

‘Conflation’ in the non-conflated Shakespearian editions

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In recent years, Shakespearian scholars and readers have witnessed a radical change in presenting critical editions of plays such as *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. Thus *The Complete Works* edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor for Oxford University Press in 1986, and the single-volume editions by J. Halio for New Cambridge, present two separate *Lears*, one based on the 1608 quarto text, the other on the First Folio version (without the well-known “mock trial” scene), instead of the traditional edition that brought together both textual authorities in a “conflated” text. Similarly, in the Oxford *Complete Works* and in the Oxford single-volume edition by G. Hibbard (1987) we can see a “non-conflated” *Hamlet* based exclusively on the Folio with passages unique to the 1604 quarto relegated to an appendix (among them the famous soliloquy “How all occasions do inform against me” from Act IV). These shocking editorial actions reflect a debate on the nature, transmission and editing of the early Shakespearian texts that we could briefly label “to conflate or not to conflate” when editing *Hamlet* or *Lear*.

It was Michael Warren who triggered the debate when, in 1978, he raised the old idea that the two early substantive texts of *King Lear* constituted two distinct versions of the play, one of them resulting from a process of authorial revision. Then Stanley Wells (1988) coined the terms “conflationists” for those advocating the traditional conflated editions that amalgamate the originary textual witnesses, and “revisionists” for those defending non-conflated editions that respect the integrity of the discrete textual authorities.

The “conflationist” editors work on the assumption that the early texts are incomplete or imperfect representations of the play, and, even though they use either quarto or Folio witness as copy-text, they add to it those words, lines and passages that are unique to the other collateral authority. The “revisionist” editors argue that these conflated editions misrepresent the nature of the plays by producing a new text that never existed, “a text -Q+F- that is neither Shakespeare’s, nor the King’s Men’s, but a construct of modern conflating editors in the tradition of Alexander Pope and his contemporaries” (Halio, 1992: 289). In my view it is arguable that an editor should distinguish and separate elements that were originally separate, regardless of whether he or she assumes a revisionist interpretation of the textual history.

Given this situation, I have closely examined the six “non-conflated” Shakespearian editions above mentioned in their editorial procedures and treatment of the respective copy-texts, and the ensuing pages will expound the result and reflections derived from my analysis¹.

I have observed that Wells & Taylor, Halio and Hibbard do separate the majority of elements that stand separate in their origin. Some particular lines and words absent in the Folio witness used as

¹ This paper stems from a larger study about ratios of emendation in Shakespearian editions. The present version has profited from the comments of Br. Bernice W. Kliman, to whom I am deeply grateful. The “non-conflated” editions examined are Wells & Taylor (1986), Hibbard (1987) and Halio (1992 and 1994). Although Dr. Peter Blayney edited the 1608 quarto *Lear* in 1979, and Wells & Taylor and Halio refer to it, it is not published yet, and I have not been able to examine it. Dr. Ann Thompson is preparing non-conflated editions of *Hamlet* for The Arden Shakespeare, the Second Quarto in a first volume, and the First Folio and the First Quarto in a second volume of the edition (private communication).

copy-text are rescued from the quarto, and viceversa, on the reasonable assumption that their absence is due to a possible error of omission². But these elements that are kept separate are only passages, fragments of from half a line to 60 lines that possess a certain coherence in themselves, that is, macro-elements that may constitute an alternative in a process of authorial revision, or that may seriously affect the structure and content of an episode, a scene or the whole play. When the analysis descends from the macro-level to the level of lines, we come across a comparatively large number of cases such as the ones exemplified below:

1) Given line TLN 1233 (II.ii.197) in *Hamlet*, the Folio authority used as copy-text presents

“I mean the matter you mean, my Lord”

whereas the quarto text is

“I mean the matter **that** you **read** my Lord”

(with substantive variants in bold-face type). However Wells & Taylor and Hibbard select the quarto reading “read” and preserve the absence of “that”, thus combining both lines into

“I mean the matter you read, my lord”

2) In line TLN 2516 (IV.vi.73) in *Lear*, the quarto witness used as copy-text gives

“the cleerest Gods, who made their Honours”

with the Folio showing two substantive variants in

“the cleerest Gods, who **make them** Honours”

But the “non-conflationist” editor Halio edits the quarto text by selecting “make” from the collateral authority and preserving “their” in his copy-text:

“the clearest gods, who make their honours

Of men’s impossibilities”

There are relatively few examples with lines showing two substantive variants between them. The commonest case of textual variation are the following, with one substantive variant between lines.

3) *Hamlet* TLN 3081 (IV.vii.70)

Folio “And they ran well on Horsebacke “

Quarto “And they **can** well on horsebacke,”

editors using Folio as copy-text: “And they can well on horseback”

4) *Lear* TLN 1008 (II.i.70)

Folio “ (As this I would, though thou didst produce”

Quarto “as this I would, **I**, though thou didst produce”

Folio-based editions: “As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce”

5) *Lear* TLN 117 (I.i.103)

Quarto “The mistresse of *Hecat*, and the might,”

Folio “The miseries of *Heccat* and the **night**: ”

Quarto-based editions: “The mysteries of Hecate and the night” (‘mysteries’ from the Second Folio)

These examples are representative of an editorial procedure that is more or less systematic throughout the text of the editions. In examples 1 and 2 we can clearly see that editors combine collateral lines into a new mixed line. Although examples 3, 4, and 5, only possess 1 variant, we

² For instance, in the Folio-based *Hamlets* we find Second Quarto passages such as TLN 240-1 (I.ii.58-60) and TLN 2690-1 (IV.iii.26-0), or only in Hibbard’s edition, the Second Quarto line TLN 3622 (V.ii.155-6). References are keyed both to the “through line Numbering” used by Hinman (1968: xxiv) and to the traditional Act.scene reference in Evans’ edition (1974).

might also consider that the edited lines are a combination of the selected reading from the collateral witness and the rest of the line from the copy-text.

Now, if what this editorial procedure does is to bring together two lines from quarto and Folio in order to form a single composite line (by adding to one what is unique to the other, or by selecting among collateral variants), and if "to conflate" precisely means "to combine two readings into a composite one" (OED), then I may hypothesize that, on the line level, the "non-conflating" editors of *Hamlet* and *Lear* are "conflating" their texts, that there is some kind of "conflation" inasmuch as editors produce "conflated" lines like the ones exemplified above.

But let's define these words more closely, by examining what kind of conflation it is, and how much there is. First of all I will determine the proportion or degree of this linear or verbal conflation, and secondly its nature.

The degree of conflation may be expressed as the frequency with which "conflated" lines occur in the edition, a frequency worked out on the basis of both the number of variants between witnesses, that is, the text susceptible of conflation, and the number of lines in the witness used as copy-text.

In relation to the Folio-based *Hamlets*, given a choice of 974 substantive variants in the dialogue between the Second Quarto and the First Folio³, Wells & Taylor adopt 326 readings from the Second Quarto, that is, a third of the variants, and Hibbard adopts 309 readings, which amounts to 31.7% of the text susceptible to conflation. In terms of lines, these figures tell us that Wells & Taylor produce 1 "conflated" line every 11.4 lines in the whole Folio text, and that Hibbard produces 1 "conflated" line every 12.1. This is a rather high frequency if we think that when Wells & Taylor or Hibbard produce a conflated line, it is because a particular reading in their copy-text line is unsatisfactory or corrupt, and therefore they emend it by substituting the collateral variant of that particular reading. Thus, 326 substantive "conflations" in the Folio-based *Hamlet* imply 326 emendations derived from Quarto of 326 substantive errors or "corruptions" in the Folio, or what amounts to the same thing, 1 corrupted or emended line every 11.4 lines⁴.

There are lower ratios in *Lear*, where there is a choice of 1115 substantive variants in the dialogue between the First Quarto and the Folio witnesses. From them, the critical editions based on the First Quarto adopt 128 Folio readings (Wells & Taylor) and 147 Folio readings (Halio), that is, between 11.4% and 13.1% of the substantive variants between the witnesses. In terms of lines, these figures may be translated as 1 conflated line every 24.5 and 21.3 lines respectively.

The *Lear* editions based on the Folio text diminish the ratio still further: Wells & Taylor adopt 106 substantive readings from the quarto (9.5%, 1 conflated line every 27.9), and Halio selects 64 substantive variants from the collateral witness (5.7 %, 1 conflated line every 46.3).

Now we can weigh the real measure of this editorial conflation if we compare this situation with other Shakespearian plays in terms of textual corruption. As said before, a "conflation" in a line implies a corruption or an emendation, so that we can compare these frequencies in the "non-conflated" editions with frequencies of corruption or emendation in those Shakespearian plays that could never be conflated because they only possess one textual authority. To obtain the degree of textual corruption or emendation in these single-authority plays I have similarly counted substantive departures from copy-text, but in three contrasted editions: the Oxford Shakespeare edited by Wells

³ For the term "substantive", applied either to variants or emendation in my study, I have basically followed Spevack's criteria in defining a variation as such (1980: vi-xii). However, as my interest is not lexical variation but editorial treatment of readings, I have counted variants that Spevack does not include (e.g. "he / a" variation in the 3rd person singular personal pronoun), and discarded variants the Spevack does count (for instance when a reading which is graphically ambiguous has been interpreted differently by editors: "metal / mettle", "interest / interested"). As Spevack did, I have not taken into account either the wording of neither speech directions or speech prefixes, because the fact that editors treat them more liberally than dialogue posits problems of classification between substantive emendation and simple regularization. Lines of dialogue in the textual witnesses have been counted as if both quarto and folio texts had been printed in Evans' edition (1974). This system secures uniformity of reference by avoiding cases such as the Folio *Hamlet* which, being a shorter version than the Second Quarto *Hamlet*, has some 3800 lines for 3723 lines in the Second Quarto.

⁴ Note that here I have not taken into account modern emendations, i.e., those originated in sources other than the textual authorities of the play under study, nor have I counted emendations or modernizations of punctuation and spelling.

& Taylor (1986), the Riverside Shakespeare edited by G.B. Evans (1974) and D. Bevington's edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (1980). Moreover, the Folio-based editions of *Hamlet* and *Lear* have been compared with those plays that are believed to be set by the same compositors B, E, and I of the First Folio⁵. This could not be applied to the quarto *Lear* because the other Shakespearean text printed by Nicholas Okes, the First Quarto of *Othello* published in 1622 (Greg, 1970: 1535-6), belongs to another multiple-authority play⁶. Therefore I have analysed those Shakespearean quarto-plays whose printer's copy was, according to Wells & Taylor (1987: 145-7), of a nature similar to that of the quarto *Lear*: a rough draft or "foul papers"⁷.

The following table shows the results of this statistical analysis.

RATIOS OF EMENDATION

(frequencies expressed in terms of 1 emended line every *x* lines)

| "NON-CONFLATED" EDITIONS | | SINGLE-AUTHORITY TEXTS | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--|---------|
| emendations* | ratios** | ratios according to Wells, Evans and Bevington ⁸ | |
| F1 <i>HAMLET</i> | | FOLIO PLAYS _____ average | |
| Wells 326 (344) | 11.4 (11.6) | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | (40.1) |
| Hibbard 310 (328) | 11.6 (11.5) | <i>Timon of Athens</i> | (48.1) |
| | | <i>Cymbeline</i> | (53.6) |
| F1 <i>LEAR</i> | | <i>Twelfth Night</i> | (89.6) |
| Wells 106 (137) | 27.9 (21.6) | <i>Henry VIII</i> | (95.5) |
| Halio 64 (84) | 46.3 (35.3) | | |
| Q1 <i>LEAR</i> | | QUARTO PLAYS | |
| Halio 147 (184) | 21.3 (17.5) | <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> | (31.9) |
| Wells 128 (211) | 24.5 (14.8) | <i>A Midsummer Night's</i> | (45.4) |
| | | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> | (56.8) |
| | | <i>Much Ado</i> | (166.1) |

* The first figure indicates the number of substantive emendations from collateral variants. Between brackets, the total number of substantive emendations in copy-text irrespective of their origin.

** In bold-face type, ratios of substantive emendations from collateral witness –figures that also express the proportion of "conflated" lines. Between brackets, ratios of all emendations including

⁵ For compositorial attribution in the First Folio, cf. Wells & Taylor (1987: 152-4): *Hamlet*, compositors B, I and E; *Lear*, B and E; *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*, compositors B and E; *Henry VIII (All Is True)*, B and I; *Twelfth Night*, compositor B.

⁶ For the classification of plays according to their textual authorities, see Greg (1942, footnote on p. ix-x) and Partridge (1964: 166-7). Blayney (1982: 154-87) demonstrates that the First Quarto *Lear* was set by two compositors: Okes' B and C.

⁷ These single-authority texts are the first quartos of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. I have not taken into account *Pericles*, since Wells & Taylor treat the novella *The True Painfull Adventures of Pericles*, published by George Wilkins in 1608, as "a 'substantive' text of *Pericles*" (1987: 557), and "have accordingly made much more editorial use of *P.A.* in ... Wilkins's share of the play (Sc. 1-9)" (1987: 558).

⁸ The average ratio of each play derives from the following figures in Wells, Evans and Bevington respectively. *Antony and Cleopatra* = 35.5, 46.5, 38.2. *Timon* = 32.1, 66, 46.2. *Cymbeline* = 29.1, 73.1, 58.7. *Twelfth Night* = 90.7, 87.6, 90.7. *Henry VIII* = 67.7, 126.3, 92.6. *LLL* = 28.3, 34.3, 33.1. *Midsummer Night's* = 33.1, 56.6, 46.7. *Titus* = 47.7, 67.6, 55.3. *Ado* = 152.9, 161.9, 163.5. These discrepancies remind us, first of all, that textual criticism is a subjective discipline, and secondly, that when a text or a reading is referred to as corrupt or erroneous, it is always a critic or editor's judgment, not a fact.

those from modern editions, that is, ratios that indicate the total degree of textual corruption (according to respective editors). Thus they can be compared to ratios on the right-hand side which also reflect total degrees of corruption.

A comparison of these figures tells us that: 1) In the case of the *Hamlet* editions, where the ratio of emendations in Hibbard's and Wells & Taylor's editions is very high⁹, the Folio witness appears to be extremely corrupted—at least three times the frequency of *Antony*, which is the most corrupted of the Folio-single-authority texts, as agreed by Wells & Taylor (1986), Evans (1974) and Bevington (1980). 2) As for the Quarto *Lear* editions, their rates are also above ratios in Shakespearian quartos presumably printed from "foul papers", and although the difference is not as great as in *Hamlet*, these figures still convert the Quarto *Lear* into a comparatively corrupt text, as is the case with Wells & Taylor's *Lear* edition based on the Folio. And 3), the Folio *Lear* edited by Halio gives a ratio that lies within the margins of frequency of emendation of the Folio-single-authority plays.

It is perfectly reasonable that a number of "conflations" or emendations from the collateral witness are obvious or necessary, that is to say, they correct a manifest or indubitable error; and it is reasonable that other "conflations" may result from editors' choices between variants of more or less equal weight. But the pronounced differences in ratios between most of the so-called "non-conflated" editions and the single-authority texts, require some explanations. So it is time to analyse the nature of these "conflations".

In the case of the *Hamlet* "non-conflated" editions, I have observed that some 42 Folio substantive readings constitute obvious and indubitable errors. But many other readings which are replaced by quarto variants in these modern editions (273 for Hibbard, and 290 for Wells & Taylor) may perfectly stand on their own¹⁰. Their rejection by Hibbard or Wells & Taylor is due to these editors' preference or belief that the quarto variants are more authoritative. However, on semantic grounds, the Folio readings they reject are wholly acceptable. For instance, in TLN 149 (I.ii.150) "The Cooke that is the Trumpet to the day", Hibbard and Wells & Taylor adopt "morn" from Q2 and reject "day" at the end of the line. The First Quarto reads "morning", and the reading "day" appears two lines below ("Awake the God of Day") in the three substantive witnesses of *Hamlet*: two textual reasons for supporting the belief that "morn" is the more authoritative reading, apart from the idea that it is stylistically more attractive.

Hibbard (1987: 124-5) argues that the Folio printer's copy for *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's fair copy, so that the only agents of transmission intervening between the ideal text to be edited and the actual witness would be the compositors and proof-readers of the First Folio: they alone would be responsible for the errors that Hibbard emends. But as we can deduce from the comparative table, the same agents of transmission were not so deficient in printing *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon*, or *Twelfth Night*. As for Wells & Taylor, they argue that the copy behind the Folio *Hamlet* was a scribal transcript of a revised fair copy, so that some readings which they adopt from the Second Quarto (12 instances of expurgated profanity, 29 variants of the 3rd person singular pronoun "a / he", 4 cases of variance "'Tis / It's", and 4 other sophistications) are not attributable to compositors (1987: 399) and therefore were already present in the printer's copy. If we don't count these readings, the resulting ratio of emendation is 13, still far above the ratios of single-authority texts.

This leads us to think that the verbal or linear conflation that I have found in the "non-conflated" *Hamlets* of Wells & Taylor and Hibbard is not only considerable, but unnecessary. Thus, one of the explanations for that pronounced difference of ratios between the Folio *Hamlet* and the single-authority texts may be an excessive and unrequired emendation on the part of these critical editors.

⁹ Note that ratios of emendation or corruption are expressed in inverse proportion. One corrupted or "conflated" line every 10 lines is a higher frequency or degree of corruption than 1 every 50 lines.

¹⁰ These assertions are based on my own examination of Folio readings without comparison with their collateral variants, as well as on confirmation, in most cases, that a particular Folio reading has been adopted by at least a previous editor of *Hamlet*. I have consulted the apparatus of Furness's New Variorum edition (1877), and most of the widely-used critical editions in this century which, for the sake of brevity, I will not list in the bibliography.

As regards the Quarto-based *Lears*, we find similar examples of rejected substantive readings that, in my opinion, are adequate and need not be emended by their Folio variants or by modern conjectures (I have discerned 74 readings that constitute inescapable errors¹¹). Wells & Taylor's edition gives some 79 Quarto readings corrected by Folio that could be defended, and Halio's edition, 97 readings¹². These figures of unrequired "conflations" are not so high as in the Folio *Hamlet*, but they are still considerable. In conjunction with the number of modern emendations that I consider unnecessary, the whole text of the Quarto *Lear* may have a total ratio of 1 error every 42.4 lines instead of 15 or 17 lines as deduced from Wells & Taylor and Halio's edition. If we compare the former proportion with ratios in the table above, the Quarto *Lear* has a degree of corruption that is now comparable to that of other Shakespearian quartos printed from "foul papers". With a ratio of 42.4, the Quarto *Lear* is not an unproblematic play, as *Much Ado* is, but these deficiencies could result from, as the "non-conflationsit" editors explain, "difficult copy combined with inexperience" (Halio, 1994: 7). Under the assumption that the printer's copy was a rough draft, and consequently, a manuscript difficult to read, and that Nicholas Okes's compositors were setting their first playscript, the "non-conflating" editors are incorporating several readings from the Folio witness, that in my opinion are not necessary. Those assumptions may well account for a ratio of 42.2 in the Quarto *Lear*, but not for such a corrupt text as these modern editions would suggest.

As for the Folio-based *Lears*, there are some 48 Quarto substantive variants in Wells & Taylor's edition—48 linear "conflations"—that seem unrequired, since both Halio and Evans preserve the Folio lines in their integrity. Similarly there are 17 Quarto readings in Halio's edition that are not necessary emendations of Folio substantive variants (neither Wells & Taylor nor Evans have adopted them). Together with other unrequired modern emendations, this makes the Folio *Lear* a text with some 60 indubitable substantive errors, with a total ratio of 49.4. This proportion is comparable with that of *Antony and Cleopatra*, a text that also suffered from Compositor E's inexperience. Again, this leads us to think that the "conflation" and emendation that I have observed in Wells & Taylor's edition is excessive.

To conclude this analysis, in the critical editions under study I have observed different degrees of linear "conflations" that can be classified as: 1) an excessive, flagrant and thorough editorial conflationism in Folio-based editions of *Hamlet*, showing a rather high proportion of unrequired adoptions of readings from the Quarto authority into the Folio copy-text; 2) a questionable, if not so blatant, conflation in the *Lears* edited by Wells & Taylor, and the Quarto-based *Lear* edited by Halio; and 3) an acceptable conflation in Halio's edition of Folio *Lear*, resulting from the unavoidable emendation of the copy-text by readings from the collateral authority.

This linear or verbal conflationism is but the result of the editorial principle that has dominated Shakespearian editing under the influence of scholars such as W. W. Greg and F. Bowers, a principle that it is commonly known to be eclectic.

In "On editing Shakespeare", the prolegomena to his famous study *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, Walter Greg explains that, in the case of plays with two or more substantive editions of comparable authority, there are two possible courses for the editor: on the one hand, a conservative attitude in which he follows the readings of his chosen copy-text, except in cases of "errors that are obvious in the text itself without reference to any other" (1942: xxvi-xxvii); on the other hand, an eclectic approach in which the editor weighs "the claims of each variant individually", on the assumption that "now one and now another text may best represent what the author wrote" (1942: xxvii). To W. W. Greg there is no choice for the editor to accept the eclectic principle, if "what the author wrote" is the aim of a critical edition, and this has been the principle advocated by Bowers and practised by the vast majority of Shakespearian editors.

¹¹ Eighty readings if we take uncorrected copies of the First Quarto.

¹² As with *Hamlet*, I derive these conclusions from my examination of readings in the First Quarto *Lear* in their own terms, without systematic reference to the collateral witnesses, and from judgments or adoptions of Quarto readings in Stone (1980), Blayney (1982), Wells & Taylor (1987) and Halio (1994).

Now we can see the close relationship between editorial conflation and editorial eclecticism by simply examining their semantic content. In both terms there is the idea of "combination". Moreover "conflated" and "eclectic" have been used as near synonyms. For instance, when Fredson Bowers (1959: 113) argues against the conservatism of editors that follow McKerrow's view of restricting themselves to a copy-text, he uses the phrase "without eclectic conflation"¹³. Thus, if Wells & Taylor, Hibbard, and J. Halio have produced their editions following an eclectic principle on the level of lines, as can be deduced from their editorial practice, I can with assurance state that they have produced an editorial conflation, a verbal conflation, in an edition which is claimed to be non-conflated. As I have observed, these editors avoid conflating the textual witness only on a macro-level, in terms of passages that, in their opinion, constitute alternative pieces of revision, while on the level of the line they carry on conflating.

This seems contradictory: to claim a "non-conflated" edition, while its eclectic editorial procedures cannot escape conflation, seems to lapse into some inherent inconsistency. This contradictory situation might be defended on the grounds that the claimed "non-conflation" only affects passages, whereas the eclectic conflation is merely verbal, affecting single words, and that they are not comparable terms. But in my opinion it may be questionable to separate these terms in editorial practice.

The vindication of a "non-conflated" edition lies in the fact that it keeps the integrity of separate versions that were originally separate and distinct as a result of revision¹⁴. So it is reasonable to assume that this revision consisted not only in excising or adding passages but also in substituting single words. If an editor who considers himself a revisionist, and therefore "non-conflationist", produces combined or conflated lines by following an eclectic editorial principle, he may not be respecting the whole integrity of the assumed revision. As may be expected, and said before, a number of the variants are not revisions but errors of transmission, and by emending these inescapable errors with a collateral variant, the result is an unavoidable eclectic conflation. But this number of expected errors, judging by the texts of those plays with which an editor cannot be eclectic (plays with a single authority), is not as high as the ones I have observed in five of the six "non-conflated" editions (the exception is Halio's Folio-based *Lear*). Therefore, both by statistical comparison and by observing the superfluity of some emendations, I am led to the conclusion that there is an excessive number of emendations, emendations due to verbal or linear conflations that result from eclectic editing, from editing with reference to the collateral authority.

I do not wish to imply that the "non-conflationist" editors are unaware of this problem. In fact, Wells & Taylor are intent on not combining assumed revised readings from the Folio *Lear* with unrevised readings in the Quarto version¹⁵, and therefore they have "attempted, as far as possible, to emend Q -where emendation seems desirable- as though F did not exist" (1987: 510), that is, they have attempted to adopt a rather conservative stance. However, judging by my previous analysis, their editorial practice has fallen short of their own theoretical expectations. Conservative editing attends to emendations that are necessary, not "desirable", and this nuance in editorial stance may explain the difference in results.

To sum up, this paper intends to call attention to the view that the "non-conflated" editions are only so in terms of passages, that they still possess a verbal conflation on the level of lines, due to an editorial eclecticism which causes their copy-texts to appear to be much more corrupted than other

¹³ When in the preface of their edition of *Hamlet*, Parrot & Craig state that "with one exception [Dover Wilson's edition of *Hamlet* of 1930] all modern texts are a conflation of those presented in the Second Quarto and the First Folio" (1938: vii), they use the term in the sense of an eclectic text that freely selects from both textual authorities without using one of them as copy-text. To Parrot & Craig, conflation is synonymous to eclecticism, although in its pejorative sense.

¹⁴ As Wells & Taylor say in relation to *Lear*: "the entire purpose of editing Q and F separately is to preserve the separate integrity of each" (1987: 510). For contributions supporting the notion of discrete versions and their dramatic integrity, I wish to point out Taylor & Warren (1983) and Werstine (1988).

¹⁵ "... to preserve the integrity of each Q and F ... is not well served by importing revised readings into an unrevised fabric" (1987: 510).

Shakespearian witnesses printed in comparable conditions. If these editors claim to respect the integrity of the early texts by not conflating them, it is reasonable to expect that they respect them at all levels, both on the level of passages and of lines. To produce a fully non-conflated edition, it would hardly be an extreme position to suggest a less free-reined eclecticism in editorial practice – perhaps one closer to McKerrow’s proposals (1939, p.2)– if not a conservative editing of copy-text without systematic reference to the collateral witness. Otherwise, they may be inherently inconsistent, for their eclecticism is still producing conflation in an edition advertised as “non-conflated”.

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