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Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

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A Feast of Strange Opinions: Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes on the English Renaissance Stage

Edited by Marco Duranti
and Emanuel Stelzer

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CEMP - Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

The series of CEMP volumes offers studies and fully annotated scholarly editions related to the CEMP open-access digital archive. This archive includes texts pertaining to the genres of the paradox, of the paradoxical fiction, and of the problem, which were published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and which are currently unavailable online and/or not open access (https://dh.dlls.univr.it/bib-arc/cemp). Our digital archive features diplomatic, semidiplomatic, and modernised editions of selected works, furnished with critical apparatuses and editorial notes, alongside related documentary materials, which, in turn, are relevant to poetic and dramatic texts of the English Renaissance. These texts provide fundamental testimony of the early modern episteme, functioning as a hinge joining widespread forms of the paradoxical discourse in different genres and texts and within the development of sceptical thinking.

The project is part of the Skenè Centre as well as of the Project of Excellence Digital humanities applied to foreign languages and literatures (2018-2022) Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona (https://dh.dlls.univr.it/en/).

Contents

Contributors 13

Marco Duranti and Emanuel Stelzer
Introduction 19

1. Ancient Paradoxical Culture and Drama

1. Alessandro Stavru
The Paradox of 'Making the Weaker Speech the Stronger':
on Aristophanes' *Clouds*, 889-1114 33

2. Robert Wardy
Paradoxical Agathon and His Brethren 55

2. Paradoxes in/of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama

3. Beatrice Righetti
The Incidence of the Speakers' Gender on Paradoxes in
Shakespeare's Comedies 79

4. Rocco Coronato
The Backstage. Honesty as Paradox in *Othello* 107

5. Bryan Crockett
Paradox in Performance 131

6. Andrew Hadfield
The Digges' Family and the Art of War 143

7. Francesco Dall'Olio
"Indiscreet chroniclers and witty play-makers":
William Cornwallis and the Fiction of Richard III 159

3. Paradoxes in Drama and the Digital

8. Gloria Mugelli and Federico Boschetti
Searching for Ritual Paradoxes in Annotated Ancient
Greek Tragedies 205

9. Alessandra Squeo
"It Is a Happiness to Be in Debt": Digital Approaches to the Culture of Paradox in Early Modern Drama 231

10. Michael R. Best
"Do you see this?" Ambiguity and Paradox in *King Lear* 259

Index 279

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10

"Do you see this?". Ambiguity and Paradox in *King Lear*

Michael R. Best

Abstract

The conventions of print are so familiar that they are effectively invisible. Digital media, however, are still evolving as the screen makes available an interface capable of a wide range of visual presentation and interaction. In this paper I explore some possibilities for enhancing a reader's awareness of nuances of variation, poetic rhythm, and meaning in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, illustrating some experiments in making apparent some of the richness that this complex text yields. Because it was originally published in two widely variant versions, an editor preparing the play for print is confronted with the necessity of making choices, often between two readings that make sense, but which may modify a reader's understanding of the action or sense of character. Print editions record variants in collations separate from the text; the web can display them with a simple mouse-hover. Differences in the lineation of blank verse are especially difficult to collate in print, though the resulting changes of emphasis will be of interest both to critics and actors: a web page can relineate with a click. The climax of the play, where Lear dies holding his dead daughter in his arms, is paradoxically different in the two versions; one is pessimistic, the other deeply ambiguous, as Lear dies believing Cordelia is alive. On the web, a dynamic representation of the passages can make both alternative endings fluently available, visibly dramatising the questions arising from the two endings and the evolution of the play in the fifteen years between the two early editions. Print is fixed and authoritative; the digital page can be dynamic, revealing more levels of meaning at the choice of the reader.

Keywords: *King Lear*; digital; interface; variants; blank verse; editions

This essay embodies a paradox. It is a print version of a visual demonstration in which I argued that in the digital age scholars have an opportunity to go beyond print and to exploit the still-new medium in ways that can vitally enhance the presentation of

the information they seek to impart. My example is Shakespeare's textually challenging play, *King Lear*, but it is my belief that other texts and other scholarly pursuits would benefit from a revaluation of our means of communicating to our audiences.

At the climax of *King Lear*, as his inert daughter lies in his arms, the King asks those around him, "Do you see this?". What it is he sees, or thinks he sees, is the subject of a great deal of critical energy, and a topic I shall return to later. I want to begin by asking the question a little differently. What do we, as readers or as members of an audience, see when we experience Shakespeare's *King Lear*? If it is a performance or film, we will be immersed in visual and aural media, and we may particularly remember moments that strike us as illuminating the text – or irritating in what we think to be mistaken or exaggerated. When we read the play, as distinct from watching it, are we at all aware of what we see?

The physical, printed page is the traditional interface between editors and their readers. Print conventions vary only minimally from text to text, and those who design the material appearance of the page have few options: paragraphs may be indicated by white space or indentation, there may or may not be a running title at the top of the page, the position of page numbers can vary, and there is a range of type-faces to choose from. Perhaps the choice that most clearly impacts readers is the location of footnotes, at the bottom of the page, at the end of each chapter or essay, or at the end of the volume; this decision, however, is more likely to be made for economic reasons than as the result of considering the nature of the content or the comfort of the reader.

A web page is far less fixed in concept or design. In addition, whatever the design, its appearance to the viewer will vary significantly according to the screen it is displayed upon, which may be a large desk monitor, a tablet, or a smart phone; thus there is of necessity much more variety and flexibility in its interface. I am very much aware that there is a long and admirable tradition in academic scholarship to focus on the importance of the content itself rather than the presentation of that content, but I argue that the visual presentation of at least some complex texts in digital media provides scholars with the opportunity to communicate a richer awareness of nuance in the works they edit and read.

1. Line Breaks in Verse

I would like to start with a seemingly trivial matter that arises in the editing of blank verse drama – the decisions the editor needs to make from time to time concerning the appropriate point for line breaks in cases where printing practices were inconsistent or unstable. Line breaks are a powerful and very visible form of punctuation: the core of verse drama is the rhythm signaled by a new line, directing both actors and readers to the words, phrases, and images that are especially significant. The problem is that lines were routinely changed or modified in the process of printing, for example where the copy had been cast off inaccurately, forcing the compositor either to fill a page by creating extra lines, or conversely to switch from verse to prose to cram in more content. One of the tasks of the editor thus becomes the process of making choices in attempting to reverse the compositors' assumed modifications.

King Lear presents a challenge of recording changes in lineation in an unusually extreme form. First published as a Quarto in 1608 as *The History of King Lear*, the later version in the First Folio, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, differs significantly in its printing of verse. Q1 *King Lear* is a difficult and puzzling publication. It remains so even after decades of intensive research, from Doran (1931), Greg (1940), and Stone (1980), to the meticulous scholarship of Peter W. M. Blayney (1982). Originally rejected as a 'bad' quarto, more recent scholarship has accepted that it was probably printed from an early draft of the play, possibly in Shakespeare's own hand (Halio 1994, 4-7; Wells 1986, 510; Weis 1993, 3; Foakes 1997, 199-21; Wells 2000, 3; Jowett 2016, 1244-5). Blayney discovered a great deal about the process involved in printing the Quarto and about the practices of the printer responsible for it, Nicholas Okes. The manuscript was sufficiently difficult to read that the compositors set it *seriatim* – page by page – instead of by the more efficient method of "casting off" – a process of estimating where pages would be completed so that they could be set in the order of printing rather than the order of reading. In addition, Blayney has established the fact that *Lear* was the first play Okes printed, with the result that his compositors were inexperienced in reading the characteristics of play manuscripts; this may well account for the fact that substantial

sections of the play were printed as prose, where the language is clearly verse — a format the Folio duly records. The manuscript the compositors were working from was clearly difficult and puzzling: a collation of the twelve extant copies shows that there were an unusual number of "stop press" changes made as it was being printed (see Greg 1940, Blayney 1982, Warren 1989).

Another unusual feature of the Quarto is illustrated in this passage. It begins with verse that is generally similar to the Folio, though it omits one Folio line, here recorded in square brackets. King Lear has stormed away from his elder daughter, Goneril, and is seeking entrance to speak with the husband of his younger daughter, with whom he intends to stay; his first request has been denied:

> LEAR The King would speak with *Cornewal*, the deare father
> Would with his daughter speake, commands her seruice,
> [F: Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood:]
> Fierie Duke, tell the hot Duke that Lear,
> No but not yet may be he is not well.

The compositor then switches to a kind of 'fake' verse, with irregular, hypermetrical lines, each dutifully beginning with a capital letter.

> Infirmitie doth still neglect all office, where to our health
> Is boũd, we are not our selues, when nature being oprest
> Cõmand the mind to suffer with the bodie, ile forbeare,
> And am fallen out with my more hedier will,
> To take the indispos'd and sickly fit, for the sound man,
> Death on my state, wherfore should he sit here?
> (2.2.300-7, TLN 1376-89)

While these variations in lineation are largely of bibliographical rather than critical interest, there are some passages where both texts record blank verse, but the line breaks vary. Variations of this kind shift poetic emphasis, and thus meaning, and will be of interest to both actors and critics. While the Folio is far more carefully printed, it is clear that it was subjected to modification and revision in the theatre, and even in the process of printing. Paul Werstine has convincingly implicated compositorial intervention

in modifying lineation from the copy used for the Folio (1984, 111); thus, while the Quarto compositors were clearly prone to error, the Folio lineation may itself be sophisticated. In the following example Kent protests against Lear's decision to banish Cordelia; in anger, Lear warns Kent not to intervene: "The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft" (1.1.143). Kent replies:

Quarto

Let it fall rather,
Though the fork invade the region of my heart.
Be Kent unmannerly when Lear is mad.
What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty
Shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows?
To plainness honor's bound when majesty falls to folly.
Reverse thy doom, and in thy best consideration
Check this hideous rashness.

Folio

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound
When majesty falls to folly. *Reserve thy state*,
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness.
(1.1.145-51, emphasis added)

In the Quarto the lines tend to end with strong pauses, though there is one hypermetrical line ("To plainness . . ."). The Folio differs consistently, as line breaks occur more in the middle of longer phrases, a difference that has the effect of driving the passage forward rhythmically, perhaps conveying a stronger passion. The Folio also changes one phrase of significant semantic interest (italicised). Quarto Kent asks Lear to change his mind about his personal choice to banish Cordelia ("Reverse thy doom"), while Folio Kent urges Lear to make the political decision to retain his status as king. Changes of this kind are awkward to include in normal collations so that an attentive reader can see the alternative modes of expression, or the extent of editorial intervention. If they are recorded at all they tend to be relegated to an appendix: Foakes's Arden edition devotes fourteen pages to a list of modifications of

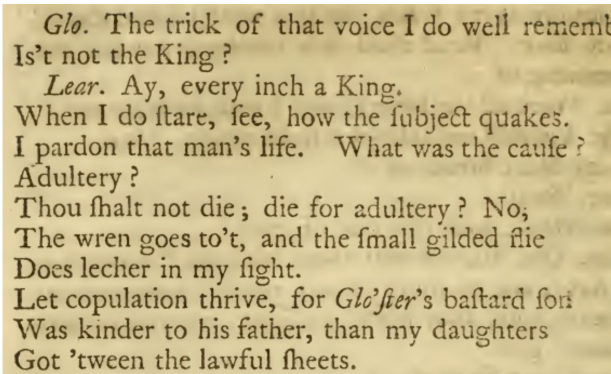
lineation, and Stanley Wells's edition of the Quarto for Oxford includes a similar number. Meticulous though these records are, it is doubtful whether readers, perhaps other than fellow editors, pay any attention to them.

Differences of lineation are particularly interesting where editors have chosen to modify the originals in passages of intense emotion. In his dramatization of mental instability, Shakespeare's characters express emotion, thoughts, and judgements that would otherwise be repressed. In general, however, they express their often disjointed thoughts in prose rather than verse. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia, when she is not singing snatches from old songs, expresses her disjointed thoughts in prose (4.5.21-72), and Hamlet himself provides an especially well-known example as he uses the cloak of madness, real or assumed, unkindly to tease Polonius about his age (2.2.196-202). Polonius's rather generous and perceptive response, in a well-known phrase, is to observe the paradox that "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (2.2.203-4), and he is generous as he acknowledges that Hamlet's disturbed mental state paradoxically allows him to speak in ways that "reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of" (2.2.208-9).

In *King Lear*, when Edgar takes the part of a mentally disturbed beggar, Poor Tom, as his disguise, he combines snatches of song with long prose passages of invented irrationality. His constructed world is peopled by demons who torment him, identified by colourful names Shakespeare garnered from Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603). When Lear asks of him "What hast thou been?" (3.4.83), Edgar recites the details of a past, real or imagined, that was peppered with vice: "Wine loved I dearly, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the Turk" (3.4.91-2). As if taking Poor Tom as his model, at this point in the play Lear's speeches switch from verse to prose, signalling that his mind has become disoriented; as Polonius observed of Hamlet, Lear's mental breakdown paradoxically brings a depth of insight beyond that which is possible when language is constrained by social norms. Like Hamlet and Ophelia, Lear, in both Quarto and Folio texts, initially records his passion in prose despite the intense power of his language.

The most interesting, and most radical, editorial intervention

in lineating speeches in *King Lear* is to be found in Lear's so-called 'mad' speeches where he meets Gloucester and his disguised son Edgar. Perhaps taking his cue from the fact that the Folio switches briefly from prose to verse at the line where Lear claims to be "every inch a king" (4.5.110), Samuel Johnson, in his edition of 1765, changed the verse lineation from that of the Folio, and also decided to convert a later, intensely felt section of prose to somewhat irregular blank verse. In the process, the decisions he made about line breaks in both sections inevitably communicated critical judgements about the passages. This extract begins with blind Gloucester's recognition of the King's voice, while Lear obsessively returns to what he sees as the cause of his fall in fortunes. Johnson follows the Folio for the first three lines, but then chooses to leave one line as a single word, just three syllables, thus giving it immensely strong emphasis: "Adultery?" (4.5.113; fig. 1).



Glo. The trick of that voice I do well rememb
Is't not the King?
Lear. Ay, every inch a King.
When I do ſtare, ſee, how the ſubject quakes.
I pardon that man's life. What was the cauſe?
Adultery?
Thou ſhalt not die; die for adultery? No;
The wren goes to't, and the ſmall gilded flie
Does lecher in my ſight.
Let copulation thrive, for *Glo'ſter*'s baſtard son
Was kinder to his father, than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful ſheets.

Fig. 1: New York Public Library. Public domain. Image from the Hathi Trust Digital Library.

Two lines later Jonson creates another short line, this time emphasizing lechery. As a poet himself, Johnson was keenly aware of the importance of rhythm; his choices have the effect of focusing Lear's – and the reader's – thoughts powerfully on the supposed adultery of his absent and seemingly long-dead wife. This indirect and glancing reference to Lear's queen is anticipated earlier when Lear scolds his daughter Regan for not welcoming him more positively after he has stormed out of Goneril's castle:

> If thou shouldst not be glad,
> I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
> Sepulchring an adultress.
> (2.2.324-6)

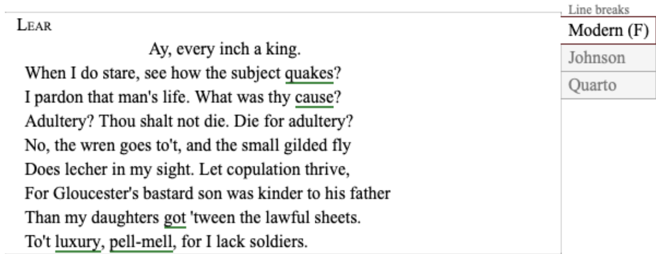
Lear's immediate suspicion of the possibility of his wife's infidelity contrasts vividly with Shakespeare's immediate source, the anonymous *History of King Leir.* This earlier play opens with Leir extolling the virtue of his recently "deceased and dearest queen", "Whose soul, I hope, possessed of heavenly joys, / Doth ride in triumph 'mongst the cherubim" (*Leir*, TLN 2-5).

Lear's implied judgement of his wife is an early indicator of his later obsession with female sexuality when his inhibitions are diminished by his state of mental disturbance. But female sexuality is just one of the multitude of human foibles his disturbed mind darts to; a few lines later, in a passage converted to verse from the original prose, this time by Nicholas Rowe, Lear's focus shifts to a sweeping and deeply moving indictment of human injustice under the influence of power and wealth:

> Plate sin with gold
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
> Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
> (4.5.166-8)

His final logic is that since all are equally guilty no-one is guilty: "None does offend, none, I say, none" (4.5.169). Johnson's choice, rhythmically and visually to emphasise adultery in particular, has been followed by many later editions, but is it justified bibliographically, or is it a kind of critical special pleading? Should readers be alerted in some way that there are alternatives?

The digital medium invites a solution. It is possible to create dynamic lines that can be redrawn at will for the reader curious enough to explore the variations. On the Internet Shakespeare Edition site, horizontal tabs allow the reader to see the text in its original form in prose, in Johnson's highly influential relineation, and, as illustrated here (fig. 2), in the lineation I chose for the edition, where I have more closely followed the Folio verse lineation so that the word "adultery" is part of a longer line, and thus is less heavily emphasised.


Line breaks
Modern (F)
Johnson
Quarto

LEAR
Ay, every inch a king.
2555 When I do stare, see how the subject quakes?
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery? Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery?
No, the wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight. Let copulation thrive,
2560 For Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to his father
Than my daughters got 'tween the lawful sheets.
To't luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.

Fig. 2: *King Lear* 4.5.110-18, TLN 2554-62, *Internet Shakespeare Editions*

This static representation on the page becomes fluently dynamic on screen, where lines are changed according to the version chosen on the tab. The visual presence of tabs invites the reader to explore the nuances of meaning and emphasis the alternatives convey. It is important to realise that where lineation in the two versions varies, the tabs do not substitute the alternative text, but change only the line breaks, thus focusing on one characteristic of the work, its rhythm. My point is not which version might more accurately represent an imagined original (supposing there was one original); and it is not to suggest that my version is closer to Shakespeare's intention (supposing we can somehow ascertain what that was); rather it is how we might represent the text to the modern reader in such a way that options of this kind are conveniently and transparently visible.

2. Clusters of Individual Variants

A more familiar task for the editor arises when differing editions record variants in words or phrases. Again, *King Lear* is something of a test case, with a very large number of variants between Quarto and Folio. Halio (2005, 85) estimates that there are "roughly 1,500" that are substantive, and by my count at least 150 of those are of significant semantic or critical interest. Many variants can be explained as errors brought about through conventional bibliographical means: eye-skip, wrong fount, misreading of a difficult manuscript and so on. But there are some that are clearly the result of a deliberate change, and there are passages where

variants cluster, sometimes including words that are not readily explained in bibliographical terms.

In the opening scene, where Lear formally announces his intention to retire, to abdicate the throne and to pass it on to his three daughters, there is a short passage where there are four clustered variants. In this, admittedly rather awkward print representation, the Quarto reading is recorded first and underlined, the Folio follows in square brackets, italicised:

> Know we have divided
> In three our kingdom; and 'tis our first [*fast*] intent
> To shake all cares and business of our state [*from our age*],
> Confirming [*Conferring*] them on younger years [*strengths*]...
> (1.1.37-40)

Two of these can be seen as simple errors, though in each case both readings make good sense: first/*fast* and Confirming/*Conferring*. But the other two cannot be so readily explained. Quarto Lear wishes to be relieved of his "state", his involvement in the business of government, while Folio Lear emphasises his "age" as motive. Quarto Lear sees the youth of those who follow as a justification for his action, while Folio Lear points to their "strengths", suggesting that the weakness of his age is his motive. The cumulative effect of all the changes, including all those that could be accidental, is that the Quarto Lear is more businesslike, while the Folio Lear is more emotional, stressing his age and declining strength. These lines are followed by a passage unique to the Folio, where Lear continues in this vein, speaking of his desire "Unburdened" to "crawl toward death" (1.1.41).

Towards the end of the opening scene there is another moment where variables may either be accidental or the result of deliberate revision (whether by Shakespeare or someone else). The two elder sisters are left alone on stage; warily they test each other on their reactions to Lear's disowning of Cordelia and the best path for them to follow in the future. In both texts Goneril observes that Lear is impetuous and that his age is "full of changes" (1.1.289). Quarto Goneril goes on to say that this is something they have seen many times before, that the "observation" they have made of

this kind of behaviour "hath not been little". Folio Goneril says the opposite, omitting that crucial word *not*: "The observation we have made of it hath been little". An editor may choose to decide that the Folio compositor skipped the word accidentally, but both readings make perfect sense; the difference is that they create interestingly different 'back stories' to an understanding of Lear's personality. A few lines later there is what appears to be a trivial change in a word, but again there is a significant effect on the emotional vector of the scene. Quarto Goneril counsels a more aggressive response to Lear's more predictable unpredictability: "Pray you let us hit together", whereas Folio Goneril proposes that they "sit together" (1.1.304) to plan their next steps in the light of this shocking new behaviour. In modern type it looks as if there is a difference of just one letter, but in the original the Quarto's "hit" took three type-forms, while the Folio took just two, the ligature "ſi" and the letter "t"; it is perhaps a misreading, but cannot be a simple typographical error. Stone comments that the Folio's reading "is probably to be ascribed to the compositor, and if so, to a lapse of aural memory" (215). Whichever version is chosen, the different effects of the variants raise keen questions about the characters both of Lear and the two elder sisters, who are too often seen in terms of simple black and white. In performance, the difference between the readings can have extensive ramifications. Alexa Alice Joubin (2013, 58) writes of the 2013 Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of *King Lear*, directed by Bill Raunch, where two different actors played Lear on alternating nights as a means of reducing the intense pressure on the lead performer:

> The dramaturgical decision showcased contrasting interpretations of the play and solved the pragmatic issue of labor by dividing the creative effort. Michael Winters played a childlike "Lear of Light" who suffers from dementia, truly a "foolish, fond old man" (4.6.61). The daughters do not so much fear as worry for his well-being. In contrast, Jack Willis offered a wrathful "Lear of Darkness" who is a "bullying mob boss". (Minton and Quarmby 2014, 65)

It does seem to be something of a paradox that very minor variations of this kind can create major echoes in the play. I am reminded of the famous crux where Othello realises that he has thrown away a

pearl, “Richer than all his tribe” (5.2.344). Quarto and Folio versions variously identify the tribe as “Indian” or “Judean”, original spelling requiring just a single letter change, “Indean” (Q) to “Iudean” (F), so easily might a single piece of type be inserted upside down. But one of these readings, “Indian”, emphatically invites a neo-colonial critical approach, while the other, “Judean”, fits neatly with an overall Christian view of the play.

Variants of this kind are recorded in collations, and, in cases where they the editor considers them to be of sufficient importance, they will be discussed in a commentary note of whatever length the edition allows. The limited space print provides means that commentary is either relegated to small print at the bottom of the page, or recorded in a section at the back of the book, widely separated from its text; collations are similarly segregated, and further separated from the reader by dense contractions difficult to expand for those other than scholars. In the process, the presence of fascinating and stimulating readings, whatever their provenance, are likely to be missed. What readers see, or fail to see, can radically modify their experience of the text. An online edition has the opportunity to make visible and interactive these features of the text. It has been my intention in creating the online *Lear* edition to take a step in this direction. Alessandra Squeo has extensively documented this approach in a recent article and book (2021, 32-6, and 2022, 195-204). In the online text, variants that suggest potentially interesting semantic alternatives are highlighted; when the mouse hovers over the word or phrase the reading in the alternative text appears above (fig. 3).

LEAR
Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom, and 'tis Q1: of our state
To shake all cares and business from our age
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburdened crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,

Fig. 3: *King Lear* 1.1.36-41. *Internet Shakespeare Editions*

The advantage of this approach is its convenience and immediacy. A further click or tap on the link opens up a standard footnote

pop-up window where the editor can more fully discuss nuances of differing readings. I want to stress that this editorial interface does not result in an "un-edited" text, but in one that adds an extra dimension for the reader. The editor retains the responsibility of choosing which variants are of sufficient semantic interest to be highlighted in this fashion, and the separately edited base texts, Quarto and Folio, require the editor, in traditional fashion, to make countless decisions on readings in difficult or obscure passages, on the minutiae of matters such as punctuation, and, as I have earlier been discussing, of lineation.

Squeo points out that the effectively unlimited space of the digital edition creates a danger that the reader may become confused or overburdened with a multiplicity of too many signals, too many choices, too much data (2021, 35-6). As Edgar admits, at the end of his already lengthy narrative describing the last hours of his father, "To amplify too much, would make much more,/ And top extremity" (5.3.208-9, Quarto). The responsibility to avoid this excess rests both with the editors and the web developers who create new online spaces under their direction. The initial screen can be invitingly straightforward and simple, leaving it to the reader to invoke access to annotations, to collations, and to further features, perhaps incrementally increasing the range and complexity of editorial apparatus as she or he becomes curious and learns to access additional information. The ISE site takes a step in this direction; a menu in the left-hand column offers a series of display options of varying complexity that can be turned on or off.

The digital medium is still ripe for experimentation and innovation. Over time, web and app interfaces have become somewhat more standardised in function and appearance, but as I scan the news in the morning on my iPhone I have to remember a range of different ways of navigating the apps or websites I access. Users of the medium are of necessity constantly involved in the equivalent of a kind of low-level computer game as they figure how each site responds to a mouse or tap. I don't for a moment wish to suggest that *King Lear* is some kind of game, but might it be possible for academics to allow themselves to be a little playful? Alan Galey has done some creative and original work on the interface for the Shakespeare Variorum project, decoding dense textual collation

in order to display timelines for variants and changes made by individual editors on readily understood coloured spreadsheets. On his personal site at the University of Toronto, Galey has also implemented his slightly mischievous idea of animating variants where it is not easy to determine which has precedence. I use this feature in my *Lear* Folio edition of *King Lear* where in the opening scene the speech prefix "*Cor.*" might plausibly be taken to mean either Cornwall or Cordelia. As Beth Goldring has pointed out in her essay in *The Division of the Kingdoms* (1983), this ambiguity creates another instance of a variant reading that has a far-reaching influence on how we understand Cordelia's character.

3. Paradox and the Limitations of Conflation

The complex dialogue set up by the two variant endings of *King Lear* provides the hardest test for the design of a display that will permit, even encourage, the kind of inclusive, multi-valent reading I am advocating. In an attempt to address this challenge, my online text extends the convention of the horizontal tabs created to display variant lineation between Quarto and Folio rather like those I used above for comparison of line breaks in Q1 and the Folio, to make it possible for the reader to flip between the two versions or to see them in parallel columns, without leaving the virtual page. This visual tool is particularly appropriate for use in the final moments of Lear's life (fig. 4):

LEAR
And my poor fool is hanged. No, no, no life?
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
3280 Never, never, never, never, never.
Pray you, undo this button. Thank you sir.
Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips--
Look there, look there.
He dies.

EDGAR
He faints. My lord, my lord!

3285 KENT
Break heart, I prithee break.

EDGAR
Look up, my lord.

Modern (F)
Quarto
Compare

Fig. 4: *King Lear*, 5.3.309-16, TLN 3277-85, *Internet Shakespeare Editions*

Critical readings of the climax of the play make very clear that it embodies a complex paradox. One school of thought, very prominent in the middle years of the twentieth century, sees, in Lear's belief that Cordelia lives, a redemptive movement towards a realization that he will be reunited with her in another life. Contrastingly, from the time of Swinburne in the late nineteenth century, Lear's vision has been seen as self-deceptive, and the conclusion of the play deeply pessimistic, even nihilistic. Both views, however, have almost exclusively been based on conflated texts which choose the Folio's more extensive ending, including, most importantly, Lear's last lines, from which I have taken the title of this paper, "Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips – / Look there, look there" (5.3.314-15)".

In the Quarto, in place of these moving and profoundly ambiguous lines, Lear simply groans, "O, o, o, o." In both texts Edgar attempts to revive him. In the Quarto, Lear calls on his heart to break, and dies (though, typically, the Quarto offers no stage direction); the Folio Lear dies immediately after the words I just quoted where Lear believes he sees some signs of life in his daughter; here his death is made specific by the stage direction "*He dies*", and it is Kent who calls on his own heart to break as he sees his master die.

The difference between the two texts is profound. The only comfort offered Quarto Lear is release from suffering as his plea for his own death is fulfilled; Folio Lear dies seemingly in the belief that Cordelia lives, and the significance of this moment is left to the production or the reader to interpret as redemptive, as a final delusion, or as a paradoxical moment of unknowing where both possibilities are held in suspension, the play ending with a question rather than a clear resolution. Any attempt to conflate the two passages forces the editor to make a choice, limiting the resonances generated by multiple textual possibilities. The print solution is often to provide the alternative passage, tucked away in an appendix or commentary; an online text invites an approach that makes possible fluent awareness of the alternatives, and of the critical dialogue they initiate.

4. The Communicative Power of the Interface

Tabs toggling between versions and parallels may not be the ideal solution to the challenge posed by complex, multiple textual differences in passages of this kind; it is my hope that other editors and developers will explore alternatives. My more general, and more important, point is that the digital interface allows precisely this kind of experimentation in making it possible for our audiences to view and explore the content we provide. From its inception, this was one of the aims of the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* (ISE). Founded in 1996, the ISE developed a tag-set based on Ian Lancashire's Renaissance English Texts. Its focus was as much on recording the appearance of old-spelling texts as on their content; in due course tags were readily adapted to experimentation in terms of the visual interface needed to enhance the display of multiple versions in the manner I have illustrated above. As is so often the case with pioneering projects, however, the ISE tags are now superseded. The original ISE material is still available on a static site generated from the earlier files, but static sites are inevitably subject to erosion in usability over time as Web protocols evolve. The ISE editors' texts remain at the University of Victoria as part of the Linked Early Drama Online (LEMDO) project, under the direction of its director, Janelle Jenstad, where they are in the process of being converted to conform with what is now the accepted standard for encoding texts in the Humanities, the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). A significant strength of TEI is that its community has developed sophisticated tools for converting texts either to an HTML Web display or to PDF for print. Standards of this kind are essential if the work of one scholar on a medieval manuscript is to be encoded and made accessible by the same tools that are used for early modern texts or Victorian novels. But standards can also shape thought, and the continuing need for scholars to publish in print inevitably reduces any incentive for research that focuses on online scholarship and publication. Fortunately, TEI has been constructed as a very capacious tent; it allows flexibility for local variation within its overall structure, so there is ample room for future experimentation with digital interfaces. At the present time, however, there are no plans for LEMDO to include the display features I have outlined in this paper.

The work I have outlined thus far is an initial attempt to use the dynamic flexibility of the digital medium as a way of revealing features of texts that are largely hidden beneath the surface of page-oriented scholarship. When we look at a book we see a fixed page with well-understood conventions: chapter headings; footnotes indicated by a small superscript, with the notes either at the bottom of the page or at the rear of the book; quotations set apart from the main paragraph, and so on. The book designer has little opportunity to modify these conventions. Responding to the need for coding that displays attractively on screens of widely different sizes, from compact phones to expansive monitors, Web design has become increasingly dynamic; unfortunately, under the pressure of commerce, its focus tends to be on distracting the reader, seeking attention in the hunt for compelling click-bait for advertisements. Academic, non-profit sites have the opportunity to use this dynamism in service of the text, where exploration of deeper meaning replaces distraction.

We are so accustomed to thinking of the digital in terms of print that we speak constantly of web 'page', unthinkingly using what has become a dead metaphor. It might be helpful to change the image, and to trumpet the fact that the still new digital medium provides a very different canvas to paint on. The screen that displays a digital text is far more open for editors to work with programmers and web designers to develop enhanced and nuanced visual rhetoric to assist, guide, and stimulate their audiences. It is my hope that the digital medium will enable scholars to find, in more elegant ways than are recorded in my experiments, ways of visually revealing the riches of both textual and conceptual features of the works they publish: to enable readers to see better.

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