AUTHORIAL REVISION AND AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS: A CASE FOR DISCOURSE STYLISTICS AND THE PIED BULL QUARTO

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> There the matter must rest, while we wait for more positive arguments, if possible, from within the texts.
> (E. A. J. Honigmann, *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text,* p. 10)

King Lear has always been surrounded by textual problems, partly because there are two extant authoritative textual sources for the play, the so-called Pied Bull Quarto of 1608 and the First Folio of 1623.[1] In recent years a controversy has emerged as to whether these two textual sources constitute two distinct versions of the play and whether it was Shakespeare himself who revised the Quarto King Lear in order to produce the Folio version of the play.

This paper is an attempt to summarise the present state of the controversy and to show how a stylistic approach can be useful for textual

[1] There exists a second Quarto, which appeared in 1619, but this 'bad' Quarto basically reprints the 1608 text, though slightly edited, and it is widely regarded as a non-authoritative text. For the purpose of this paper, the existence of the second Quarto (Q2) will be ignored; the Pied Bull Quarto (Q1) will be refer as 'the Quarto' or simply 'Q'.

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criticism, by comparing how the Pied Bull Quarto (Q) and the First Folio (F) render the first encounter of Lear and his jester on stage.

The main editorial problem of King Lear arises from the fact that both the Quarto and the Folio present doubtful readings and symptoms of corruption, so an editor cannot simply choose to follow one text and ignore the other. Q and F differ in several regards. First of all, there are a great number of variants - about 850 occasions on which Q and F do not agree. Sometimes it seems that F merely corrects Q's corrupt readings; at other times F offers an alternative reading when Q's reading makes perfect sense; and in some cases F seems to be corrupt when Q's reading is obviously correct. These variants complicate the editorial task to a considerable degree because it is necessary to distinguish between several kinds of variants: compositorial, editorial and, possibly, authorial. The difficulties encountered by any potential editor of King Lear are perhaps illustrated by one of several variants found in the play's first dialogue between Lear and his Fool. In one of Lear'ss speeches, the Folio preserves the word 'sirrah', which is not present in the Quarto:

> 'And you lye, weele haue you whipt' (sig. D)
>
> 'And you lie sirrah, wee'l haue you whipt' (TLN 694)

One could argue that the word 'sirrah' was simply left out by the careless compositor of Q and that F, in restoring it, simply corrects a mistake introduced by the Quarto text. However, one could equally argue that the introduction of this word in F is an instance of revision: John Kerrigan (1983: 195-245) has shown that revisers were usually concerned with small changes and alterations rather than with the introduction of long stretches of text, as interpolators did. The presence of the word 'sirrah' in F and its absence from Q may be then taken as evidence of Shakespeare's revising pen; but there is no definitive and undeniable proof that the reviser could not have been anyone other than Shakespeare. As a result, we cannot be conclusive about the compositorial, editorial or authorial nature of this variant.

Apart from the existence of these 850 variants, there are several speeches which are assigned to one character in the Quarto and to another character in the Folio, so the editor of *King Lear* also has to meet the challenge of deciding whether this reassignation of speeches is authorial or

not. Finally, a further problem arises from the fact that Q contains about 300 lines which are absent from F, and F contains around a 100 lines which are not present in Q.

These textual problems have attracted the attention of Shakespearean scholars since the beginning of this century. In his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1927), Granville-Barker suggested that the Quarto and Folio versions of *King Lear* could have come from different prompt books and that the F version could perhaps 'represent Shakespeare's own second thoughts' (Quoted by Wells 1983: 3). In 1931, in *The Text of King Lear,* Madeleine Doran ventured that the Quarto probably represents an earlier version of the play which was later revised. Doran's suggestion, however, found little support amongst Shakespearean scholars at that time and for almost fifty years there was practically no research carried out on the possibility that *King Lear* could have been revised. The only exception to this trend was E.A.J. Honigmann who, in *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text* (1965), observed that editors of Shakespeare's plays when confronted with two acceptable readings ought to address the possibility that both readings might be authorial.[1] With regard to *King Lear* in particular, Honigmann showed that the Quarto is sometimes superior to the Folio from a metrical point of view and that some of the Quarto-Folio variants may well 'represent first and second thoughts' (1965: 121).

These scholars excepted, from the beginning of the 18th century until the late 1970s, the assumption underlying editorial practice has been that F and Q represent different states of one single version of *King Lear.* The play had been rendered imperfect and corrupt by textual transmission and therefore the task of *King Lear's* editor was to attempt to reconstruct the *King Lear* which Shakespeare wrote, in order to retrieve the 'lost' *King Lear.*

[1] 'In the eighteenth century it was natural for the editors of Shakespeare to model themselves upon the slightly more experienced editors of the classics, and perhaps this accounts for the now scarcely questioned assumption that where two substantive readings differ one or both must be corrupt. An editorial tradition that disposes so easily of what could well become an embarrassment of riches inevitably recommends itself before the alternative that both readings may be correct, that is, may be the author's,' (E.A.J. Honigmann, 1965: 1).

This assumption partly rests on the belief that the Pied Bull Quarto is a 'bad' Quarto, i.e. a reported text, the result of memorial reconstruction.[1] G.I. Duthie (1961: 131-135) first suggested that Q had perhaps been dictated by the actors when the company was on tour and did not have the prompt book; he later modified his theory, influenced by Alice Walker's research, and supposed that Q had originated in a transcription of foul papers by dictation, in which the persons involved had some memorial knowledge of the play. Both versions of the theory, however, reach the same conclusion: the 1608 Quarto must be considered a non-authoritative text. Most editors of *King Lear* have shared Duthie's view and have consequently followed the text of the Folio for their editions; but they nevertheless incorporate the 300 hundred lines present in the Quarto, which, it is assumed, were left out of the play when the Folio was printed.

The belief that the Pied Bull Quarto is a 'bad' Quarto is partly due to the fact that the 1608 Quarto is very carelessly printed. Q repeatedly prints verse continuously as if it were prose, it also prints prose in chopped up lines as if it were verse, and punctuation and spelling are far from being consistent. However, in recent years, there has been a rehabilitation of the 1608 Quarto, which is now held to be a good, authoritative text. Two things have contributed to this change of opinion in the scholarly community. First, research on the characteristics and production of the printing house in which the Quarto was manufactured has revealed that it was one of the first books to be printed by Nicholas Okes, who at the time was an extremely inexperienced printer.[2] A shortage of certain types in the cases of the printing house could explain some idiosyncracies of the Quarto in matters of punctuation and spelling. The printing house was badly equipped for printing plays: on the one hand, the compositors had to make do with cases which soon ran out of full-stops[3] and this partly explains the erratic style of punctuation; on the other, a shortage of wooden blocks could account for the frequent printing of verse as prose. Second, there is an increasing awareness of the fact that some of the textual problems presented by the Quarto may have originated in the nature of the copy from which the

[1] On the problems arising from dividing Quartos into 'good' and 'bad', see Paul Werstine, 1990: 65-86.

[2] For the Quarto's printing history see Peter W. M. Blaney, 1982. See also a review of this book by Paul Werstine, in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 36, 1985: 120-125.

[3] A play consumes vast quantities of full-stops: at least two are needed for each speech, one after the speech-heading and another one at the end of the speech.

Quarto was set: the printer's copy standing behind the Quarto could have been Shakespeare's own manuscript or a scribal copy of this holograph. This supposition has been reinforced by the fact that close study of the Q text has revealed that corruption does not occur regularly and uniformly throughout the text as would be expected if Q had originated in memorial reconstruction (see Howard-Hill 1985: 165).

This recent rehabilitation of the Quarto has contributed to a reconsideration of the textual problems of *King Lear.* Madeleine Doran's suggestion that the Quarto may represent an early draft of the play has been seriously taken up and examined, giving birth to the theory of the two texts of *King Lear.*

This current of opinion is based on the belief that it is likely that Shakespeare did with *King Lear* what Wordsworth did with *The Prelude.*[1] Shakespeare may have first written the play as it survives in the 1608 Quarto and later he could have revised it, producing the version preserved in the 1623 Folio.

The theory of authorial revision for *King Lear* has become controversial partly because it has not yet been totally and undeniably proved, but also because it undermines the traditional editorial practice on which the *King Lear* we know and are familiar with exists. We are told by the revision theory that the *King Lear* we have read, studied and seen performed was not written by Shakespeare but by his editors.

It is even more difficult to accept the theory of authorial revision if one thinks that *King Lear* (the play that Shakespeare never wrote) has been held to be the greatest tragedy by the greatest post-classical playwright and a monument of Western Civilization. It is hard to accept that there never was a single, unified text of *King Lear* because then the foundations of Western European art are shaken. And yet we have to accept that we do not even have a single, unified title for the play: in the Quarto, the play is entitled *True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear;* in the Folio, the play's title is *The Tragedie of King Lear.*

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[1] For a study of Shakespeare's possible revision of some of his plays in the light of known instances of revision by writers such as Wordsworth, Yeats and Eliot, see Andrew Gurr, 1984.

It is therefore important, in order to approach the revision theory unbiased, to bear in mind that prejudice -and reluctance to find our 'favourite' passages of *King Lear* gone - may influence our critical capacities. If nothing else, the followers of the revision theory deserve credit for unveiling the hidden assumptions on which traditional editorial practice has been based. The editorial practice which revisionists attack is that of producing a composite text by conflating the texts of the Quarto and the Folio.

According to the revisionists, the conflation theory operates under the following assumptions:

> 1. Shakespeare wrote one *King Lear;*
>
> 2. The original *King Lear* which Shakespeare wrote is now lost;
>
> 3. The lines missing in Q or in F offer passages from the original *King Lear* which should have been preserved in both texts;
>
> 4. Differences between Q and F are therefore 'errors of textual transmission' and comparison of variants is necessary to establish what 'corrections' are needed;
>
> 5. Conflation of Q and F is the only way to proceed if we want to retrieve an approximation of what Shakespeare originally wrote.

The theory of authorial revision proposes instead a new set of assumptions:

> 1. Shakespeare wrote two versions of *King Lear;*
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> 2. The original, lost *King Lear* is an archetypal construct, an invention of the last three centuries of Shakespearean scholarship;
>
> 3. The practice of conflation rests on 'bardolatry'; it is based, in the words of the Victorian editor Charles Knight, 'upon the principle that not a line which appears to have been written by Shakespeare ought to be lost';[1]

[1] Charles Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare,* vol. 6, 1843, p. 392. Quoted by Stanley Wells in Taylor & Warren, 1983: 8.

4. Q and F are autonomous texts which should be edited, published, read, interpreted and performed separately;

5. Q offers Shakespeare's first thoughts and a more literary version whereas F offers Shakespeare's second thoughts and probably represents actual theatrical practice.

The theory of authorial revision as explanation for the textual problems of *King Lear* began to gather momentum after a paper delivered by Michael Warren to the International Shakespeare Congress in Washington D.C. in 1976. This paper, entitled 'Quarto and Folio in *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar' (Warren 1978), postulated that a comparison of the differences in the speeches attributed to these two characters in Q and F reveals that a revision has taken place. The role played by Edgar has been magnified in F at the expense of Albany's importance in Q. The cuts in F are regarded as part of a conscious strategy to diminish the stature of Albany in the play.

In this paper, Warren convincingly argues that there never was an original arch-text of *King Lear,* that Q, despite its errors, is an authoritative text, and that F *may* be a revised version of the play (1978: 96-97). Warren's suggestion that F could have been the result of conscious revision triggered a number of studies which aimed to identify strategies of revision. In 1980, a paper by Gary Taylor, 'The war in *King Lear',* identified another strategy of revision in the differences between Q and F: some of the cuts and variants of F aim to tighten the structure of Act IV and are directed to hasten the pace of the action towards the war (Taylor 1980: 28). In the same year, a book by Steven Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of* King Lear, concluded that Shakespeare revised Q to produce a new version, F, which would be more effective on stage (see Urkowitz 1980). Urkowitz identified theatrical economy, practical action and theatrical imagination as the strategies of revision lying behind the new version. According to him, most changes and differences between Q and F originated in Shakespeare's wish to render Q into a better play for the stage.

Still in the same year, 1980, a seminar of the Shakespeare Association discussed the differences between the Quarto and the Folio texts and the essays presented in that seminar have been collected in a volume entitled *The Division of the Kingdoms,* edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, and published in 1983.

Most of the essays in *The Division of the Kingdoms* are dedicated to the study of the Folio text and to the identification of strategies of revision. The contributors to this volume regard most differences between Q and F as part of Shakespeare's strategy of revision in order to diminish the importance of Kent, re-shape the character of Goneril, revise the role of the King and re-cast the Fool from a natural or idiot into a wise, sarcastic jester.

In 1986, the publication of the Oxford Edition of the Complete Works put into practice the assumptions of the authorial revision theory. The editors of the Oxford Shakespeare, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, decided to publish the Quarto and Folio texts of *King Lear* independently, as two separate plays (see Wells *et al.* 1986), giving the authorial revision theory the status of a new orthodox editorial practice.

The response of Shakespearean scholars to the theory of authorial revision has been by no means uniform. Some scholars, notably R.A. Foakes (1985), E.A.J. Honigmann (1984), Mac D. P. Jackson (1983), George Walton Williams (1982) and Paul Werstine (1983) have sided with the revisionists, but a number of discordant voices have criticised the revision theory both for lack of logical reasoning in their interpretative strategies and for inconsistencies in the bibliographical foundations of their affirmations. These scholars include William C. Carroll (1988), Philip Edwards (1982), Richard Knowles (1985), T.H. Howard-Hill (1985), Kenneth Muir (1983), Sidney Thomas (1984) and Marion Trousdale (1986). This list is far from being exhaustive and it is included here to show that there is no agreement amongst scholars on this matter and that the controversy is still open.

Most critics of the revision theory do not altogether deny the possibility that F may be a revised version of Q. Their complaints are mostly directed towards the lack of convincing evidence. The case might still be plausible but it has not yet been sufficiently argued and proved.

However, there are firm grounds for taking the revision theory seriously, since it seems that the differences between Q and F cannot always be attributed to printing house corruption or contamination produced by the process of textual transmission. The revisionists believe that those differences affect the structure of the play, the psychology of several characters and the interpretation of certain passages. In my opinion,

these claims are worth investigating. However, the main problem still lies in the fact that between Warren's paper in 1976 and the publication of *The Division of the Kingdoms* in 1983, what were mere working hypothesis have become established without having been sufficiently proved.

Although we should not reject the idea that Q and F may represent two versions of *King Lear,* I would like to take issue with some of the contributions to *The Division of the Kingdoms* which take for granted that Shakespeare was unquestionably the reviser of *King Lear* and that when the two texts differ, F is always superior to Q. I would like to try to show that sometimes F makes better sense than Q but that at other times Q's reading seems better than F's and that, for the purpose of editing and performing *King Lear,* it might be more fruitful, in some cases, to subordinate the question of authorial revision and authorial intention to the evidence obtained from a close examination of the intention of the text, or rather, the intention of the texts.

If we now turn to the first dialogue between Lear and his fool, we can see that, apart from the existence of a handful of variants, the Quarto and Folio texts differ mainly on three occasions:

> i) when the Quarto reads '*Kent.* Why Foole?' (sig. $C^4{}_v$) the Folio changes the line to 'Why my boy?' (TLN 628) and attributes it to Lear;
>
> ii) another speech, 'This is nothing foole' (sig. $C^4{}_v$; TLN 658) is attributed to Lear in Q and to Kent in F;
>
> iii) and perhaps the greatest difference concerns the cut in F of 12 lines which are present in Q.

Two of the contributors to *The Division of the Kingdoms,* John Kerrigan (1983: 195-245) and Gary Taylor (1983: 75-119) have seen in the Folio cut and the reattribution of the two speeches irrefutable evidence of Shakespeare's revising pen.

Gary Taylor has suggested that the omission of those 12 lines by the Folio may have had its origin in censorship. The lines would have been censored in 1605 or 1606 when the prompt-book of the original performance was submitted to the Master of Revels, but since the Quarto

was probably set from Shakespeare's 'foul papers', the censored lines were printed in Q (Taylor 1983: 105-106). However, Howard-Hill (1985: 168) has argued that it is very unlikely that the cut originated in censorhip because if the lines excised in F were found to be offensive around 1605, they would have been found equally offensive in 1608 when the Quarto was licenced for publication, because the censor in both cases would have been the same person, Sir George Buc.

Taylor explains the excision of those lines in the Folio by arguing that although the cut may have originated in censorship: 'Shakespeare may not have resisted the change too vehemently; in fact, once it was suggested he may have welcomed the deletion' (1983: 108). The problem here is that one can always argue for or against a Shakespearean interpolation on the grounds of imagery, vocabulary, syntax, etc., but it's almost impossible, it seems to me, to argue for or against a Shakespearean excision, because how can we possibly identify a truly Shakespearean cut? Interpolators may leave trace of their linguistic and stylistic preferences but unfortunately excisors do not, so the cut in F could have been performed by someone other than Shakespeare (see Knowles 1981: 197 and Werstine 1988: 2).

Gary Taylor bases his argument in favour of Shakespeare's responsibility for this cut on a fallacious, untenable conclusion: since any other explanation one can think of is highly implausible (compositor's omission or editor's interference) the only explanation left (that the cut was consciously performed by Shakespeare) is bound to be correct (1983: 106-107). The reattribution of speeches in F has been considered by John Kerrigan (1983) as an indication of authorial revision. According to Kerrigan, Shakespeare re-structured this dialogue between Lear and his Fool partly by cutting out some lines and partly by giving Lear one of Kent's lines and giving Kent one of Lear's. Kerrigan thinks that by giving Lear the line 'Why Foole?' (TLN 628) Shakespeare improved the whole dialogue because the king and his jester talk to each other without being interrupted for 32 lines. Shakespeare also improved this dialogue, according to Kerrigan, by giving the line 'This is nothing foole' (TLN 658) to Kent, because as a result of this the dialogue becomes less monotonous (1983: 218-219). So Kerrigan concludes, the Folio version of this dialogue is superior to the Quarto version.

In my opinion, Kerrigan is mistaken in attributing superior literary merit to F and in identifying these changes as evidence of authorial

revision. Kerrigan does not discuss at all whether these changes could be the result of printing house corruption or theatrical abridgement. It seems to me that Kerrigan and Taylor have reached their conclusions before they have set down their premises. Since they are trying to prove that Shakespeare was the reviser of *King Lear,* they feel they have to prove that the Folio is always superior to the Quarto in every possible instance, every reading or passage in which the two texts differ, even at the cost of ignoring evidence which emanates from the texts themselves.

Trying to escape from the kind of bardolatry on which the conflation theory rests (that every line supposed to have been written by Shakespeare must be preserved and venerated when editing *King Lear,* Taylor and Kerrigan have been prey to another kind of bardolatry: if Shakespeare was the reviser of *King Lear,* the revised version must necessarily be far better than the previous one, since Shakespeare's genius could only exceed itself (Kerrigan 1983: 230).

I would like to show now that if we put aside any considerations of the *intentio autoris* and instead attend to the *intentio operis* or intention of the text, we cannot sustain that whenever Folio and Quarto King Lear disagree, the Folio version is always better than its Quarto counterpart. In fact, we might find that the opposite is sometimes the case. In particular, with regard to the first dialogue between Lear and the Fool, one can argue that the Folio impairs rather than improves the Quarto version, partly because when the Folio attributes Kent's line to Lear, the dialogue does not make sense, but also because, by excising the 12 lines preserved in the Quarto, the Folio text deprives the scene of its climax.

If we look at the reattributed speeches in their context, we can determine, I think, who could and who could not speak each line by the position which those lines occupy in the chain of discourse:

Pied Bull Quarto (1608)

Foole. Let me hire him too, heer's my coxcombe.

Lear. How now my prety knaue, how do'st thou?

Foole. Sirra, you were best take my coxcombe.

Kent. Why Foole?

Foole. Why for taking on's part, that's out of fauour, nay and thou can'st not smile as the wind sits, thou't catch cold shortly, there take my coxcombe; why this fellow hath banisht two on's daughters, and done the third a blessing against his will, if thou follow him, thou must needs weare my coxcombe, how now nuncle, would I had two coxcombes, and two daughters.

Lear. Why my boy?

Foole. If I gaue them any liuing, id'e keepe my coxcombs my selfe, ther's mine, beg another of thy daughters.

(sig. C4v)

First Folio (1623)

Foole. Let me hire him too, here's my Coxcombe.

Lear. How now my pretty knaue, how dost thou?

Foole. Sirrah, you were best take my Coxcombe.

Lear. Why my Boy?

Foole. Why? for taking ones part that's out of fauour, nay, & thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch colde shortly, there take my Coxcombe; why this fellow ha's banish'd two on's Daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will, if thou follow him, thou must needs weare my Coxcombe, How now Nunckle? would I had two Coxcombes, and two Daughters.

Lear. Why my Boy?

Foole. If I gaue them all my liuing, I'ld keepe my Coxcombes my selfe, there's mine, beg another of thy Daughters.

(TLN 625-639)

If we take into account what comes before and after the reattributed speeches and study the way in which the taking of conversational turns is

managed, we can see that the attribution of Kent's line to Lear in the Folio text stands at odds with its surrounding dialogic context. The Fool has just addressed Kent ('Sirra, you were best take my coxcombe'), so it is reasonable to expect that it will be Kent who replies to the Fool, not Lear. It is possible to tell that the Fool is addressing Kent and not Lear because of the conversational function of the utterance in the context: the Fool's offer disguises an indirect speech act whose illocutionary force ('you are a fool and therefore you need a coxcombe, a fool's hat') is superimposed on its perlocutionary force ('take my fool's cap'). The Fool, in perfect harmony with a long tradition of court jesters, is mocking Lear's hiring of Kent as a servant: the Fool pretends that he wants to employ Kent as his own fool.

Also, the fact that the Fool uses the pronoun of address 'you' indicates that he is addressing Kent and not Lear: the Fool hardly ever addresses Lear with 'you'; he usually prefers the endearing, familiar 'thou'.

It is also quite clear that the Fool's reply to Kent's 'Why Foole?' is addressed to Kent and not to Lear because in his reply the Fool refers to Lear with a third person term of reference, as if the king were not present: 'this fellow has banished two of his daughters ...'

But what finally settles the matter is the Fool's greeting to Lear. After replying to Kent, the Fool turns round to address Lear with 'How now Nunckle?'. This is the Elizabethan equivalent of 'Hello, how are you?'. Lear himself uses it at the beginning of this scene: 'How now, my prety knaue'. Greetings always occur at the beginning of conversations: one never says 'Hi' or 'Hello' after talking to somebody for a while.

By contrast, what we have in the Folio is the Fool addressing Kent, Lear replying to the Fool in place of Kent, the Fool answering Lear's question but addressing it to Kent and then greeting Lear as if the king had just turned up on stage. It does not make good conversational sense. It is not too far fetched to suggest, I think, that the Folio compositor may have made a mistake here and instead of setting Kent's line 'Why Foole?', he simply set Lear's 'Why my boy?' twice.

Kerrigan claims that Shakespeare revised this dialogue to make it less monotonous, but to me, the 'revised' version sounds even more monotonous than the original because Lear has to deliver the same line twice - and in two conversational turns which are almost consecutive.

The second controversial speech, the one which the Quarto attributes to Lear and the Folio attributes to Kent ('This is nothing foole', sig. $C^4{}_v$; TLN 658), is also regarded by Kerrigan as an instance of authorial revision and as compensation for a line which Kent had in the excised passage and which he loses in the Folio. However, it is also possible, if not likely, that the reattribution of this speech may have originated in a compositor's mistake. Lear usually addresses his jester with affectionate terms of address such as 'boy', 'lad', or 'pretty knaue', and if he is annoyed, he calls him 'sirrah'. Not once throughout the whole play, does Lear address his jester as 'foole'. Kent, instead, consistently uses the vocative 'foole' to address the jester.

What may have happened here is that the Quarto compositor, after setting for a while *Lear* and *Foole* as alternative speech headings, continued to do so and failed to notice that this line was to be spoken by Kent. The Folio would simply correct a Quarto mistake here and there would have been no authorial reattribution of this speech.

The Folio supression of the 12 lines preserved in the Quarto has been used by Gary Taylor to argue that the Folio surpasses the Quarto in literary merit. According to Taylor, the omission of those 12 lines improves the dialogue by producing a jump from sweet and bitter fools to eggs and crowns. In my opinion, the only thing the Folio achieves by supressing these lines is to deprive the audience of a punch-line:

Pied Bull Quarto (1608)

Foole. Doo'st know the difference my boy, betweene a bitter foole, and a sweete foole.

Lear. No lad, teach mee.

Foole. That Lord that counsail'd thee to giue away thy land,
Come place him heere by mee, doe thou for him stand,
The sweet and bitter foole will presently appeare,
The one in motley here, the other found out there.

Lear. Do'st thou call mee foole boy?

Foole. All thy other Titles thou hast giuen away, that thou wast borne with.

Kent. This is not altogether foole my Lord.

Foole. No faith, Lords and great men will not let me, if I had a monopolie out, they would haue part an't, and Ladies too, they will not let me haue all the foole to my selfe, they'l be snatching; giue me an egge Nuncle, and ile giue thee two crownes.

(sig. $C^{4}{}_{V}$-D)

First Folio (1623)

Foole. Do'st thou know the difference my Boy, betweene a bitter Foole, and a sweet one.

Lear. No lad, teach me.

Foole. Nunckle, giue me an egge, and Ile giue thee two Crownes.

(TLN 667-671)

Throughout the dialogue, the Fool is repeatedly using the same kind of joke, a Question-Answer joke: 'would I had two Coxcombes, and two Daughters' (TLN 634-5), 'can you make no vse of nothing, Nuncle?' (TLN 660-1), 'Do'st thou know the difference my Boy, betweene a bitter Foole, and a sweet one' (TLN 667-8) or 'Nunckle, giue me an egge, and Ile giue thee two Crownes' (TLN 670-1) are all first parts or questions of some of the Fool's jokes. The humour of Question-Answer jokes rests, as Walter Nash (1985: 9-12;49-50) has pointed out, on the interplay of two compulsory elements. The first of these is the *signal,* a word, phrase or clause which indicates the intention to joke and is generally present in the Question. The other element is the *locus,* the word, phrase or clause which triggers the humour, usually present in the Answer.

By supressing those 12 lines preserved in the Quarto, the Folio does little more than present us with a *signal* ('Do'st thou know the difference...') only to deprive us of the corresponding *locus,* leaving the

joke unfinished. We are asked to guess what is the difference between a sweet and a bitter fool and we never get to the punch-line because someone has crossed out the answer to the riddle.

There is yet another reason why I think that the Folio not only does not improve but impairs the Quarto. The Folio supresses two crucial lines, crucial for this dialogue and for the play as a whole. When Lear asks the Fool in the Quarto 'Do'st thou call mee foole boy?' and the Fool replies 'All thy other titles thou hast giuen away, that thou wast borne with', we finally reach the climax of this fool-master duologue. With his jokes, the Fool has been trying to tell Lear that he has been a fool for giving away his kingdoms and it is precisely in these two lines, excised from the Folio text, that the Fool finally makes his point.

Audiences do not fail to notice the dramatic importance of the excised lines. In a paper entitled, 'The *King Lear* Quarto in rehersal and performance', David Richman refers to the ins and outs of a production of *King Lear* which took place at the Drama Center of the University of Rochester. This performance was based on the Quarto text and kept the lines omitted in the Folio. Richman (1980: 381) comments:

> In our performance this was one of the Fool's most successful sequences. "All thy other titles thou hast giuen away, that thou wast born with" elicited a strong reaction from the audience throughout the run. Every night the spectators laughed and gasped, fully understanding the comedy and growing pain of Lear's situation.

With this analysis of the first fool-master duologue in *King Lear,* I have tried to show that a combination of stylistics and discourse analysis can be of use for textual criticism because it encourages us to look at the differences between Quarto and Folio not as isolated variants but as elements operating in a text. By comparing the variants in each text, not in themselves but in relation to their function in a stretch of discourse, it is possible to obtain evidence which emanates directly from the text of the play. And since we cannot unfortunately ask Shakespeare whether he revised *King Lear* or not, there is little we can do besides trusting the two extant authoritative texts of the play.

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