6 *Making Variants*

THE idea that every copy of a book will be the same as another is an illusion that has been made more plausible by machine methods of production. In modern books, different impressions from the same stereotype plates may be variant;[1] whilst recent digital technologies can either be used to create absolute uniformity from one edition to the next, or to modify and recreate texts in multiple forms, both textually and visually, and generate differences analogous to those found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before mechanized typesetting in the late nineteenth-century, the standardization of print could only ever be partial;[2] and with manuscript, exact replication of a source document was rarely considered essential. Before the mid-eighteenth-century, variant spellings offered scribes and compositors a means for adjusting the layout of the page that was preferable to the use of hyphens, contractions, and unwanted space. At all times, the function that a copy was intended to serve could have consequences for the methods and materials of replication. This chapter is concerned with the analysis of textual differences between copies and versions, with the generation of corrupt readings and the causes that gave rise to them, and with the broader significance of those issues for textual scholarship.

Sometimes variants are described as errors that reveal specific stages in the mediation of a text; whether as lapses of vigilance, or as active (and often mistaken) attempts to fix corrupt readings: but the truth is more complex than there being an archetype from which all copies descend via a combination of scribal or compositorial mistakes. That is a very simple model of what is possible given the diverse permutations of versions and copies that can exist. In many cases, variants do represent errors of one kind or another; but texts may also be subject to revision and emendation in ways that complicate the patterns of recension, as well as the idea of an original document: Herrick, for instance, often returned to his source papers to modify unresolved lines in a poem, generating a second version, rather than working from his previous revision, and thus reworking the same lines in quite different ways.[3]

All variants are the result of human acts that have left their trace in the text through the processes and sources that shaped each witness.

[1] For instance, volume 7 of Herford and Simpson's Oxford edition of Jonson (the *Masques and Entertainments*) was reissued with page corrections by Simpson: see his letter to Sir Walter Greg, 3 September 1951; Trinity College, Cambridge, MS Greg 1, letter 82.
[2] McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order*, 80.
[3] See, T. Cain (ed.), *The Poems of Robert Herrick* (Oxford, forthcoming).

Thus, we cannot understand whether a variant is significant until we have determined its cause, and the purposes that informed those people responsible for making the documents. (How we apply such an insight is yet another matter, and beyond the scope of the present discussion).[4] Each variant between witnesses will be the result of one or more factors (whether it be a misreading, an attempted correction, and so on), and the reason why one variant occurred may differ from that for other variants in the same document. As a consequence, each difference needs to be analyzed and understood on its own terms in order that the genesis and evolution of a text can be differentiated from the history of its reception and use. This is why, in so far as is possible, it is helpful to determine the circumstances under which any document may have been created, and to analyze the materials that were involved, as it is the combination of the analytical and the textual details that can help to determine the order of witnesses in a given sequence. First assumptions about bibliographical relationships do not always prove correct.

Critical decisions about why variants or versions are significant, and how they ought to be recorded, will depend on the text being edited and the range of evidence that survives: both the treatment and the presentation of the evidence require a balance of precision and clarity. Although, as Peter Shillingsburg remarked, 'Textual criticism does not tell anyone what to do with their texts',[5] it does demonstrate the relationship between, and the reasons for, variants and establishes their importance. There can be no universal rule of what is appropriate with regard to the method for recording these details for all texts, as the organization and interpretation of variants requires an understanding of authorial processes; of the ways in which these have been mediated through the methods of replication; of the forms of social and political influence, and the financial constraints, that may have influenced the making and distribution of a copy or edition; and it requires a judgment about how these factors coalesce and are best represented. Every witness to a text is a fragment because each document encodes in its materials, signs, and structure, the history from its creation to its use. The variant is, therefore, of interest beyond its existence as a fact, as it is always informative of something other than itself: there is always a reason for it being as it is, whether that is cultural or individual, a result of mundane carelessness or deliberate forethought.

[4] For a survey and analysis of the issues, see: D. C. Greetham, *Theories of the Text* (Oxford, 1999).

[5] P. L. Shillingsburg, *Resisting Texts: Authority and Submission in Constructions of Meaning* (Ann Arbor MI, 1997), 4.

Original Documents

For bibliographical purposes, an author is the person or group who originates a text and first decides its content. Authors may intervene in the communication of a text at later stages and to various ends, alter content, tone, or structure, and respond to suggestions by others about specific details or issues that are raised. What defines the authorial role, however, is the relationship to, and responsibility for, a work: it is for this that payment (in cash or kind) is commonly made, and for which consequences may be suffered ranging from private rejection to ostracism, exile, mutilation, imprisonment, or death. These non-textual occurrences have influenced biographical accounts of identity, and narratives about the role of the author, or of a document, in the history of reception; but identity and influence are quite separate issues (ones of motive and consequence) to that of origination, and are open to historical (re)interpretation as well as misunderstanding.[6]

It ought to be axiomatic that all accounts that seek to interpret authorial acts ought to be based on a precise textual history of the relevant documents, but that rarely happens: the fire in Jonson's desk where he lost various manuscript materials, for instance, is often spun into a conflagration of his library without awareness of the revisions he made to 'An Execration upon Vulcan', the lack of evidence relating to the fire in the books that he once owned that would have been in his library at that time, the existence of the manuscript that he borrowed from Sir Robert Cotton to write *Henry V* with his marginalia, or the financial accounts of Gresham College where he resided at the time of the fire.[7] In establishing the history of a text and its associated materials, authorial identity (where this is known) matters in so much as it helps to explain the origins of specific documents and the relationship between one witness to a text and another.

All texts have pretexts and contexts: they do not exist in perfect isolation from one another. The act of their creation may be the result of a commission; be owing to patronage, payment, or suggestion; or have as its cause a response to an event. The text will have been shaped and influenced by other words, written, spoken, or sung, as well as lived experience. Yet neither the cause that gives rise to a text, nor the influences upon it, involve that act of making it with an infusion of eloquence and intellectual content that seeks to enable understanding.

[6] See, in particular, H. Love, *Attributing Authorship* (Cambridge, 2002), 32–50.
[7] For instance, see C. I. E. Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford, 1997), 198–216.

There can be complications to the history of authorship. More than one person might be involved in the act of first making; or a text may be issued by a group or body such as the Privy Council, or the Corporation of London.[8] Some texts are anonymous because they were copied without formal attribution, and we do not now know who was responsible for their creation, and for putting them into circulation.[9] Some texts were reattributed to other authors by well-meaning near-contemporaries who associated them with someone more famous, such as the poems of Hare and Roe that were associated with Donne, the various poems (including 'The Goodwife's Ale' by Sir Thomas Jay) that were attributed to Jonson, and others linked to Ralegh.[10] Texts that survive with initials attached may also be difficult to identify, especially 'W. S.' (usually William Skipwith, William Strode, or some seventeenth-century author other than Shakespeare).[11] Sometimes, a person might preserve (with permission or otherwise) the spoken words of another, such as the comments made by Jonson to Drummond.[12] Such complications may affect the processes of textual transmission, and our sense of who was responsible for the text that we have.

The traditional study of variants, as developed in the nineteenth-century by Lachmann, starts out with the idea of a source text from which all else flows. In general, this model could be applied to ancient authors because the paucity of early evidence meant that there were few issues concerning the origins of the texts that required explanation: in many cases, as with the Greek dramatists, most of what has come down to us is fragmentary. Thus, one could assume texts were transmitted broadly as intended (there being no autographs to complicate analysis), and that corrupt readings would demonstrate the relationship between later witnesses. This method of Aristotelian categorization was used to group manuscript families in order that palaeographical and philological methods could then be applied to the differences between the traditions. Specific exceptions, where more than one archetype can be shown to have existed, could then be dealt with, normally as evidence

[8] Modern library cataloguing practice has tried to distinguish carefully between the various forms of responsibility for texts: see, www.aacr2.org.
[9] See, M. L. North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England* (Chicago, 2003).
[10] See, M. Ruddick (ed.), *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: A Historical Edition* (Tempe, 1999).
[11] Similarly the 'E. S.' responsible for 'A View of the Present State of Ireland' might not be Edmund Spenser, as so often assumed but Edward Strange who was admitted to Lincoln's Inn at the behest of Sir Thomas Egerton in 1591.
[12] See, M. B. Bland, 'Further Information: Drummond's *Democritie, A Labyrinth of Delight* and His "Certain Informations and Manners of Ben Jonson"', *TEXT*, 17 (2005), 145–86.

of revision—as with Martial's *Epigrams* where Book X (first published in 95; reissued in 98) was revised after the assassination of Domitian in September 96.[13] Such a view of creativity was inherently inflexible, and simplified the processes of writing and the way in which these have been transmitted: it was this predeterminative quality that Foucault and others challenged by insisting on the malleability of authorship.

With the advent of systematic editing for Shakespeare and other non-classical authors, the Lachmannian method was applied to a new range of texts. For Greg, it opened up the possibility of establishing 'the very autograph' of the author behind the typographic page, and thus the 'ideal copy' from which to edit a text.[14] At first, this theory seemed to suit the editing of Shakespeare (as well as Jonson), where half the plays exist only in a single version and most of the other texts exist in either two or, at most, three states (the exception being Jonson's poems, which were edited by Simpson from printed sources in order to avoid the issue of their complicated manuscript history). As some of Shakespeare's quarto texts were highly variant to those in the *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* published in 1623 (STC 22273), the differences were held to be a consequence of post-authorial activity (mercenary actors and nefarious printers with an eye to a quick profit), preserving the notion of a stable original text.[15] As with the classics, there were no literary documents in Shakespeare's hand (there are some signatures) except, perhaps, Hand D in the collaborative manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*.[16] Thus, in order to peer behind the texts, the working practices of early modern printers were studied, so that textual scholars could understand the confluence of palaeographical and printing-house errors that gave rise to the issues that perplexed them.

The move away from categorization towards some notion of perfect form (the text as a kind of Platonic shadow), as proposed by Greg, was first taken as a principle, and then subject to much criticism as it became apparent that there were authors whose textual remains proved more varied and complicated than the unitary theory of origins supposed. Daniel's intervention in the printing history of his texts at multiple stages might serve as one example, the complicated manuscript history

[13] For a survey of the surviving evidence relating to Latin authors, see L. D. Reynolds (ed.), *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, rev. edn. (Oxford, 1986).
[14] Greg, *Collected Papers*, 251 and 374–91.
[15] See, L. E. Maguire, *Shakespeare's Suspect Texts: The 'Bad' Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge, 1996).
[16] See, T. H. Howard-Hill (ed.), *Shakespeare and 'Sir Thomas More': Essays on the Play and Its Shakespearean Interest* (Cambridge, 1989); V. Cabrieli and G. Melchiori (eds.), *Sir Thomas More: A Play by Anthony Munday and Others* (Manchester, 1990).

of Donne's poems as another. One answer to this problem was to posit the idea of final intention: that it did not matter what the author did in the process of writing (first drafts, revisions, and so on), what mattered was the final version as it was made public, with the obvious caveat that errors by compositors or scribes ought to be emended. The crucial point that needed to be established, for this to be determined, was the order of the versions where more then one survives. The theory of final intention thus reasserted a unitary theory of origin: the best text represents the latest point of intersection between the creative process of the author and the production history of the primary documents.[17]

The problem with the fixed notions of an original source and a final intention is not that they locate responsibility for authorship, but the rigid structure they impose on the fluid and complex activity of textual creation. The idea that the act of writing can only lead to a single version is an obvious fallacy, and one that will lead to false conclusions in the analysis of variants. A text may be begun in oral or written form; there may be drafts, notes jotted down on separate sheets of paper, or in margins and notebooks; revisions may involve both new changes and the reversion to earlier ideas; fair copies may not be autograph, but corrected by the author; and complete versions may exist in different states, with texts adapted to specific circumstances. A rigorously determined authorial text is only one possible outcome of this process. A play, in contrast, might be sketched out, expanded, reimagined, and revised. A copy, with more than was required for performance, might then be prepared for approval and publication, as would appear to be the case with the second quarto of *Hamlet*. In rehearsal, further changes could be made to adjust the pace of the action on the stage with music, costume, gesture, and delivery all becoming part of the text. A performance for a different audience might prompt revisions, new scenes, and changes in emphasis, as well as the addition or deletion of speeches and characters. Further, an author, such as Shakespeare, might not use the fair copy to prepare this new version but, like Herrick, revert to an earlier draft and rewrite the text in a new way. *King Lear* is an example of this process at work, with the 1608 quarto representing the public performance, and the 1623 folio text a court performance that drew upon new, as well as possibly earlier, material.[18]

[17] See, J. McLaverty, 'The Concept of Authorial Intention in Textual Criticism', *The Library*, vi: 6 (1984), 121–38.

[18] Blayney, *The Texts of* King Lear, as before; S. Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of* King Lear (Princeton NJ, 1980); M. J. Warren and G. Taylor, *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of* King Lear (Oxford, 1983).

Once the role of the author is freed from the idea that all copies of a text must derive from a single source, or an original and final revised version, and the variety of human activity is allowed, then Lachmann's method of identifying families can be employed to describe the permutations that underlie all extant documents, both manuscript and printed. The single or binary model of composition is simply not true for many authors: Jonson's 'An Execration upon Vulcan' exists in three states, with the 1640 Benson piracy descending from a combination of a manuscript and stolen sheets of the, as yet unpublished, 1640 *Workes*; the same is true for the piracy of 'Upon My Picture Left in Scotland', which had four stages of composition and revision; whilst Overbury's *A Wife* circulated as five variant texts, with the first, second, and seventh printed editions deriving from different manuscript groups.[19] Familial relationships are similarly important for the later seventeenth-century: the plays and poems of Buckingham, Rochester, and Dorset can only be established by abandoning authorship as the prime criterion for analysis. These authors pose difficult questions concerning the genesis of their work and their relationship to what survives in their name.[20]

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is unusual to be able to watch an author at work, from draft to fair copy. In some cases, as with Drummond and Clarendon,[21] we do have extensive autograph papers; otherwise, most of the evidence relating to working practices involves either reading or note-taking (i.e. marginalia in a book the author owned), or the scribal and printed versions of later revisions.[22] A few examples, however, of such things do survive, including a sonnet by King James, written in January 1616 (figures 6.1 and 6.2). The poem is about the king being unable to hunt owing to the severe winter. What the transition from draft to fair copy illustrates is the complexity of the relationship between composition, transmission, and the normalization of authorial language. A further scribal manuscript survives, in the hand of Thomas Carew, in the British Library (Additional MS 24195).

The manuscripts show that James began the process of composition by writing out half a dozen lines of 'thoughts', that were then crossed through once they had been reused in the poem:

[19] The evidence for the stages of revision and the piracy will be presented in Bland (ed.), *The Poems of Ben Jonson*.
[20] H. Love (ed.), *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (Oxford, 1999); R. D. Hume and H. Love (eds.), *Plays, Poems and Miscellaneous Writings Associated with George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2007). Dorset awaits a similar edition.
[21] National Library of Scotland, MSS 2060–7; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Clarendon MSS.
[22] For a conspectus of materials relating to print, see, Moore, *Primary Materials Relating to Copy and Print*.

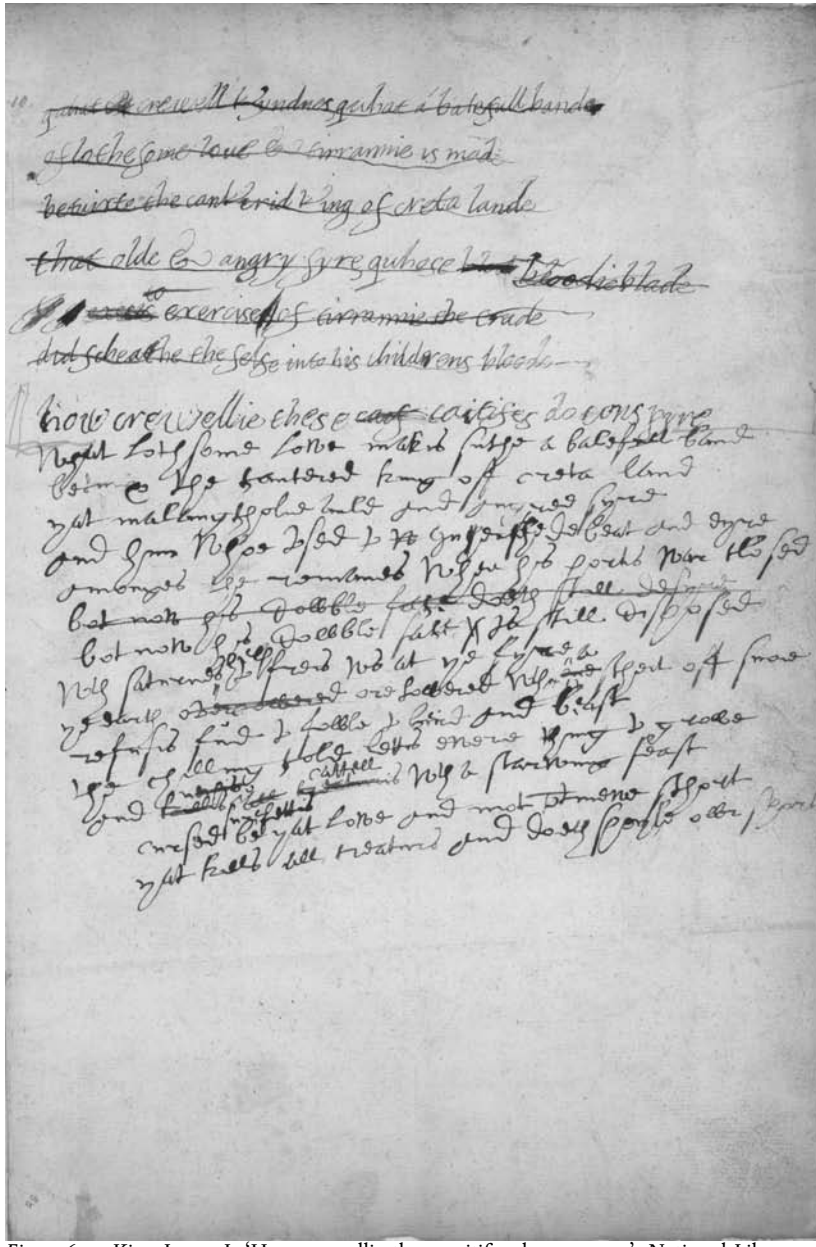
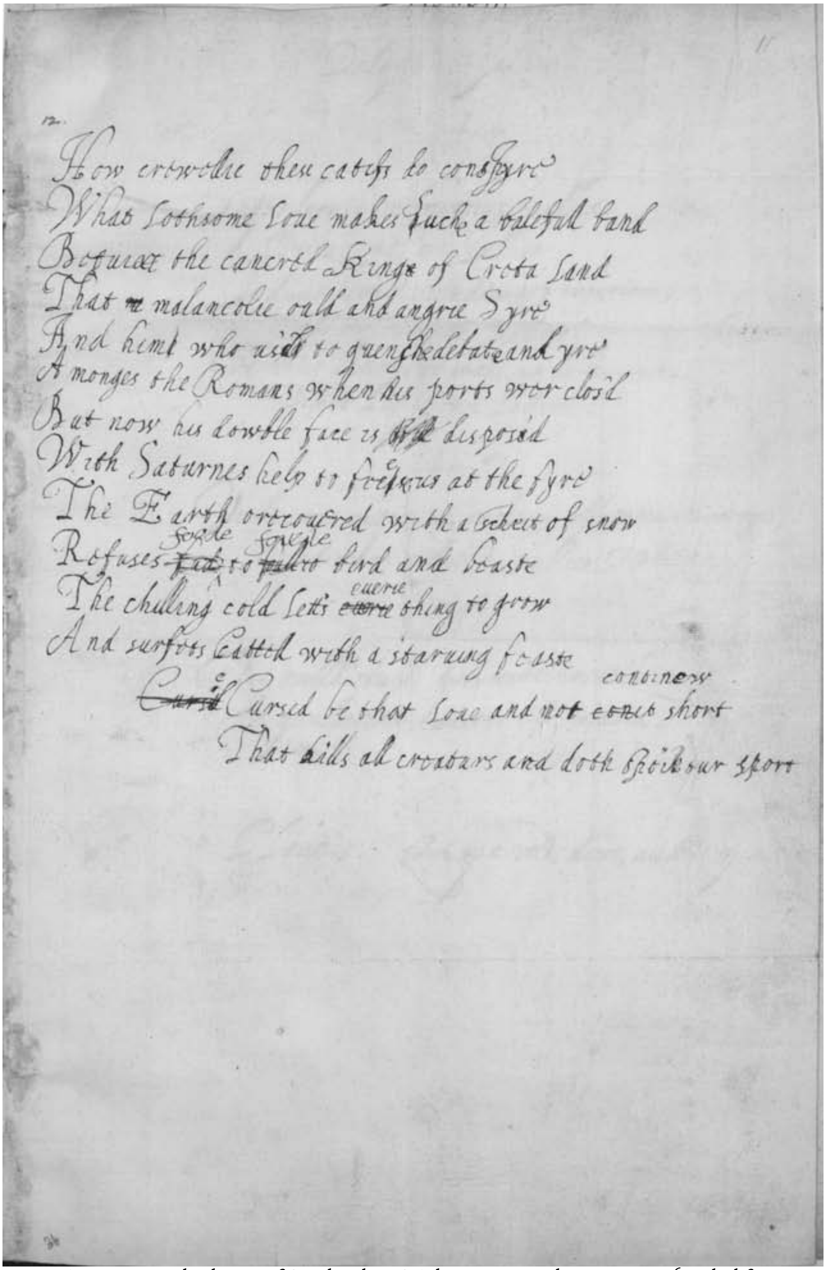


Figure 6.1 King James I, 'How crewellie these caitifes do conspyre': National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.14, vol. 31, item 10 (autograph).


12.

How crewellie thes catifs do conspyre
What lothsome love makes such a balefull band
Betuixt the cancred kinge of Creta land
That malancolie old and angrie syre
And him who usd to quench debate and yre
Amonges the Romans when his ports wer closd
But now his dowble face is still disposd
With Saturnes help to freese us at the fyre
The Earth orecouered with a scheet of snow
Refuses foode to fowle bird and beaste
The chilling cold letts everie thing to grow
And surfets cattell with a starving feaste
Cursed be that love and not continew short
That kills all creaturs and doth spoile our sport

Figure 6.2 National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.14, vol. 31, item 12 (scribal fair copy with autograph corrections).

qwhat crewell kyndnes, qwhat a balefull band
of lothesome loue & tirranie is mad
betwixte the cankerid King of creta lande
that olde & angry syre, qwhose ~~blood~~ bloodieblade
~~to execis~~ to exercises of tirranie the trade
did scheat the selfe into his childrens blood

These notes have a number of distinct Scottish spellings, particularly 'qwhat' and 'scheat'. However, when James then prepared a draft of the full sonnet, he started to anglicize his language, although his text retains distinctive spellings such as 'malangcholie' and 'ws', with 'w' commonly used instead of u/v. Such traits are common in other Scottish authors such as Drummond.[23] The full draft of the poem reads:

How crewelle these caitifs do conspyre
What lothsome loue makes suche a balefull band
betwixt the cankered king of creta land
that malangchole ould and angree syre
and him whoe vsed to ~~w~~ qwenche debeat and eyre
amonges the romanes when his ports were closed
bot now his dowble face doeth still desyre
bot now his dowble face ~~s~~ is still disposed
Wth saturnes $^{\wedge help}$ to freis ws at ye fyre
ye earth ~~overcowered~~ ore cowered wth $_{\wedge}$~~ane~~ ^{a} scheit off snoue
Refusis fūd to fowle to bird and beast
the chilling cold lettis ewere thing to growe
and ~~kills~~ $^{[del]\,rs}$ ~~all~~ $_{surfettis}$ ~~creaturis~~ ^{cattell} wth a starwing feast
cursed be yat lowe and not continewe short
yat kills all creaturis and doeth spoyle owr sport

This version of the poem is on pot paper and is clearly intended to be a draft. When the fair copy was made in an italic hand (figure 6.2), Italian flag paper was used. This is significant: it seems likely that this version was initially meant to be made available for others as a source document for their own transcript but, as is often the case, a fresh clear text led to further revision, whilst the fact that it was a scribal copy served to distance the king from his own processes of writing. James, in other words, did not circulate his poems in royal autograph (given his hand that is perhaps as well), rather he made them available via a high-quality secretarial copy. This preliminary fair copy is anglicized further by both the secretary and the king who made some final adjustments, including altering 'fud' to 'foode':

[23] Drummond, for instance, introduced Scottish spelling into Jonson's poem 'That Women are but Mens Shaddowes' (*For*. VII): National Library of Scotland, MS 2060. f.238^{r}.

How crewellie these catifs do conspyre
What lothsome loue makes ˢ~~o~~uch$_{e}$ a balefull band
Betwixt the cancred King of Creta land
That ~~m~~ malancolie ould and angrie Syre
And him~~e~~ whoe us'd~~e~~ to quen~~s~~che debate and yre
Amonges the Romans when his ports wer clos'd
But now his dowble face is ~~still~~ dispos~~e~~'d
With Saturnes help to fre^{e}~~i~~se us at the fyre
The Earth orecouered with a scheit of snow
Refuses ~~fud~~ ^{foode} to ~~foull~~ ^{fowle} to bird and beaste
The chilling cold lett's ~~euorie~~ ^{euerie} thing to grow
And surfets ~~e~~Cattell with a staruing feaste
~~Curs~~'$_{\wedge}$,^{e}~~d~~ Cursed be that loue and not ~~conit~~ continew short
That kills all creaturs and doth spoyle our sport

From this corrected secretarial copy, it is likely that a final transcript was made, and that some remaining idiosyncrasies were removed with implicit consent. In a more elaborate way, the same relationship between secretary and author is apparent in the manuscripts of Dudley, Lord North.[24] Secretarial transcription was, in cases such as this, a highly important link between the author and the circulation of the text in its presently finished form. What the example demonstrates is a shift from draft to fair copy, from autograph to scribal copy, from private jottings to public circulation, and from regional to standardized spelling, all within two sheets of paper. From the scribal copy, the poem could be disseminated through the court and beyond, with each subsequent copy giving rise to a unique combination of differences. From that stage onwards, the variants would no longer be the result of revision, or made with implicit authorial consent, but would rather reflect the social history of the text as it was received and (mis)understood. Variants in scribally circulated texts are different in their causes to those in the original documents with which an author is involved.

Visible Signs

Every textual scholar usually has to deal with the presence in the text of agents other than the author who have interpreted what is before them. The problem is that when someone copies a text, they will introduce

[24] North's poems can be found in their earliest (scribal) state in Huntington, HM 198 part 2, ff.57^{r}–79^{r}. Autograph corrected scribal copies include: Bodleian Library, Oxford, North MS e.1 and North MS e.2; and Rosenbach Library, Philadelphia, MS 240/1. Although begun in 1598, North's poems were not published until 1645, when they appeared as *A Forest of Varieties* (Wing N1283).

variations to the text, partly owing to alternate practices, partly to human fallibility, and these differences need to be assessed for the information that they yield. Sometimes the changes have been accepted as without consequence—at least at the time. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'she' and 'shee', 'beauty' and 'beautie', 'logic', 'logick', and 'logicke', were all accepted as being the same for all intents and purposes. This fluidity of lexical form was further subject to formal variation through the coexistence of secretarial and italic script, and a tendency in personal script to mix the two alphabets in idiosyncratic ways, with the consequence that both letters and words could change visual form from one copy to another.

The problem with copying a text is that we tend to do so more often in haste than with the exacting care of a public inscription. The motto of the Aldine printing-house, *festina lente*, is an expression of this conflict between speed and accuracy. Owing to the technical aspects of both writing, and setting type, when speed is applied to the process specific kinds of variants occur, sometimes in combination with one another. Thus, most types of variant are generic because they can be explained as being the consequence of one or another particular act, however different each variant is as an example of its kind. In order to clarify how they occur, Dearing has listed 14 main kinds of variant: that discussion has shaped what follows.[25] Dearing's list is conceived with scribal practices in mind, and there are some other issues that relate to printing-house practice that need to be taken into account, as printed variants may arise from the setting, correcting, and distribution of type, or derive from the same scribal issues that arise from communicating a prior manuscript copy.

With printed books for which manuscript copy does not exist (and that is most of them), a recognition of the common patterns of scribal confusion that give rise to a reading may often help to resolve textual cruces. In almost all cases, the simplest explanation is the most likely. All printed books derive from an antecedent document: if the book is a reprint then the source copy would generally (but not always) have been a prior printed edition; in the first instance, however, a manuscript had to be used, whether in the author's hand or prepared by another with, or without, the author's consent. A compositor was, therefore, faced with the same potential problems in setting what was before him as scribe in making a copy: he was capable of misreading exactly as a scribe might, as capable of making unintentional and sometimes deliberate

[25] V. A. Dearing, *Principles and Practice of Textual Analysis* (Berkeley CA, 1974), 44–53.

variants, and as potentially subject to working from a copy that was less than satisfactory. What is important, however, is not just the kinds of variant that are possible, but how one recognizes the particular kind of alteration that has occurred: part of the art is being able to understand what happened at an earlier stage than survives.

The simplest form of misreading is the confusion of one letter, or group of letters, for another. This is known as the 'minim' problem, as the even strokes of those letters up and down can make it very difficult to discern the letters intended, and it is possible for there to be two equally valid alternatives. Earlier (p. 89 above), it was noted that with secretary hand, *h* can be confused with *y*, *a* with *u*, and *o* with *e*. These letters, and the possibility of a confusion between them, appear in *King Lear* at II.ii.47/52. Scholars have agreed that the correct reading is 'yeares' rather than 'houres' because, in Greg's words, 'This is sober sense: Shakespeare knew that art is long.' If we accept that the textual difference was an error and not intentional, then it must have had a cause. Hence, what is wrong in Greg's subsequent reasoning is his explanation for why the confusion occurred:

> For the actor and the groundling two years seems an age: so the quarto substitutes 'two hours', which is absurd.[26]

Strictly speaking, the quarto is an inanimate object: what Greg meant is that he believed the quarto to be a piracy and, therefore, that the 'actors' responsible for the text changed one word to suit contemporary notions of theatrical performance. Elsewhere, Greg had argued for the primacy of bibliographical facts over this kind of meta-critical reasoning.[27] In this instance, a misreading of 'yeares' as 'houres' can be explained by something as simple as 'yea' being confused with 'hou'. If there is another reason for the change, then it may be of some consequence, as Blayney demonstrated, that there was a single compositor responsible for setting most of *Lear* and that it was set seriatim.[28] It has already been suggested that this person was Thomas Corneforth, who had been bound as an apprentice to Okes's predecessor in September 1605, some two years previously.[29] Perhaps Corneforth held a higher estimate of his competency than scholarship has subsequently allowed him, and so he read 'yeares' as 'houres'. If the palaeographical similarity is sufficient in

[26] W. W. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1951), 91. References to the text, for convenience, are to the Cambridge editions.
[27] Greg, 'Bibliography—An Apologia', 253.
[28] Blayney, *The Texts of* King Lear, 78–84 and 89–150; see also, pp. 00–00 above.
[29] Blayney, *The Texts of* King Lear, 17.

itself to account for the variant readings, the biographical detail of who might have been responsible is suggestive.

A second kind of letter substitution occurs because of the lay of a compositor's case, which was placed on an angle and organized rather like a modern keyboard.[30] With lower-case letters, the most commonly used types (*a*, *e*, *n*, and *d*) were placed as a group on the centre-left of the case. There are a great many words, apart from 'end' and 'and' that end with, or contain, those letters. Unlike 'with' where the sorts are of different widths, 'end' and 'and' have letters of the same width, and are without kerns. Thus, when the individual sorts were distributed back to their slots in the case, it would have been easy for a sort to spill out of a full box into a neighbour, or for the compositor to distribute a sort to the wrong slot and subsequently set one letter for another.

Usually, a compositor did not examine each letter before placing it in the stick: certainly, if a 'w' had dropped into the 'i' box, it would have been noticed from touch that the wrong sort was in the hand, but this would not happen for two sorts of the same width. The fact that 'n' and 'd' are adjacent in the case probably explains another variant in *King Lear*: at II.iv.234/57, the quarto reads 'O reason not the deed', the folio reads 'need'. Editors have argued that 'need' is the correct reading but have not noticed that a misdistribution of type is the most probable cause of 'deed' in the quarto text. What such a variant indicates is that the quarto version was not read against copy, as was best practice, but simply from proof, with the copy only checked if the text did not make sense and in a way that could not be easily fixed.

A third reason for letter substitution involved a combination of loose type and faulty proof correction. When a compositor set type in the composing stick, the letters and spacing had to form a rigid rectangle otherwise the letters could work loose under the pressure of the platen.[31] Thus, it was imperative that loose type be fixed immediately as a single dropped letter might cause an entire page to drop from the forme, with the result that not only would all the composition have to be done again, but all the letters would have to be resorted from the pied heap. As a consequence, loose type was fixed before presswork began in earnest at the time when an early pre-production proof was pulled. If type worked loose during presswork, the typical signs are that some letters have been driven up the edge of the page, or dropped from the register. When loose type was fixed before presswork began, the nature of the variant is what usually indicates the problem.

[30] P. Gaskell, 'The Lay of the Case', *Studies in Bibliography*, 22 (1969), 125–42.
[31] Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, 207 and 231–5.

In printed books, the miscorrection of a dropped letter may result in it being substituted for another. For instance, the quarto of *Richard III* reads at I.i.13 'the lasciuious pleasing of a loue' whereas the folio reads 'lute'. As with *Lear*, scholars have preferred the folio on the basis that it is clearly the superior reading, but have not explained the mechanics of the problem. In fact, the cause of the variant is likely to have been a dropped letter rather than, for instance, scribal confusion. As the forme of the quarto was locked into place, the thin 't' probably dropped from the page leaving the reading 'lue' and a slight disturbance of the type: when the proof was read before the printing began, the mistake would have been obvious, but the solution less so, with 'liue', 'loue', 'lure' and 'lute' all possible alternatives. Whilst 'liue' and 'lure' do not make sense in the context, 'loue' can easily be lasciuious and is a more obvious quick fix than 'lute'. It is only because we know the folio variant that we can perceive what the compositor probably did.

It is more unusual to be able to watch a section of type collapse owing to a correction, but this is what happens with the marginal note at III.ii.124 in Jonson's *The Staple of Newes*. The correct text ought to read '1. Cuſt. | A *ſhe* Ana- | baptist', but a stop-press correction loosened the type in the marginal column. None of the copies that Simpson had seen had this reading, but the variant was present in a copy owned by Greg who informed Simpson of it. Simpson wrote back:

> None of the 11 copies I collated have the reading A she Ana-/I can't explain it: as the type was deranged at that point it may have been the original reading, or it may have been a correction.[32]

Simpson was, in fact, very fortunate to have located all three variants in only 12 copies. When he finally came to issue volume IX of the Oxford edition, he had made a decision about the order of the three variants and it was a telling one: the most correct reading had to be the last. This order ignored the fact that the type was, in Simpson's word 'deranged', or rather that the 'ſt.' of 'Cuſt.' had shifted down the page in gradual stages: this is the most common state of the text. He therefore proposed an order that went 'A *ſhe* | baptist' (with type movement), 'A *ſhe* An- | baptist', and then 'A *ſhe* Ana- | baptist'.[33] That this is self-evidently wrong should on reflection be obvious, but it is worth explaining why and exactly what did happen.

[32] The note is loosely inserted at F1^{r} in Greg's copy of the 1631 plays, now Bodleian Library, Oxford shelfmark: Gibson 519. The second state is also to be found in the copy now at the Peabody Library, Baltimore, shelfmark P820.J81.1616.v.2.RB.
[33] H&S, IX, 123.

There is one variant on F1r that neither Simpson nor Riddell noticed, where 'idle and laborious,' was corrected to 'idle, and laborious,'.[34] The state of the marginal note that is connected to the first reading is 'A *ſhe* An- | baptist'; all the copies with 'A *ſhe* Ana- | baptist', or type slippage, have the corrected state with the comma. Furthermore, the register of the type on the page in Greg's copy is informative, for the terminal 'a' of 'Ana' is far darker on the page than the capital 'A' indicating that type slippage had already begun to take place. In effect, what happened was that after a few sheets had been printed off, the press was stopped and the corrections made. The result of opening up the marginal sidenotes was that the surrounding quads and other spaces were loosened, and when the page was closed back up again the line was slightly loose. As the forme was then printed off, the pressure of the platen first led 'Ana-' to drop below the level of the other type, so it did not appear, and then as it dropped further for the type in 'Cuſt.' above to collapse gradually down the page.[35]

Similarly, at the opening of *Lear* the quarto reads 'for equalities are so weighed,' whereas the folio reads 'qualities'. In this instance, it is more likely that the folio is in error and the reason, again, is that a letter dropped from the register before a proof was pulled and prior to presswork: this is indicated later in the folio line where the text reads 'weighed , that'. It is uncommon in a printed text of this period for a space to precede the comma and for there to be another after. Further, the space is the same width as the letter 'e'. It is possible, therefore, that the first 'e' of 'equalities' dropped; and that, once again, proof was not checked against copy. When the pull was read, the text would have made sense but a space would have been needed to justify the line and prevent type collapse: and so the compositor inserted a space in a way that did not create an obvious pigeon hole between two words.

A particular form of substitution and omission occurs at the end of words, where a singular may be made plural, a plural singular, or verbs are turned into nouns. This usually occurs because of the similarities in secretary hand between 'e', terminal 's', and the contraction for '-es': the latter like an italic 'e' with a longer tail. A lack of conventions for standard spelling practices only served to compound the problem. Consider, for instance, the words 'writ', 'write', 'writes', and 'writs'.

[34] J. A. Riddell, 'Some Notes on the Printing of the Jonson Plays of 1631', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 4 (1997), 65–80.

[35] Strictly speaking, the final state of type collapse is not a variant, as it did not involve a separate stop-press correction; although displaced, 'Ana-' is present if not visible. Some assumed variants are simply nothing more than this: in particular, punctuation marks were apt to shift and a comma might easily register as a full-stop.

Some scribes omitted the final 'e' on various words, so there are several permutations in spelling and understanding that are possible. If, for instance, the original 'he writes' was copied as 'he writs', another person might read 'writs' as we now would do, and so decide that 'he' was a mistake and emend 'he' to 'his'. This is the problem known as the substitution of similar words.

A similar example of a palaeographical misreading leading to a more extensive attempt at emendation occurs in one of Francis Beaumont's verse letters to Jonson, where he disparages the popular taste for several plays including John Marston's *The Fawne* and Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire*. Beaumont remarks that the next play will be called *The Grinne*.[36] Only Huntington, HM198 part 2, a manuscript associated (as was the Beaumont family) with the Inner Temple, records this correctly; the remaining manuscripts have 'geinne', '*Gennie*', and 'ginne': it seems likely that 'geinne' was copied from a manuscript where secretary 'e' and 'r' could be confused, and that what began as a difficulty in reading led to attempts at emendation. What such mangled spellings reveal is a lack of comprehension on the part of those who access the text in its derivative forms. Unusual words, such as 'etiostichs' in Jonson's 'An Execration upon Vulcan', baffled many who copied the poem.

A failure to transcribe the text accurately would cause confusion for those who followed, and has clear antecedents in classical scholarship where the principle of the correctness of the more difficult reading is well established as the more likely alternative. Of course, the analysis of variants must depend on the balance of probabilities, rather than certainty, because we cannot look over the shoulder of those who prepared the text. Variants should be understood as occurring through the processes of textual transmission, and require no broader meta-critical theory than an insight as to what scribes and compositors did. This is exactly what Greg thought bibliographers ought to be able to demonstrate, but in practice he failed to apply the methodological rigour that he advocated in principle.[37] Thus, the level at which each variant must be understood is the variant itself, not all the variants in a text with their separate and distinct causes. Only once there is an irreducible number of variants that have no mechanical cause can the real differences between alternate versions of a text be identified. This is

[36] Jonson shared Beaumont's contempt for these plays and said as much to Drummond. For an analysis of the textual tradition of Beaumont's letters, see my 'Francis Beaumont's Verse Letters to Ben Jonson and "The Mermaid Club"', *English Manuscript Studies*, 12 (2005), 139–78.

[37] Greg, 'Bibliography—An Apologia', 259.

the bibliographical equivalent of the principle established by William of Ockham: the simplest explanation is almost always the correct one.

Similar words could be substituted for several reasons other than an attempt to rectify the meaning or spelling of a source document, and such substitutions can seem like particular acts of carelessness: thus, all the miscellany texts of Jonson's epigram 'On Giles and Joan' (*Epig.* XLII) derive from scribal copies of the 1616 *Workes*. One intermediary changed 'free' to 'good' in line 5 giving rise to two other manuscripts with that reading. In order to make better sense, the text of British Library, Sloane MS 1489 has been altered in line 5 from 'By' to 'With'; whilst, in line 3, the text of Folger, MS V.a.339 reads 'ever' rather than 'her'. This is not unusual. All the other copies of the poem have similar substitutions: in Bodleian, Ashmole MS 47 'yearn'd' in line 11 reads 'yeare and'; in Bodleian, MS Don e.6 'sad' is substituted for 'harsh' in line 10, and 'earnd' for 'yearn'd' in line 11; Folger, MS V.a.345 reads 'doe' for 'can' in line 2, and 'to' for 'with' in line 16; whilst the printed miscellany *Wits Interpreter* has 'mome' for 'morne' in line 2, 'comming' for 'turning' in line 8, 'yarnd' for 'yearn'd' in line 11 and 'thing' for 'things' in line 17.[38] The change of 'comming' for 'turning' is a particularly good example of how an intermediary might simplify a text with the more obvious word.

Similar words could be substituted owing to memorial transmission: this was particularly true for songs and ballads where music, sometimes now lost, formed a basis through which texts could be communicated and learned. Subsequent scribal copies would then descend from the variant memorial text. Thus, Clerimont's song from *Epicoene*, 'Still to be neat, still to be dressed' (I.i.91–102), survives in at least 22 manuscript copies and three printed miscellanies. Line 9 ('Robes loosely flowing, haire as free,') shows probable signs of having been influenced from memory. In several manuscripts, 'loosely' either reads 'rudely' or 'sweetly'; in other manuscripts 'flowing' is replaced by 'hanging'. Such changes do not have their origin in a mistranscription; rather they reveal an assumed familiarity with the text.

Some substitutions are of a more deliberate nature, and some reflect shared prejudices and attitudes. In *Pseudo-Martyr*, it was almost certainly the compositor, and not a difficulty with the copy, that was responsible for a gender slur on the Pope, whose claim to authority as '*Supreame ſpiritiual Princeſſe*, ouer all Princes' was corrected by Donne in his errata to '*Prince*'.[39] Similarly, Bodleian, Rawlinson Poetry MS 62, a manuscript

[38] Stemmata will be provided for all of Jonson's poems where more than four copies survive in my forthcoming Oxford edition of *The Poems of Ben Jonson*.
[39] J. Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* (STC 7048; 1610), G2^{r} and ¶2^{v}.

of Cambridge origin, changed 'A London Cuckold . . .' in 'Cock Lorrell' to read 'An Oxford Cuckold', reflecting the rivalry between the two universities.[40] Fear might also play its part and cause an intermediary to alter a text. In 1621, Robert Jenison, who was in Newcastle, trusted the publication of a sermon to his friend Richard Sibbes, who toned down some of the phrasing after the book had been licensed. Jenison was not best pleased, and wrote to Samuel Ward, Master of Sidney-Sussex College, Cambridge, about the matter, noting that Sibbes had changed 'owne nation' to 'neighbour nations', and 'forbidden marriages with women popishly affected' to 'unfortunate marriages . . .'.[41]

A particular form of substitution is abbreviation, where the idea is communicated but the phrasing simplified. Hence, when Jonson visited William Drummond in Scotland, Drummond preserved fragments of the comments that Jonson had made in two manuscripts. These reported texts are clearly condensed. The principal manuscript was copied by Sir Robert Sibbald around 1700 and probably destroyed in a fire at Penicuik in the late nineteenth-century. The second manuscript repeats a number of the anecdotes from this lost source. It is therefore possible to compare Drummond's text of these stories with Sibbald's transcript, and what is evident is that Sibbald repeatedly substituted a shorter phrase than found in Drummond's version of the text.[42]

As well as word substitution, inaccurate word separation may give rise to variants. The example from 'On Giles and Joan' where 'yearn'd' becomes 'yeare and' illustrates the problem and its consequences. In manuscripts, a momentary lifting of the pen might mislead later readers into thinking that two words were intended rather than one. Similarly, two words might be merged into one. In printed texts, word separation was basic to the justification of the page and so compositors tended to take more care with spacing than they did with the accuracy of their work as a whole. Hence, the only adjustment to the forme that happened during a stop-press correction two-thirds of the way through printing $A2^{v}/A3^{r}$ of Jonson's 'Horace his Art of Poetry' in the 1640 *Workes* (STC 14754) was the alteration of the final line of $A3^{r}$ where 'Andwealth . . . ;and brought' was respaced 'And wealth . . . ; and brought'.

A common form of variation is transposition, which occurs when the order of two words is switched. For instance (and to revert to an earlier

[40] Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Poetry MS 62, $f.32^{r-v}$.
[41] Bland, 'Invisible Dangers' 165–6. The book was *The height of Israels heathenish idolatorie* (STC 14991; 1621). Jenison's letter, in which he describes the 'timorousness' of Sibbes, is Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 73, f.29.
[42] See, M. B. Bland, 'Further Information', 145–86.

example), one manuscript of Clerimont's song from *Epicoene* ('Still to be neat . . .') records the text as 'Haires looselie flowinge, roabs as free' (Edinburgh University, Laing MS 436) rather than as 'Robes looselie flowing, haire as free'. Once again, this is a sign of a copy influenced by memorial patterns of transmission, or at least a very casual transcript. As with word substitution, transposition is commonly found in texts with musical settings and songs from plays that are sometimes copied. It should not be assumed, however, that the source of the text was a play or performance. In one instance, Jonson must have circulated Karolin's song from *The Sad Shepherd* (I.v.65–80) separately, as the play was incomplete at his death: it survives in 15 manuscript copies and four printed miscellanies. The second line ought to read 'Either what Death, or Love is well', but several scribal copies transpose the middle of the line to read 'Love, or Death'. Compositors also memorized texts in short sections whilst setting type, and so they might transpose words or punctuation marks: hence, on $Z2^{v}$ of *The Underwood* in Jonson's 1640 *Workes*, the preliminary setting reads '*done? . . . slave:*' (ll. 31, 33) and the revised setting '*done: . . . slave?*'.

A more substantial kind of transposition can occur when two parts of a text are moved in relation to one another. Sometimes this happens when a text has an oral tradition like 'Cock Lorrell' where the order of the stanzas is sometimes rearranged. Other transpositions may occur because the layout of the source document is more complicated than usual. Thus, Jonson's 'An Epitaph . . . on Vincent Corbett' survives in six manuscript copies. The most important of these is the placard prepared for Corbett's funeral (Beinecke Library, Osborn MS fb230), which is laid out in columns and includes poems by John Selden (whose father was a neighbour) and Richard Corbett, Vincent's son.[43] Of the remaining five manuscripts, two start the poem at line 7, and in one case (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS MA1057), lines 1–6 are moved to the end of the epitaph. The other copy is a later version from the same tradition. It seems likely that the complex arrangement of the text had something to do with the displacement, and then loss, of the first six lines.

As well as being prone to the variants of the kind so far outlined, the transmission of the text might be affected by several forms of omission. The last example noticed how a source document might lead to a partial

[43] Selden's father was the tenant at Twickenham of Christopher Jonson (see Jonson's will: PROB 11/90, ff.86^{r}–87^{v}), the neo-Latin poet, sometime schoolmaster at Winchester, and member of the Royal College of Physicians from the time Donne's stepfather was president. The Seldens and Corbetts lived there along with Francis Bacon and, later, Lucy Countess of Bedford. It is also very near where Donne lived during his years of removal from London. See also, G. J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship* (Oxford, 2009), 1–8.

loss of text; an earlier example suggested how an absent letter might lead to an attempted resolution of a reading; the next level of omission is that of an absent word, epithet, or phrase; or what is known as simple omission. This is surprisingly common in early modern texts, and the causes range from carelessness and distraction, through an inability to read a document being copied, to deliberate abbreviation, and private or official censorship. We tend to think of the last as affecting entire texts, but a defter hand might simply omit or alter a word or a phrase.

Scribal omission is so common as to affect almost every manuscript tradition of any complexity. Two of the scribal copies of 'On Giles and Joan', for instance, have omissions: Bodleian, Ashmole MS 47 lacks 'neighbours' in line 2, and Folger, MS V.a.345 'repents' in line 3. Once a text is affected like this, it is almost impossible to recover a lost word unless comparison is made with another copy. In some cases, it is possible to see that a scribe was confused by the copy. The transcript of 'Cock Lorrell' in Folger, V.a.345 has a space in the text where 'vp' should be at line 34; earlier at line 18 the last three words 'and greene sauce' are also wanting. Similarly, with 'An Expostulation with Inigo Jones', the copy in University of Nottingham, MS Pw 2V 154 has a space where 'giuing' ought to be in line 75, as in 'giuing his mind that way'. Such spaces suggest either an intention to return to a difficulty in the copy, or an awareness that the source copy itself was deficient at that point.

Printed texts were frequently affected by simple omissions, and might be indicated in the errata. In a number of cases such errata are accompanied by the comments of either the printer or the author. William Stansby (or his corrector) remarked that:

> Some things haue escaped, others beene mistaken, partly by the absence of him who penned this Treatise, partly by the vnleage-ablenesse of his hand in the written coppy; . . .[44]

Authors might equally admit as much. John Sanford excused:

> the faults herein escaped, thorough ouersight of the Printers; my sicknesse at that time, and the distance of place, not giuing me leaue to be alwayes present . . . the compositors omitting, or not well reading the wordes interlined, wherein I sometimes corrected myselfe, haue thrust in their owne coniectures.[45]

[44] A. Roberts, *An exposition vpon the hundred and thirtie psalme* (STC 21073; 1610), O4^{r}. See also, Bland, 'William Stansby and the Production of *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson*, 8–10; McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order 1450–1830*, 97–165.
[45] P. du Moulin, *A defence of the Catholicke faith*, ed. J. Sanford (STC 7322; 1610), A4^{v}.

Poor handwriting and interlined copy, combined with the absence of the author might easily lead to every form of variant so far described in combination with one another. Even under the best of circumstances, with an author revising the proofs, variants and stop-press corrections were inevitable; and the bigger the book, the more likely it was that the text would have not only misreadings, but omissions. In 1617, Samuel Purchas explained that 'many faults haue passed in many Copies; though I thinke not so many in the worst, as in the former Edition, by almost a thousand.'[46] Whilst in his translation of Montaigne, John Florio recorded 127 references to classical texts that had been omitted by the compositors. Florio's presentation copy to Sir Thomas Egerton tells another more complex story, being corrected by Florio throughout with many omissions added back in.[47] Once a text had been set, it was very difficult to restore such material if it meant resetting large blocks of text and readjusting formes. If a compositor had to restore text, he worked by adjusting every line before and after the one affected until the text would 'fit'. Another option was to add the missing text as a marginal note: in Jonson's *Discoveries*, for instance, the word *Thiefe* has an asterisk added and in the margin is added 'with a great belly'.[48] This is clearly not a note as such, but an omission in the text. Such methods were usually only enlisted as a measure of the last resort: many an author must have had to accept the loss of a phrase or a word through oversight and only the conscientious or offended would have recorded the slip.[49]

In some cases, it is clear that the omission was deliberate and may have been required by authority. Seventeenth-century texts were usually censored for theological or political reasons, but the more modern issue of explicit sexual description could also cause a poised censorial pen to delete what was perceived as inappropriate. The fact that several of Donne's elegies including 'To his Mistress Going to Bed', did not appear in the 1633 *Poems* is well known. A more subtle example is Jonson's 'Epigram. To my Bookseller' (*Und*. 58): a poem that has no manuscript witnesses. Editors have been perplexed by a space enclosed by square brackets in the middle of line 12:

> Like a rung Beare, or Swine: grunting out wit
> As if that part lay for a [ ] most fit!

[46] S. Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage* (1617), STC 20507, 5D4^{v}.
[47] M. de Montaigne, *The essayes or morall, politicke and millitarie discourses* (STC 18041; 1603): Huntington Library, shelfmark RB 61889, dated 20 January 1603.
[48] Jonson, *Discoveries*, paragraph 34. The compositor divided the anecdote.
[49] See, Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, 235–6.

The omission is an obscenity. Jonson is referring to a Greek pun that is found in Homer, Xenophon, and Aristophanes: χοιριδιον is the word both for piglet and the female genitalia: hence the deletion. The pun was later exploited by Rochester in the song '*Faire Chloris* in a Pigsty lay', as well as explicitly alluded to in 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' where the poet compares present failure with past history, being a man:

> On whom each Whore Relieves her tingling Cunt
> As Hoggs on Gates doe rubb themselves and grunt (ll.64–5).[50]

More substantial omissions might have several causes. When a word or idea is repeated, or similar words occur in close conjunction, then the intervening words or phrases might be omitted owing to 'eyeskip'. Once this has occurred, all subsequent copies that derive from that source will be affected. For instance, Jonson's 'An Execration upon Vulcan' survives in an original version, an early revision in the mid-1620s, and a late revision in the 1630s. Some copies of the early revision have one line affected by an omission. The affected passage reads in full:

> Or fix'd in the *Low-Countryes*, where you might,
> On both sides, doe your mischiefe with delight;
> Blow vp, and ruine; mine, and countermine;
> Vse your Petards, and Granads, all your fine
> Engines of Murder, and enioy the praise
> Of massacring Mankinde, so manie wayes. (ll.203–8)

One of the early copies of the revision omitted two lines, jumping from 'ruine;' halfway through line 205 to 'and enjoy . . .' in line 207. In all, nine of the 20 extant manuscripts derive from this copy, which was the most widely circulated of any version of the text. What is more unusual is that the skip happens in a medial position, where metre could have been affected; slippage of this kind is more common in prose texts.

In verse, it is common to find the omission of standard lengths, often a line or a couplet. Such omissions are usually a consequence of eyeskip and are common in verse. Hence, the anonymous 'Whoso termes Loue a fire' survives in 26 manuscript copies, nine of which omit line 16. Likewise London Metropolitan Archives, MS ACC/1360/528, which attributes 'Variety' to Nicholas Hare, lacks line 64.[51] Three of the

[50] Love (ed.), *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, 13–15 and 39–40.
[51] M. B. Bland, 'Nicholas Hare's "Variety" and the Clitherow Miscellany', Baton Rouge, February 2008. The editors of the Donne Variorum have accepted the reattribution.

manuscripts of Francis Beaumont's letter to Jonson, 'The Sunn (which doth the greatest comfort bringe . . .)' omit line 80, and a fourth substitutes a non-authorial line; another group of manuscripts omits lines 71–4.[52] Similarly, the manuscript copies of Jonson's verse letter 'To Sir Robert Wroth' (*Forr.* III), in Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Poetry MS 31 and British Library, Harley MS 4064 reveal that two lines were omitted from that poem in the 1616 *Workes*: the forthcoming Oxford edition will restore them.[53]

The omission of a standard length could involve a large blook of text, such as a page, sheet, or quire. This usually happened because part of a source document had gone astray, or two pages were turned over at once. Given such a gap, a later intermediary might, if they could, conflate sources to 'restore' the missing text. Often the person who did this was unaware that distinct textual traditions were being mixed. Authorial statements about lost material, on the other hand, ought to be treated with some circumspection: Jonson's claim to have lost the last part of his 'Epistle. To the Countess of Rutland' (*Forr.* XII) has been shown from manuscript evidence to be a polite fiction. With *Eupheme* (*Und.* 84) there is a note in the text that 'A whole quaternion in the middle of this Poem is lost, containing entirely the three next pieces of it': most of the other poems survive in manuscript, whereas the missing texts do not. It is quite possible that the work was never finished.

As well as omissions, variants can be created through the addition or substitution of material. In texts with a strong oral tradition, such as 'Cock Lorrell', additional stanzas might be added. An editor has to make a decision about the genuineness of such material and therefore its place in the textual tradition. This can be established by determining where the additions come in the history of transmission. With 'Cock Lorrell', five of the 29 manuscripts and at least two printed copies of the 1640 *Workes* with scribal marginalia contain an extra stanza that begins 'Then broil'd and broacht on a butchers pricke . . .'. The position varies between witnesses, appearing variously as stanza 5, 7, 9, and 14. None of the witnesses is of high authority, and one of them was written in the nineteenth-century by the forger John Payne Collier who added another stanza to the ballad beginning 'A carted whore a forc'd bakemeat was . . .'.[54] Inevitably, Collier's version of the 'butchers pricke'

[52] Bland, 'Francis Beaumont's Verse Letters to Ben Jonson', 139–78.

[53] The lines follow on from l.60 and allude to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I.111–12.

[54] One copy of the 1640 *Workes* is at Harvard, the other is in my possession. Collier's forgery is Rosenbach Library, MS 1083/15. The other manuscripts are British Library, Egerton MS 923 and Additional MS 27879, National Library of Wales, MS 12443A and Beinecke Library, Osborn MS 62.

is variant (it begins 'Then brought he stuckt vppon . . .') from the other witnesses, which are broadly contemporary with the ballad and reflect its popularity and social history in the mid-seventeenth-century. In more extreme circumstances, where a text was known to be imperfect, it might be 'rectified' with the addition of material from another source.

Several other kinds of variation are found in texts, although these are less common. For instance, words could be inserted from the margin if a note was not understood to be such. More commonly, a word or phrase might be repeated: this is the reverse of eyeskip. Hence, it was not until the fourth edition of the *Historie of Tithes* (STC 22172.7) that the repeated 'what through constitutions, what through constitutions' on L3^{r}, was corrected.[55] In a printed text, a compositor may try to rectify that problem by removing the extra text and respacing the line as well as, possibly, those lines before and after. When this happens, the compositor has to be careful not to open up a river of white space through the middle of the page as this impedes reading. On the other hand, a word or phrase may fail to be repeated because the intermediary or compositor thinks that the repetition is redundant, or because it is assumed (as with a chorus) that the text is sufficiently familiar for '&c.' to be satisfactory: Beinecke Library, MS Osborn b62, for instance, records a chorus after each verse of 'Cock Lorrell' as 'Hi downe downe, &c' the 'chorus' is found in full in another music manuscript, New York Public Library, Drexel MS 4257.

Scribes and compositors might sometimes add an extra syllable into a word, which might or might not make sense. One of the variants in 'Variety', common to several manuscripts, is 'immedicinable' instead of 'immedicable', and similarly the uncorrected state of P1^{r} line 31 in the 1640 text of the *Discoveries* reads 'Catalumnie' not 'Calumnie'. Similarly extra punctuation marks might be added, especially either hyphens or parenthetical closures; or, again, the parenthesis may be opened but not closed. For those without a knowledge of Greek (or Hebrew), variants might also arise owing to unfamiliarity with the alphabet: most of the manuscripts of 'An Expostulation with Inigo Jones', for instance, get 'Σχηνοποίος' (stagemaker) in line 60 wrong.

Greek ligatures in the early modern period were highly complex and the transition from the Greek to a Roman alphabet could easily result in variant readings.[56] The problem was well known to scholars of classical texts, and it was on this point that Jonson launched his attack on Jones:

[55] Bland, 'Invisible Dangers', 170–7 (176).
[56] The essential article on Greek ligatures is W. H. Ingram, 'The Ligatures of Early Printed Greek', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 7 (1966), 371–89.

> M^r^: Surueyour, you that first beganne
> From Thirty pound, in pipkins, to the man
> You are: from them, leap't forth an Architect,
> Able to talke of EUCLIDE! and correct
> Both him, and ARCHIMEDE! Damne ARCHYTAS
> The Noblest Inginere, that euer was!
> Controll CTESIBIUS! ouer-bearìnge vs
> With mistooke names, out of VITRUVIUS! (ll.1–8).

Against 'Ctesibius' in Jonson's copy of *De Architectura*, a contemporary hand has written 'Clesbius. Ar[undel]. passim'. The hand is not that of Marquard Gude, who notes that the copy was collated 'in Anglia' with the Arundel manuscript. Gude was a professor at Schleswig Holstein and a Counsellor at the Danish court in the mid-seventeenth-century. His library was dispersed at auction in Hamburg on 4 August 1706.[57] After the auction, the volume returned to England and was owned by Philip, Lord Hardwicke in the eighteenth-century. The collation with the Arundel manuscript must have taken place before the volume made its way to Denmark during the Civil War.

Jonson's point is that Jones is guilty both of overbearing pedantry and false scholarship. Ctesibius of Alexandria was a third-century B.C. engineer, who sought to regulate wind and water as mechanisms to control power and time. His name occurs in *De Architectura* at the beginning of a discussion about water-clocks (IX.8). What the collation of Barbari's edition with the Arundel manuscript reveals, therefore, is a variant error in an ancient manuscript based on a mistranscription of the Greek. For Jonson, Jones is a charlatan because he relies on his professional status, and the antiquity of a manuscript, as evidence rather than possessing the palaeographical, historical, philological, and textual skills to understand that 'Clesbius' is an early mistranscription.

One of the inevitable consequences of variant texts, especially those that are not understood, or are perceived to be wrong, is that attempts will be made to correct them. Such attempts are almost always in error because the earlier history is irrecoverable to the person making the attempt, or because the source copy was not consulted when the change was made. There are, in addition, variants in printed texts that have been caused as part of the process of proof correction that were other than intended at the time, either because the marginal annotations were

[57] [M. Gude], *Bibliotheca Exquisitissimus Libris . . . à Viro Illustri Domino Marquardo Gudio* (Kiel, 1706). The volume is listed under 'Libri cum manuscriptis collati vel notis autographis doctorum virorum illustrati', 3S2^v^ item 8. It is now in Boston Public Library, shelfmark **G.401.66.

misunderstood, or because the change necessitated a further adjustment to the line.[58] Jonson's extensive corrections to sheets C and F of *The Fountaine of Selfe-Love* (as *Cynthias Revels* was first called) caused the compositors both textual and spacing problems (which then confused Simpson when he collated the text). Thus at C2^{v} line 7, the reading 'Gods i'le' was altered to 'Gods il'e'' (instead of 'Gods, il'e' with a comma), because the marginal annotation that was probably mean to indicate a comma was instead misunderstood as an instruction to shift the apostrophe.[59]

Mistakes in proof correction were more common than is usually assumed and need to be taken into consideration as a possible cause of variant texts. Consider I.iv.96–7 in the folio version of *King Lear*, and the same passage in the quarto (the line breaks have been marked):'

> Truth's a dog muſt to kennell, hee muſt bee | whipt out, when theLady Brach may ſtand by'th'fire | and ſtinke. (F: 2q4^{v})
>
> Truth is a dog muſt to kenell, hee muſt bee whipt | out, when Lady oth'e Brach may ſtand by the fire and ſtincke. (Q1: C4^{v})

The folio text is unevenly spaced (the compositor made a dog's dinner of setting the text), with three spaces closed up, whilst the quarto is evenly and fully set: at the visual level of workmanship, therefore, the folio looks suspect, although there is clearly an error in the quarto. As a consequence, the phrase 'the Lady brach' has been accepted as correct because 'brach' is a reasonably common word from the period for a bitch-hound. Yet editors have been uneasy: in part, because 'Lady' in the context is redundant; and, in part, because the quarto reading raises other possibilities. Although in error, the 1608 quarto version matters because it has to have derived from a source *manuscript*, however egregious the mistakes made in the *printed* text; whereas the folio copy has been shown to be a mixture of a different manuscript *and* a copy of the quarto (and possibly the second quarto) as well. The first quarto therefore has an independent authority, whereas the folio must in some way be derivative of it.[60]

Instead of accepting the folio text of *Lear* and attempting to resolve the issue through literary means, the first step must be to understand

[58] For a list of early modern proof-sheets, see Moore, *Primary Materials*, 65–86; also, P. Simpson, *Proof-reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1935).
[59] STC 14773, 1601; H&S, IV, 5–17.
[60] As well as the books referred to in footnote 18 above, see T. H. Howard-Hill, 'The Problem of Manuscript Copy for Folio *King Lear*', *The Library*, VI: 4 (1982), 1–24; and, P. W. K. Stone, *The Textual History of* King Lear (London, 1980).

how the quarto text came to read as it did.[61] There are, at least, four explanations that are possible, depending on whether the manuscript copy read 'the Ladie brach' (as found in the folio), 'the Ladie o'the brach', 'the Ladie, or the brach', or 'the Ladie o'the brace'.

If the source copy read 'the Ladie brach', then the compositor must have set 'Ladie brach', in order for the corrector to indicate that the insertion of 'the' was necessary—which the compositor then placed after 'Ladie' rather than before it. Next, either the compositor assumed that a further correction was necessary, or a further revise was pulled and the corrector compounded the error. Either way, one or both of them did not understand that a 'brach' was a bitch-hound and so turned the word into a noun, misinserting *o* with an apostrophe in order to correct 'Ladie the brach'. It is, in other words, quite a difficult process to get from the folio reading to the one found in the quarto.

The second alternative is that the compositor set 'Ladie brach' or 'the Ladie brach' where the copy read 'the Ladie o'the brach'. The meaning would be that the 'Ladie' who stands by the fire is not the bitch-hound but her spoilt daughter. The marginal note instructed the compositor to insert 'o'the' in the line and possibly 'the' before 'Ladie', but the lack of space was a problem; if 'the' was present before 'Ladie', it was pulled out and used for the other part of correction, with the apostrophe then inserted in the wrong place. This is possible, but the indirect role of the bitch-hound does make it the least likely reading as some of the force of the comparison is lost.

The third alternative implies that the compositor set 'Ladie othe brach', or 'the Ladie, or brach', for 'the Ladie, or the brach'. This reading implies direct sarcasm, with the dignity of 'Ladie' immediately undercut by the crudity of 'brach'. In this instance, the corrector might have noted in the margin '˄ the r' with an insert mark before 'Ladie' and slash through 'othe'. Unable to insert 'the' before 'Ladie' and realizing that 'other' could not be correct, the compositor assumed 'r' was an apostrophe and inserted it where the slash seemed to indicate. The other alternative is that a slash after 'or' went through the 'r' instead, so that the compositor assumed 'or' should be corrected to 'othe'—or else he was saving space. The assumption would be that 'oth'e' is the garbled result of correction made without reference to copy.

The final version, 'the Ladie o'the brace' involves the most radical emendation and the simplest explanation. If an 'h' had previously been misdistributed to the 'e' box, the compositor would have set 'Ladie

[61] Blayney, *The Texts of* King Lear, 5–8.

othe brach' by accident and omitted the initial 'the' because it did not fit. If this were the case then a corrector would have placed a mark before 'Ladie' to add 'the', a slash through 'othe' with an apostrophe in the margin, and another slash through the 'h' of 'brach' with an 'e' in the margin. When the compositor saw the note '^ the ' e', he ignored the slash in 'brach' and read it as a single instruction to emend the text as 'oth'e brach' rather than 'o'the brace'. No editor has proposed such an emendation because of the status traditionally accorded the folio text.

Depending on the view one takes of the relationship between the quarto and folio versions of *Lear*, and the extent to which one estimates how much of the folio might derive from the quarto, will affect editorial judgment about the likely validity of the alternative explanations. For some, 'the Lady brach' will be the line of least resistance in an attempt to make sense of the apparently corrupt text; whether or not its reading and redundancy are genuine. To start from the quarto text, however, is to open up a range of issues about the ways in which variants occur. Whilst we cannot know the original reading for certain, it is worth understanding the alternatives because only then can all the possibilities be properly assessed: to assert the folio reading without understanding the problem diminishes the value of the critical judgment being made.

The Pursuit of Difference

For textual scholars, variants matter because it is primarily through them that the history of the transmission of a text can be understood: hence the necessity of recording all the differences between each witness; and, therefore, recording the repetition of every difference as this enables one group of documents to be distinguished from the others. In order to determine difference, it is necessary to collate (in so far as possible or reasonable) every copy of a text in manuscript, print, inscription, or other form of extant record. Collation is simply a method of gathering information through the comparison of one witness with another that requires the primary skill of accuracy in the observation of lexical changes, spelling, punctuation, and, sometimes, the arrangement of the text on the page, in all their possible permutations: that information is essential if a full account of the textual history is to be rendered.[62]

[62] For a salutary and cautionary view of the value of collation, see J. A. Dane, 'The Notion of the Variant and the Zen of Collation', *The Myth of Print Culture: Essays on Evidence, Textuality, and Bibliographical Method* (Toronto, 2003), 88–113. In practical terms 1:1 plastic transparencies are sufficient for most collation work provided that sample variant copies are checked with a McLeod or Comet collator (which use mirrors to unify the images).

The collation of manuscript and printed texts is based on different approaches, for printed texts will differ from one edition to another, as well as within an edition owing to stop-press correction. The uniformity of print within an edition (except for stop-press variants) enables the direct comparison of copies by comparing images with a collator, or by using a 1:1 transparency from a master copy and placing this over the text being collated. Such methods will reveal any stop-press correction. Differences between manuscripts, on the other hand, as well as between different printed editions, require a complete transcription of the text to be prepared before a comparison can be made.[63] However, once a complete digital record of a text is made, it is then possible to use software to identify the textual differences.

In practical terms, it may be necessary to collate up to 80 copies of a printed edition in order to ensure that every stop-press correction is recorded; the most difficult to locate being the intermediate corrections when the forme was opened up twice to alter a part of the text.[64] Usually intermediate variants indicate something about the production history of the volume and may occur after the large paper copies have been printed. This is because large paper copies of seventeenth-century books did not generally have their margins readjusted, and so presswork could begin immediately after the stop-press corrections had been made. For printed editions where fewer than 80 publicly owned copies are readily accessible, and where the text is of some length, it is useful to collate a sufficient number—that is as many as to suffice that when no further variants have been recorded for 10–12 copies after the last one was found, it is likely that the list of stop-press variants is complete.

Establishing the order of variants (that is the preliminary and later revised states) is often self-evident from the nature of the corrections involved, but not always so. If we were to think of collation in terms of set theory, it might show that five out of 20 copies of a hypothetical text read 'and', and the remainder 'but'; of those five 'and' copies two have 'kind' and 'just', and the other three 'good' and 'wise'. We would then know that within the history of this text there was a group of 'and' witnesses (five), and a larger group of 'but' witnesses (15). If this was a printed text, we would want to know whether the 'but' copies read 'kind' and 'just' or 'good' and 'wise'. Let us assume that the 'but' copies

[63] See also, F. T. Bowers, 'Transcription of Manuscripts: The Record of Variants', *Studies in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 212–64.

[64] The observation is based on my own collations of Jonson's 1616 and 1640 *Workes*: for some parts of the text 40–50 copies would have been satisfactory, for others the last variants were not found until 65–80 copies had been collated.

read 'kind/just'. What we would then know is that the preliminary state of the forme read 'and/good/wise'; about 15 per cent of the way through, the press was stopped and the forme opened up with 'kind/just' substituted for 'good/wise'. Then, about a quarter of the way through, the forme was opened up again with 'but' substituted for 'and'. Thus we would have a preliminary state, a first revise, and a final revise. Three-quarters of all copies would have the fully corrected final state.

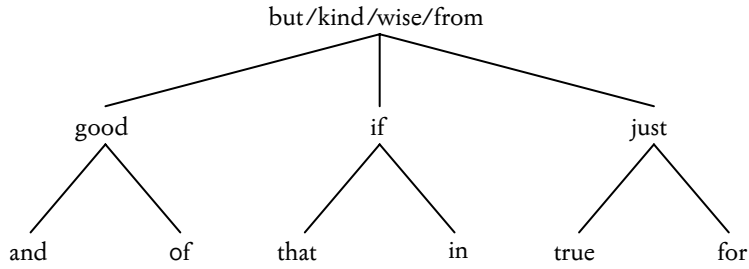
So far, so simple; if the edition was the only witness to the text, an editor would draw the conclusion that 'but/kind/just' was the corrected version and proceed accordingly. The information about the first revise would be informative about the printing history, but not have a bearing on editorial decision-making. However if, ten years later, a second edition was printed from a copy of the first edition, then the state of that copy would have a bearing on what happened subsequently. Imagine that the second edition reads 'if/true/wise'. The presence of 'wise' might indicate that a preliminary state of the first edition was used as copy, and that 'if' and 'true' were new revisions of the original setting—in other words, that the text had been revised for a second time in a different way. Or imagine that the second edition read 'and/true/just': the evidence would then suggest that a copy of the first revise had been altered. Such distinctions reveal an added level of complexity to the revision process and present an editor with distinct alternatives. This can happen easily and, perhaps, unwittingly: when Jonson returned to *Sejanus* for the 1616 *Workes*, he worked with an uncorrected forme outer M from the 1605 Quarto, and he revised it in a second different way.[65]

With manuscripts, and with printed texts from different editions, the collation of variants will demonstrate how copies of a text descended from one witness to another. This method of analysis is known as stemmatics. Stemmata work in two directions: the closer one is to the top, the more it is possible to make a pragmatic reconstruction of what the original document(s) looked like. As they proceed downwards and outwards, stemmata map the social history and circulation of the text. In this sense the variant is less significant as an 'error', than as a key to establishing and tracing various networks and relationships. Hence, the use of stemmata for different texts and authors that are present in the same manuscripts may yield information about the origins of some texts and make more specific the history of those documents whose first associations have yet to be identified.

[65] See, T. O. Calhoun and T. L. Gravell, 'Paper and Printing in Jonson's *Sejanus* (1605)', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 87 (1993), 13–64 esp. 64: there are four states of outer M.

The problem with the use of stemmatics for early modern texts is that it has been impeded by some careless work. Wolf and Leishman, for instance, claimed that stemmatics were ineffective as a tool for the analysis of miscellanies in the period, but their selection of witnesses was partial and incomplete.[66] Wolf studied Walton Poole's 'If shadows be a picture's excellence', but collated barely half of the 68 surviving copies. His conclusion, that the results were too problematic to be meaningful, needs to be revisited in the light of a more complex and informed understanding of the transmission history of that poem.

For the moment, imagine again a textual history where five of the copies read 'and/good/wise/from', five copies 'but/good/wise/of', two copies 'if/kind/wise/that', two copies 'if/kind/wise/in', four copies 'but/true/just/from' and two copies 'but/kind/just/for'. After drawing together the common elements, and separating the distinctive readings, the stemmata would be constructed as follows:



What the diagram demonstrates is that the original reading was 'but/kind/wise/from': ten of the manuscripts read 'good' and of those five have the reading 'and', with five 'of'; four copies read 'if', of which two have 'that', and two 'in'; six copies read 'just', four of which have 'true', and two 'wise'. Hence we can establish that the readings 'but' and 'from' are common to the groups that read 'good' and 'just'; the reading 'kind' is common to the groups that read 'if' and 'just'; and the reading 'wise' is common to the groups that read 'good' and 'if': these must be, therefore, the earlier readings that the other copies descend from, and we would expect further differentiation to occur within each group. What we also know is that each of the three families can be identified by a variant that is common to that line of descent alone.

[66] J. B. Leishman, 'You Meaner Beauties of the Night. A Study in Transmission and Transmogrification', *The Library*, IV: 26 (1945), 99–123; E. Wolf II, '"If shadows be a picture's excellence": An Experiment in Critical Bibliography', *PMLA*, 63 (1948), 831–57.

For most texts, the stemmatic analysis of variants will establish the historical relationship between different witnesses. Unfortunately, if a copy from one line of recension is conflated with that from another group, then contamination of the text will take place when the versions are mixed.[67] Whilst conflation is not always an issue, it can happen and when it does the analysis of the variants will reveal common elements that contradict the remaining evidence. Sometimes, it is possible to identify the source of the conflation, but when a text is anonymous and the direction of the manuscript history is difficult to establish, then contamination between traditions may pose particular problems.

Harold Love, for instance, was particularly interested in restoration satire and libertine verse. For Love, the problem of contamination is compounded by that of direction. In other words, if one does not know what the source text ought to be, then the analysis of the variants and the contamination between independent lines of recension becomes more opaque and much depends upon whether a particular line of recension can be established. Such analysis has to begin with an assumption that a certain version of the text represents a likely point of departure and then see what happens when the collations are prepared. Under such a scenario, it may be possible to construct the stemmata in two or more different ways and to have distinct versions and variations from such a text. This simply points to the other problem with which this chapter began: authors revise, sometimes more than once, and when one analyzes the material, that fact needs to be borne in mind.

Through an understanding of both how error is transmitted and of how copies of a text are related, it becomes possible to establish a list of variants that cannot be readily explained by the processes of scribal or printed transmission. That final irreducible group of variants must then either be the consequence of revision by whoever was responsible for the text, or caused by a later and deliberate intervention in its history. It is the privilege of an author to vary a text as they wish; to return to ideas that were first discarded, and to add or remove material as they see fit. Every author is likely to do this more than once, and in many different ways. Any stemmatic analysis may need to recognize that there was more than one document of origin, and that distinct and separate traditions of transmission exist. Revision has always been part of the creative process.

Sometimes, of course, the difference between an author and a later reviser, or a second hand, is easy to discern; on other occasions, it may

[67] The problem of contamination is particularly frequent in late medieval texts; see also, H. Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford, 1993); —, *English Clandestine Satire 1660–1702* (Oxford, 2004); and his editions of Rochester (Oxford, 1999) and Buckingham (Oxford, 2007: with R. D. Hume).

not be that simple to demonstrate.[68] An original version might be recast in ways that involve truncation, rewriting, or the creation of additional material, as with 'His Parting from Her'.[69] On other occasions, a work may be the product of two or more people working in tandem, and their revisions will have occurred in a concurrent and semi-independent manner. In other words, when faced with genuine independent variants, the permutation of what is possible needs to be borne in mind given the evidence that is available.

One final comment: it is one thing to identify all the variant readings in a text, another to analyze their causes and demonstrate relationships; yet to do this requires that such information be organized in a way that is intelligible for others to use. Every editorial decision about how to use and record this information is always, as Dane has observed, an act of interpretation; and it is one that will shape the response of others to the methods of analysis.[70] Textual analysis is never entirely neutral, nor is the organization of that information without consequence. It is the exercise of editorial judgment, based on the material and textual understanding of alternatives, which must justify the orchestration of the information in the form that it is received. What an editor does is analyze the genesis and history of the relevant documents to achieve that end.

[68] For instance, M. P. Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case* (Oxford 2003); B. Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author: A historical Study of Five Collaborative Lays* (Oxford, 2002); —, *Counterfeiting Shakespeare: Evidence, Authorship, and John Ford's Funerall Elegye* (Cambridge, 2002).

[69] G. A. Stringer, et al. (eds.), *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, 8 vols. (Bloomington IN, 1995—in progress), II: 335–68.

[70] Dane, 'The Notion of the Variant and the Zen of Collation', 88–113.