nicholas Hytner, suggests that cuts to F mean that this version of Albany simply disappears rather than accrues any moral ambiguity. Clare asserts that much of the revisionists' case, in particular regarding changes to Kent, Albany, and Edgar (the latter of whom, it is often argued, is foregrounded due to the lessening importance of other characters) is rationalisation rather than perception of an authorial intention (90-91). Richman likewise draws on experience of performance of King Lear to dispute the claims of revisionists with regard to characterisation, suggesting, *pace* Warren, Urkowitz et al, that the functioning of Albany and Edgar "in Q and in our production was close to the relation as it emerges in the traditional conflation" (380f). This suggests that revisionists have overstated the significance of the changes to character relations between Q and F.

Accusations of tendentiousness have been levelled at both sides of the Lear textual debate, often with good reason. Clare provides an interesting case in point, as he highlights Urkowitz's "weighted vocabulary. . .deployed to compensate for a lack of substance in argument," (89) but himself refers to "F's filleted version of 3.6" (91). It is difficult not to feel that Clare has a point however, when one encounters arguments such as Taylor's in 'The War in King Lear'. Indeed, Taylor's discourse often reveals much more about modern reading and critical practices than about the texts of Lear, or Shakespeare's writing

processes. He writes, as do a number of critics, of Folio cuts to the "superfluities" of the Quarto, thus "strengthening the narrative line. . .accelerating. . .clarifying. . ." (28), as if these were objective truths rather than interpretations, thus illustrating Jerome McGann's assertion that textual scholarship inevitably involves interpretation of a text (98). That there is no clear dividing line between scholarship and criticism is evident also in modern versions of Lear, such as Foakes's New Arden edition. For example, the announcement of the arrival of France and Burgundy at 1.1.189 is assigned to Cornwall in this edition. The notes (171) however, admit that this is an interpretation of the texts and with diverse implications, since Q gives the announcement to Gloucester, and F designates it to 'Cor.', that is, either Cornwall or Cordelia. As the footnote reveals, the editor's choice here is interpretive and somewhat arbitrary, whatever justifications are adduced.

The mode of argument presenting subjective interpretation and aesthetic preferences as objective proof is prevalent among revisionists. Urkowitz, for example, prefers the (rarely performed) F version of Kent's speech in 3.1, arguing that Kent's incomplete sentence represents a subtle rejection of him by the Gentleman, in a "dramatic moment. . .not without real theatrical strength" (70). Again, it is difficult not to feel that this assertion is overstated, and shaped, *ex post facto*, in order to support a tenuous line of argument. For a yet more conspicuous example of such rhetoric, John Kerrigan's conclusion to his essay in Division of the Kingdoms is unsurpassed, wherein he maintains that the "excellence of the new material" in F proves that only Shakespeare could have been responsible for the revisions, since "the only writer capable of surpassing Shakespeare at the height of his powers was Shakespeare" (230). Such tautology not only weakens the case for the revisionists, by distracting from many of their more valid arguments, but also suggests that textual scholarship's characterisation of its methodology as objective, even scientific, is an epistemological fraud. Similarly, Urkowitz concludes his book with the assertion that the "dramatic boldness, sensitivity, and power demonstrated by the variants in the Folio," as if these

were *a priori* measurable, "prove" that Shakespeare, and he alone, revised the play (147).

Paul Cantor voices similar objections to some of the assumptions of textual editing, complaining that "scholars talk about the Folio text as more effective in the theatre, as if we had undisputed universal standards of theatricality" (449). What these scholars strenuously avoid admitting is that judgements based on evaluation such as this are mere conjecture; nobody knows for sure why the two texts of Lear differ so, and unless Shakespeare's manuscript makes an appearance nobody ever will. McCleod similarly observes the way in which editorial practices draw on a particular and partial interpretation of the play, even envisioning how it should be staged: "the editor gives evidence that he has his own way of reading, stressing, delimiting the meanings of the text - in short, he has his own mental production of the play, which silently identifies *an* optional reading as *the* reading" (163, original emphasis). This process, illustrated by the examples in Foakes's edition cited above, not only elaborates McCleod's assertion that textual editing commonly comprises "aesthetics. . .irrationally crossed with. . .textual authority" (163), but also demonstrates the importance of perceiving editorial and performance practices as interdependent; the text is important for performance, but the reverse is equally true.

Few critics would wish to dismiss utterly the claims of the revisionists, but neither am I willing to accept every claim made in favour of revision. As Richard Knowles argues, the fundamental uncertainty surrounding the Q and F texts of Lear renders any encompassing metanarrative of revisions ultimately unconvincing: "it is simply impossible to know that Shakespeare made or supervised or even took personal interest in these cuts" ('Two Lears' 60). In order to be clear regarding the competing claims for the texts of Lear it would be helpful to consider further the rhetoric employed in these debates. One typical tactic is to attempt to mislead the reader into believing that an argument has previously been proved. E. A. J. Honigmann, for example, begins an argument "[n]ow that we are aware of the strategies of revision. . .I believe that we have to

take the revisions of Lear. . .very seriously," (8) as if it were a given that the variants between Q and FLear were revisions.

Similarly, there is, as suggested above, the assumption of consistent patterns of revision between Q and F texts. In exploring the cutting of the mock trial from 3.6 and the added lines in Folio 4.6, Roger Warren uses both these rhetorical moves, arguing that others "have demonstrated that the whole trend of Folio revisions is towards streamlining and simplification: to concentrate the presentation of mock justice all in one scene, adding new passages to intensify it, would be in line with the other revisions" (53). Here, then, we have a model of tendentiousness, with the argument assumed to be proved ("have demonstrated"), a pattern to the "revisions" ("whole trend", "in line with"), and also the loaded vocabulary approving of the changes ("streamlining", "simplification", "intensify"). Urkowitz similarly devotes a chapter of his study to variants associated with entrances and exits, arguing that they are governed by a determinable design, and "offer sharply differing plans for performance" (35). This is clearly questionable, however, and does not necessarily reveal an underlying intention, since these aspects of the text are surely those most prone to casual, even careless, variation, according to theatrical and practical contingencies. One has only to consider the number of stage directions which are added in any modern edition of the play (deriving from Rowe, Pope et al), to realise that this is not a sufficiently exact science to justify discussion of significant patterns of revision.

Many of the patterns allegedly found in the textual variants are simply not as consistent as widely claimed. Knowles thus warns against perceiving an underlying logic governing the changes, which he takes rather to be largely "editorial, scribal, or compositorial error, correction, or sophistication," most of which, moreover, have little significance, since they "make no practical difference" ('Revision Awry' 32). As we can see from some of the above, a final typical strategy to strengthen revisionist argument is to overstate the significance of textual variants. Urkowitz, for example, writes of "radical changes in performance" (16) resulting from what are minor textual variants. Similarly,

Michael Payne argues that the few lines "added to Lear's speeches in 1.1, 3.4, and 5.3 profoundly affect his role," (10) an argument I suggest is groundless if discussing Lear as performed, rather than read.

As for those anti-revisionist critics who argue in favour of conflated texts, perhaps their most striking rhetorical position constitutes an appeal to tradition, a fear that modern literary theory and textual criticism are "undermining our cultural heritage" (Cantor 445). Cantor's appeal to Bardolatry uses a vocabulary quite as loaded as that of those he criticises, somewhat hysterically discussing their "tearing King Lear apart, deconstructing it literally to pieces," and their "decomposition of Lear" (446). The rhetoric employed in the above contending arguments is, finally, instructive in adumbrating particular notions of Shakespeare. He is either the universal, transcendent, never-revising genius, as in Heminge and Condell's introduction to the Folio, or the material playwright of New Historicism, constantly revising and reworking. Grace Iopollo epitomises this latter perspective, arguing that Lear "is a fluid theatrical text that Shakespeare could rework, not an enshrined, sacred literary document" (50-51). The conclusion to her essay is instructive in this respect:

> [t]o insist on an author who blotted, revised, and authored his text is to insist on a historically present Shakespeare. To insist on two original texts of an author who revised, rather than a reinvented, conflated text of an editor who revised for him, is to insist on a historically present King Lear. There are two texts of King Lear, each produced by the author, William Shakespeare, not one text imposed by the editorial idea of Shakespeare (54).

Quite apart from the value of her argument, it is worth asking whether Iopollo is not equally a victim to another "idea of Shakespeare", of no more intrinsic merit than that she opposes. What is apparent is that theories of Shakespeare in particular and literary production in general are at stake, hence the vociferousness of the arguments.

II

In order to try to shed some light on the contesting claims of literary scholars regarding Lear, I now turn to an examination of the play in performance. Besides reports of past theatrical productions, I draw on four television and film presentations: Peter Brook's 1970 film starring Paul Scofield, Michael Elliott's 1983 ITV production starring Laurence Olivier, and two BBC productions from 1982 and 1998, directed, respectively, by Jonathan Miller and Richard Eyre, and with Lear played firstly by Michael Hordern and secondly Ian Holm. By comparing a selection of scenes from these productions, I intend to explore the extent of any determining influence exerted by using variants from Q and F.

These four productions create strikingly different effects for the play's opening scene, not only in terms of textual selection, but also in setting. While Miller's production takes place in a more traditional state room, Elliott's opens amongst stone megaliths, recalling Stone Henge and the play's pagan roots, and Eyre's begins in what appears to be a boardroom with stylised red decor. Brook's film, following his 1962 RSC staging, immediately sets out his Kott-influenced absurdist approach, signalled not only by high contrast black-and-white photography and sparse mise-en-scène, but also by his textual choice. He begins 1.1 at line 36, Lear's "Know that we have divided. . .", with a lengthy pause after the first word which, combined with Scofield's sonorous delivery, sounds a nihilistic (if contrived) 'No!' from the film's very beginning.

The question of Edmund's presence during the love auction represents another important variant between these productions. After all, if Edmund remains present during this scene it informs our understanding of his later actions: "Edmund's experience of Lear's mistreatment of his daughters. . .can colour for an interpreter the perception of Edmund's behaviour in the second scene" (Michael Warren 29). Quarto and Folio variants are not relevant here, since Q neglects to give a stage direction following Gloucester's "I shall, my lord" (1.1.34), while F, since it merely inserts '*Exit*' (rather than '*Exeunt*'), probably should not be taken to include Edmund. Of the editions of Lear listed in the bibliography, only Muir's conflation

(which predates the textual controversy) stipulates that Edmund exits with Gloucester, and this without a footnote drawing attention to the relevant editorial decision. Jay Halio's Folio text, and Foakes's New Arden edition, by contrast, indicate that Edmund remains and gloss this issue in a footnote. Of the four productions mentioned above, only the BBC ones make Edmund's presence plain: in Miller's he is clearly present, and remains in the background to begin 1.2, while in Eyre's he is shown at the end of the scene to have been eavesdropping from behind a door. Neither is this the only indication of a sensitivity to modern textual debates demonstrated by Eyre's production, since he chooses a higher number of Q variants (for example, "betwixt" at line 140, "between" at line 171, and "diseases" at 175) than has generally been the fashion in previous productions, certainly those discussed here. Eyre's choices here appear to reflect a growing popularity for some Q readings in recent textual debate.

On the whole, however, the Q/F variants in 1.1 seem to be of distinctly secondary importance compared to other aspects of these productions. Goneril's "not" at 1.1.291 (omitted from F) has been the subject of much literary critical study, yet this is treated in radically different ways by these four productions without significant effect. Miller's production follows the F text in omitting the word, Elliott's retains it, while Eyre and Brook, perhaps judiciously, avoid the need for a choice by omitting the entire speech. Similarly, while Foakes argues that F additions in 1.1 soften Lear, reducing "a little the impression of capricious absolutism suggested by Q" (New Arden 138), Eyre's production, like the others, retains the Folio lines, yet Holm's performance is conspicuously impulsive, autocratic, and quick to anger.

Turning to 3.1, another pivotal scene in the textual controversy, this is again given radically varying treatment by the productions here discussed. This scene, as suggested above, has been the subject of huge textual debate, since the differing versions of Kent's speech are often taken to lay the foundations of two divergent interpretations of pro-Lear forces in the play. While Q's version of this speech is almost universally preferred in production, Richman finding in his that it is

"dramatically stronger than F's, and. . .played to good effect," (380) a number of enthusiastic supporters of the Folio (Urkowitz, for example, as cited above) prefer its reading. Foakes, on the other hand, maintains that the passage was revised in order to delay news of the French landing until later in Act 3: "[i]f the references to a French invasion are left out of 3.1 and 3.3, as in the Folio, the action becomes more coherent" ('French Leave' 221). This is consistent with Foakes subsequent New Arden edition, which inserts some Q lines, after the Folio passage, but omits references to the French landings. As for productions, Miller's is the only one to retain the scene in full, wherein Kent, following theatrical convention, utters the Q version of his speech. Eyre and Brook again cut the scene entirely, while Elliott cuts the scene, but interpolates a few lines (see Halio, Quarto, 3.1.22-26) into 3.3, giving them to Gloucester.[2] For all the importance, then, attached to this scene by literary scholars, it is demonstrably dispensable in performance; none of the success or failure of these productions can be attributed to their handling, or omitting, of this theatrically minor scene.

Another crux of textual debate is the mock trial of 3.6, which is present in Q but excised from F. The cutting of this scene from F has been the subject of much ingenious justification by revisionists. Other critics, however, have observed that this scene in performance is frequently a highlight, and is rarely omitted. Clare notes that "the journey to 4.6 [i.e. Lear's madness] is made possible only by playing the mock trial first," (92) a contention supported by the fact that all four productions discussed here retain the scene, albeit with occasional minor trims. Indeed, Clare tabulates the textual variants in a further seven major stage productions from 1962 (Brook) to 1993 (Noble), and notes that all of them, even Hytner's 1990 RSC production which consciously set out to use the Folio text, retained Q's mock trial (97). Hytner's production certainly provides a striking example, since despite claims of revisionists that F represents a version of Lear shaped by rehearsal and production, Hytner and his company were of one mind when it came to the Q-only mock trial in 3.6: "[d]espite his commitment to F elsewhere, he tested the variants of 3.6 in rehearsal, and agreed that the mock

trial must be included. . .Hytner's rehearsals suggested that, without the trial, 3.6 did seem to lack shape, rhythm, and substance" (Clare 95).[3] If theatrical experience of 1.1 and 3.1 suggested that Q/F variants are not as significant as many literary critics argue, that of 3.6 suggests that neither are they as consistent, since Q-only material seemingly cannot be omitted even from largely Folio-based productions. Since the dramatic appeal of the Folio's trial scene proves so irresistible to theatre directors, this casts further serious doubt upon claims that this latter text of Lear represents a version revised and refined through performance.

The next substantial variant, the omission of 4.3 from the Folio, also receives strikingly different treatment from the productions here discussed. While none of them retain it in full, Eyre cuts the exposition, but includes lines 9-21 and 34-36, the latter a voiceover as Cordelia prays before the start of 4.4. Elliott's production cuts 4.4 too, whilst Brook even goes further than any seventeenth-century editor in excising 4.3-4.5. Similarly, the theatrical convention appears to be to omit this scene; none of the seven productions considered by Clare include it in full, and three cut it entirely. While the effect of omitting this scene is a general speeding up of the action in Act 4 (it could scarcely have the opposite effect), the idea that it is necessarily consistent with other Folio cuts is not borne out in production. Most productions, after all, if they include 3.1 at all, use the text from Q. According to the line of argument proposed by revisionist critics, this should provide incoherent signals when the F text is subsequently followed in leaving out 4.3, since the nature of the invading force is left unclear. In performance, however, other aspects tend to outweigh or overtake these minor textual choices, suggesting again that the revisionist argument overstates the significance of variant readings.

The final scene of the play too, contains what many argue are significant variations between the Quarto and Folio texts, yet while the four productions discussed here deliver highly distinct versions of the climax, this is rarely due to choosing either Q or F readings. Indeed, the text used for this final scene varies

surprisingly little: without perceptible incoherence, all four follow F in assigning line 82, "Let the drum strike and prove my title thine," to Regan rather than Edmund, and Q in giving line 158, "Ask me not what I know," to Goneril rather than Edmund. Similarly, all four cut Edgar's Q-only story of the death of his father (203-20), as well as many of the surrounding lines, as do all productions listed by Clare. Finally (and, given the imperfect nature of the Quarto version, almost inevitably), all four follow the Folio version of Lear's dying speech, and assign the play's final speech to Edgar (F) rather than Albany (Q). Despite these similarities in textual choice all four productions achieve strikingly different effects in the play's finale, from the bleak nihilism of Brook's, to the political and domestic disaster that ends Eyre's. Once more it appears that the effect of Lear in performance is demonstrably more dependent on the personal, and sometimes capricious, interpretations of director and actor, or upon matters such as design and indeed medium, than upon whether Q or F readings are employed.

I believe that discussion of the play in production diminishes the revisionists' case that textual variants are the determining factors in how the play is interpreted. If nowhere else than in 3.1 and 3.6, the examples of texts used in these, and other, productions suggests that the variants between Q and F are further down the list of important factors for directors than many textual scholars would advocate. It is still necessary to ask, however, what the effect of textual choices might be, and why those choices are typically made. The central thesis of Clare's essay is that a conflated text works better on stage than either Q or F, and that "despite F's general superiority, the case against conflation is. . .seriously flawed" (80). The practice, as in theatre generally, is that directors find something that works through rehearsal rather than doctrinally following either Q or F. Even experimental attempts to stage Q (Richman) or F (Hytner) are forced to make some textual compromises. Non-definitive but no less authoritative versions of Lear are the norm, since "conflation is necessary to preserve all that works best on stage" (Foakes, New Arden 132). Richman's experience of directing the Quarto-based production is again instructive here. He concludes that

> numerous passages in the Quarto which we could not bring satisfactorily to the stage suggest how problematic the Quarto is as a basis for performance. But our reactions and those of our audience to so many of the passages included in Q but cut from F suggest that the Folio text is also problematic as the sole basis for production. . .as Granville-Barker suggested. . .for productions of King Lear a good deal of conflation will always be necessary (382).

Theatrical evidence therefore suggests that the definitive text of Lear is as much an illusion as the definitive production. The theatrical Learwill always vary and, as Cantor suggests, whichever text is initially chosen for production, "directors are always going to pick and choose among its passages, thereby bringing out certain aspects of the play and suppressing others" (450). The experience of Richman indicates just how contingent these choices can be: his Quarto-based production gave the final lines, as in F, to Edgar, largely because the "actor playing Edgar gave them a stronger rendering than did the actor playing Albany" (380).

It should be clear by now that the productions discussed above produce new versions of the play, across a wide range of media. Performances typically use an eclectic text of Lear, derived from rehearsal. What they do not do to any conspicuous extent, is follow either the Quarto or so-called patterns of revision in the Folio. Their effectiveness and coherence as productions accrues via a range of other factors (actors' performances, for example) rather than whether they use Q or F. Likewise, their willingness to drop entire scenes of purported significance in terms of revision (3.1 and 4.3, for example), suggests that textual differences are of considerably lesser importance. Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, these productions create and/or follow certain conventions of theatrical editing, which are both independent of Q/F variants and generally unexplored by critics carrying out specifically textual readings. The clearest pattern amongst these productions is not, then, how they follow certain Q or F variants, but how they almost always cut the same passages of exposition from 3.7, 4.7, and 5.1, or, for example, Edgar's lines in colloquial dialect during the fight with Oswald (4.6). Since all these

examples appear in both Quarto and Folio, it would seem that theatrical imperatives are quite at odds with textual critics' priorities and editing practices.

Despite this lengthy exposition of my reservations, I would not want to dismiss out of hand the revisionists' case; it is not improbable that some of the differences between Q and F Lear derive from its original rehearsal and production. And yet this raises another important question: namely, that even if F does represent Q as revised in the light of early rehearsal and performance, then why is it any more significant than all the other (equally contingent) versions of the text created every time the play is performed? As with any other play, Learshifts and changes with each performance; it is never definitive, can never be nailed down. To dispute this is a symptom of literary rather than theatrical experience of the play. The only possible answer, then, to the question posed above is that since certain textual scholars assume that Shakespeare was involved in the 'revisions', the two versions grant us a unique insight into his practices of writing and revision, or as Urkowitz puts it, into "the working methods of Shakespeare's acting company" (14). There is, however, simply no way of knowing whether Shakespeare had any involvement with the changes, and this argument is therefore rendered spurious.

If this is the case, then an examination of the ulterior motives underlying the revisionists' arguments might be in order. One factor, evidently symptomatic of the capitalist economy that markets Shakespeare as a commodity, is the need to justify and sell new editions of the play. This process is conspicuous, for example, in Halio's introduction to his Quarto edition, wherein he argues both that there are significant differences between Q and F (6-7), and that these are unlikely to be attributable simply to cutting for reasons of length (24). Revealingly, Foakes is able to use similar means to justify a quite different, conflated, edition. His introduction to the New Arden edition stresses, for example, that "none of the differences between Q and F radically affects the plot of the play, or its general structure" (118-19). Since no production would sensibly claim to be the definitive Lear, it is surprising that published editions of the play continue to attempt to provide the definitive text. While this may be an interpretation based on

our reading habits and our preference for a trustworthy text, certain editions (such as Michael Warren's four volume Complete Lear, or Halio's New Cambridge edition entitled The First Quarto of King Lear) do present themselves as absolute and authoritative. Again, the imperative to provide a commercially viable product underlies the way in which these texts are presented. Yet even Halio's separate editions of Q and F are versions; that is, they are modernised, not facsimiles, and, moreover, they contain 'corrective' or 'better' readings from other versions. Cantor identifies what I take to be an equally strong ulterior motive, that is the attempt to launch or further academic careers: "[y]oung scholars need to build reputations and what better way to establish one's credentials as an editor than to show that for hundreds of years we have been labouring under false assumptions about the most basic facts concerning the text of King Lear?" (452) A degree of academic games-playing indeed appears particularly seductive to Shakespeare scholars.

The Lear textual controversy also illustrates an outmoded approach to Shakespeare's plays as great works to be read as poetry and studied for their revelations of genius, rather than experienced in the theatre. In other words, the changes between Q and F discussed in this essay are largely insignificant, and have been granted greater importance because we approach Shakespeare's plays as literary texts rather than theatrical scripts. An example might illustrate this point. Regardless of the initial textual variation in her part at 1.1.62 (in Q "What shall Cordelia do?", in F "What shall Cordelia speak?"), Cordelia could be played in a number of ways. It might be less satisfying if she is not played with some consistency, but not to the extent that some critics assert. There are more important factors than textual variations such as this particular one, to which has been devoted so much critical attention, not least the competence of the actor, contributing to her effectiveness on the stage. The choice becomes relevant only as a textual study issue, and has therefore only been elevated as an important issue since Shakespeare was canonised by literary academia and we started studying, rather than seeing performed, Shakespeare's plays. Literary critical focus on the

text is at the expense of analysis of performance. As suggested earlier, the nuanced readings an individual actor or director will inevitably bring to bear on a production of Lear are likely to outweigh textual minutiae. Moreover, this example demonstrates that even interpretations based solely upon textual study remain, in any case, indeterminate. Continuing from Cordelia's choice of first line, Iopollo reads her in the Quarto as "a strong, central figure heading a French army," and in the Folio as "a passive, incidental woman who exercises no real authority" (52). Foakes, by contrast, perceives the variants in F transforming Cordelia from "a saintly figure, emblematic of pity, to a warrior determined to put her father back on the throne" (New Arden 138). That these diametrically opposed, but both plausible, readings of the effects of Q and F variants on Cordelia's character can exist, reinforces my position that textual scholarship is based primarily on interpretation.

If it is indeed misguided to search for a definitive printed edition of Lear, and a sign that we are clinging on to outdated romantic notions of textual authority and the poetic genius author, then it is worth asking what type of edition of King Lear might be most suitable, and for what purpose. Is there any truth, for example, in the widespread contention that the conflated edition of Lear is otiose? Honigmann, for one, argues that such editorial practices do indeed misrepresent Shakespeare, mislead students, and construct "synthetic texts, sanctified by centuries of editorial copying and inertia" (22). Iopollo likewise objects to the conflated edition's betrayal of Shakespeare's intentions, producing "something unShakespearean. . .denying him the authority and creative power that he exerted as a dramatist" (52). While McGann calls into question any notion that authorial intention is either recoverable or desirable, Iopollo is correct in perceiving an inherent measure of inauthenticity in any modernised, conflated edition. Conflation and contingent editing for the stage, however, belie claims that the eclectic text of Lear is necessarily incoherent. Indeed, the experiences of Richman and Hytner, amongst countless others, indicate that some conflation is actually necessary for coherence. Perhaps, after all, Foakes's edition, signalling the

variants where possible and providing extensive discussion of the differences, is the most attractive option for the reader seeking a manageable modern text. Maybe, too, Cantor is correct in asserting that a conflated text such as this is ultimately the only practical method of "fully respecting Shakespeare's achievement in King Lear and learning to explore its depths" (455). I would not want, however, to dismiss the merits of other possibilities, such as facing page Q and F texts (as in the Oxford Complete Works), performance editions based on actual productions (as advanced by Osborne 168), or even Michael Warren's 'box set' Complete King Lear. Maybe the appropriate answer to Lear's peculiar textual problem, at least for the textual scholar rather than the theatre director or general reader, is a McGannian hypertext. At the very least, Lear in performance demonstrates that an over-zealous stress on the differences between the existing versions of the text is both disingenuously motivated and counter productive.

Endnotes

1 Line references are to R. A. Foakes's 1997 *New Arden* edition.

2 I cannot avoid feeling that another reason for excising the scene is that the storm of 3.2 is a more effective dramatic spectacle to return to after the commercial break than this somewhat obscure discussion of the French forces.

3 The only other major departure from F was the retention of Edgar's Q-only soliloquy at the end of 3.6 (99-112). This is surprising since Hytner's was the only production of the seven surveyed by Clare to include this passage in full (Clare 97).

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King Lear. Dir. Jonathan Miller. Perf. Michael Hordern (Lear), John Shrapnel (Kent), Norman Rodway (Gloucester), Michael Kitchen (Edmund), Gillian Burge (Goneril), Penelope Wilton (Regan), Brenda Blethyn (Cordelia), Anton Lesser (Edgar), Frank Middlemass (Fool), John Bird (Albany), Julian Curry (Cornwall), John Grillo (Oswald). BBC TV, 1982.

King Lear. Dir. Michael Elliott. Perf. Laurence Olivier, (Lear), Colin Blakely (Kent), Leo McKern (Gloucester), Robert Lindsay (Edmund), Dorothy Tutin (Goneril), Diana Rigg (Regan), Anna Calder-Marshall (Cordelia), David Threllfall (Edgar), John Hurt (Fool), Robert Lang (Albany), Jeremy Kemp (Cornwall), Geoffrey Bateman (Oswald). ITV, 1983.

King Lear. Dir. Richard Eyre. Perf. Ian Holm (Lear), David Burke (Kent), Timothy West (Gloucester), Finbar Lynch (Edmund), Barbara Flynn (Goneril), Amanda Redman (Regan), Victoria Hamilton (Cordelia), Paul Rhys (Edgar), Michael Bryant (Fool), David Lyon (Albany), Michael Simkins (Cornwall), William Osborne (Oswald). BBC TV, 1998.

First Response

The textual variants between King Lear in Quarto and Folio exert an apparently inexhaustible fascination on commentators because they are so tantalizing. In one sense they bring us much closer to the historical Shakespeare, the man of the theatre, revising, improvising, having second thoughts; yet in another they snatch him away again. We have no way of knowing whether it was Shakespeare who made the changes, whether cuts were meant to stay cut, whether new speeches were additions or alternatives. We are left with confusing traces of an unstable theatrical phenomenon, a set of notes towards representing a particular tragic story on the early modern stage. The merit of this review of the debate on the texts of King Lear and the choices made among them in film and television productions is that it urges on us a becoming modesty in our interpretation of the textual evidence. We can recover no ‘definitive’ text of a play that in any case was never

a definitive play. But there is a further paradox in this that should give us pause. The author expertly exposes the flaws in the arguments of so many critics who make large claims for the significance, especially the performance value, of the so-called ‘revisions’; in so doing, he/she privileges hard evidence over subjective judgement. This is to take textual criticism seriously as a scientific mode of enquiry, while at the same time casting aspersions on it as a bogus operation, trivialising its findings and accusing its exponents of make-work, furthering their own careers and marketing new editions of the play. The interface between scholarship and criticism deserves a more nuanced handling.