
The Editorial Problem of Press Variants: *Q₂ Hamlet* as a Test Case

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THE first good edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* went on sale in 1604 or 1605 and of that initial print run just seven exemplars are known to have survived. The seventh of these was not recognized until 1959, and it is possible that other surviving exemplars may be discovered in the future.¹ The seven surviving exemplars from this first good edition — designated the Second Quarto (*Q₂*) to distinguish it from the preceding First Quarto (*Q₁*), which most readers find markedly inferior — differ from one another in a number of ways. Some of these differences arise from the treatment the exemplars received in the four centuries since they were made, but others were present when they first went on sale, for example, variations in the thickness and absorbency of each sheet of hand-made paper and in the depth of the type's "bite" into the paper each time a human operator pulled the bar to apply pressure in a wooden printing

1. The word *exemplar* is used here for each of the physical objects (individual books) belonging to a single edition. Commonly the word *copy* is used for this purpose, but it has the disadvantage of also being the word used for the document, printed or handwritten, from which the compositor derived the words to be set in type.

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press. One class of differences between the exemplars, however, demands special attention because it raises uncertainty about the words and punctuation of the edition. On occasion, early modern printers would stop a printing press and alter the words, spaces, or punctuation of the type that was impressing the paper, so that exemplars containing pages printed before this interruption will differ from exemplars containing pages printed after it. Each occasion of difference constitutes a so-called press variant. Why such alterations were made is not always clear, but the correction of error in the original setting figures largely in the explanations. This article considers all the press variants in the surviving exemplars of Q₂ *Hamlet* to see if it can be determined in each case which reading witnesses the pre-alteration and which the post-alteration state of the type. This is the essential first step towards determining the readings that best represent the play as Shakespeare wrote it.

The detection of press variants requires the close comparison of all the exemplars, for which task machines can offer assistance. By eye it is possible to detect where letters and punctuation have been changed, but unless the differences are large, this will not reveal where spacing has been adjusted. Better and faster results can be achieved by the superimposition of an image from one exemplar onto an image from another. The first to do this was Charlton Hinman, who adapted an astronomers' process for comparing images of the heavens taken at different times in order to see which objects had moved.² A Hinman Collator presents to the viewer an image from first one and then the other exemplar, switching between them about once every second, so that where the pages are identical the image appears steady but where they differ, due to adjustments to the type, the letters and punctuation appear to shift before the viewer's eyes. Other methods of optically assisted collation include presenting one of the two exemplars to each of the investigator's two eyes so that the brain's processing of visual information makes regions of difference appear to float above the surface of the page³ and, most simply of all, printing images of the pages onto transparencies that can be

2. Charlton Hinman, "Mechanized Collation: A Preliminary Report," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 41 (1947): 99–106; Steven Escar Smith, "'The Eternal Verities Verified': Charlton Hinman and the Roots of Mechanical Collation," *Studies in Bibliography* 53 (2000): 129–62.

3. Gordon Lindstrand, "Mechanized Textual Collation and Recent Designs," *Studies in Bibliography* 24 (1971): 204–14.

slid one over another.⁴ Digital images of the exemplars make it easy to replicate the first and last of the processes in a computer, greatly simplifying the necessary adjustments of scale and translucency.

A press variant will frequently offer a reading that is obviously wrong (in the sense of being not what the author intended) and a reading that is obviously right. The British Library exemplar of Q₂ *Hamlet* has a messenger tell Claudius that “*Laertes* in a riotous head | Ore beares your Officres” (L₁’), while “Officers” is the last word in the other six exemplars. The physical evidence gives no obvious indication of whether the British Library exemplar’s reading represents the state of the type before or after alteration, but if the difference reflects intention rather than accident it makes more sense that someone turned “Officres” into “Officers” than vice versa. However, changes to type need not be intentional. During a print run, type may shift within the plane of the forme so that the spacing between letters and punctuation changes, and it may rise or fall perpendicularly to the forme so that spaces begin to take ink and leave unwanted marks on the paper, or letters and punctuation impress more or less heavily, or not at all. Such unintended alterations, and variations in inking and the obtrusion of small particles (dust, dirt, paper) between the paper and the type, may produce changes to the inked impressions that are difficult to distinguish from deliberate alterations of the type. Ink was applied to the forme by being smeared on from leather balls and loose pieces of type might lift out during this process. Because the forme of type is a mirror-image of the inked impression it leaves on the paper, it would be easy to reinsert two letters in the wrong order and so turn “Officers” into “Officres” inadvertently. We cannot assume that the later (or if more than two, the latest) state of a variant is the one the printers wanted to produce.

Instead of offering an obviously correct and an obviously incorrect reading, many press variants offer alternatives that are about equally acceptable. Indiscretion may serve us well “When our deepe plots doe fall” (N₁’), says Hamlet in the three Q₂ exemplars currently held in England, but “pall” is the last word in the other four exemplars, which is just as good poetically. Help with such cases may arise from the printers’ practice of making changes in groups. In a quarto such as Q₂ *Hamlet*, the compositor making stop-press alterations was faced with four pages

4. Randall McLeod, “A Technique of Headline Analysis, with Application to *Shakespeares Sonnets*, 1609,” *Studies in Bibliography* 32 (1979): 197–210.

of type, either 1^r, 2^v, 3^r, and 4^v (the outer forme), or 1^v, 2^r, 3^v, and 4^r (the inner forme), and would deal with them all before printing recommenced. For each forme, we have only to detect one variant with a clear direction of change (where the states before and after are apparent) to settle the direction of change for all the intentional variants in all pages of the forme. An additional aid comes to hand where there exists another edition independently derived from the ancestral authorial manuscript, since where this agrees with one of the two readings in a press variant the likeliest explanation is that this reading existed in the manuscript copy for both editions and hence is correct. Thus in the specific case of *Hamlet* we have also the 1623 Folio text⁵ (here designated F), which appears to be set from an independent authoritative manuscript,⁶ although it must be borne in mind that the Folio compositors may occasionally have consulted Q3 (a direct reprint of Q2), or Q2 itself, when setting the play, which possibility reduces the significance of F's agreement with one of the readings in a Q2 press variant.⁷ Where F is demonstrably derived from Q2 (directly or via Q3), a nearby occurrence of F's agreement with one reading in a Q2 press variant must fall under suspicion of arising from the same cause rather than showing F and Q2's independent agreement with the ancestral manuscript. However, if one of the two readings in a press variant in Q2 seems a garbled version of the F reading, this would be strong evidence of an authoritative shared copy reading, since the partial disagreement (the garbling) would rule out direct dependence of F on Q2 but would suggest that Q2's compositor failed correctly to read from his copy a word, the same word, that F's compositor managed to discern in his.

Except for stop-press alterations that were bungled, an editor would prefer post-alteration to pre-alteration readings if she believed that the copy was consulted, made sense of, and its authority used to warrant the change. W. W. Greg gave an example from Q1 *King Lear* (1608) where copy was clearly consulted because although the passage concerned re-

5. William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedie* (London: Isaac and William Jaggard for Edward Blount, John Smethwick, Isaac Jaggard and William Aspley, 1623), nn4^v-qq1^v (STC 22273 [F1]).

6. Gary Taylor, "The Folio Copy for *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 44-61.

7. Stanley Wells et al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 396-420.

mained unintelligible the stop-press alteration recovered a couple of undoubtedly correct words (“vntender” > “vntented” and “peruse” > “pierce”) as witnessed in the Folio; these cannot be guesses made to produce sense since the passage nonetheless remained gibberish after these alterations.⁸ However, Greg followed this with an example of the printer clearly making something up, since he turned the meaningless “crulentious” into the acceptable (in context) “tempestious” where F’s reading “contentious” suggests that Q₁’s pre-alteration state arose from difficulty reading the copy.⁹ (As Greg pointed out, the printer making something up is not itself evidence that the copy was not consulted: it might have been looked at and determined to be illegible.) From these examples Greg concluded that there could be no hard-and-fast rule, no presumption that since the compositor “had the manuscript before him we are bound to accept his evidence as to its readings.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, Greg also wrote that “an editor will of course as a rule accept the corrected form of a reading,” except where an accident of the press seems to have necessitated the corrections, or where it seems clear that copy was not consulted to make the changes.¹¹ Hinman and Fredson Bowers proposed the opposite default assumption, that ordinarily copy was not consulted in stop-press alteration and hence the pre-alteration readings have authority because they alone were made from consultation of the copy in the original act of typesetting.¹²

Before we turn to the variants in Q₂ *Hamlet*, one further complication must be considered. In a study of the press variants in Q₁ *King Lear*, Peter W. M. Blayney separated stop-press alteration into its component parts: a proofreader examining a proof-sheet and writing the necessary changes on it, and a compositor altering the type in response to these

8. W. W. Greg, *The Variants in the First Quarto of “King Lear”: A Bibliographical and Critical Inquiry*, Supplements to the Bibliographical Society’s Transactions 15 (London: Bibliographical Society, 1940), 134–5.

9. *Ibid.*, 135–6.

10. *Ibid.*, 136.

11. W. W. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare: A Survey of the Foundations of the Text* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), xlviii.

12. Charlton Hinman, “Mark III: New Light on the Proof-Reading for the First Folio of Shakespeare,” *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950): 145–53, 152; Fredson Bowers, “The Problem of the Variant Forme in a Facsimile Edition,” *Library*, 5th ser., 7, no. 4 (1952): 262–72, 269–70.

instructions.¹³ Naturally, the latter could misunderstand the instructions of the former, or interpret them too literally. Blayney reproduced proofreading symbols from the period, and examples of their misinterpretation. For each press variant in *Q₂ Hamlet* we must bear in mind the possibility of such error. One peculiar kind of error could arise on pages 2^r and 3^r if the proofreader folded his proof-sheet in a certain way.¹⁴ For the inner forme, the proofreader would find it convenient to fold the sheet along the shorter axis (and in the opposite direction to the fold made to produce a gathering in reading order) so that the first page requiring his attention, 1^v, was before him with 4^r to its right. Working forwards through the copy, the proofreader had only to turn over his bifolium proof-sheet to see 2^r on the right and 3^v on the left and could correct those in that order. Turning to the inner forme's last page, 4^r, Blayney imagined the proofreader folding the proof-sheet an additional time (along its new shorter axis) so that 3^v touched 2^r and 4^r was in front of him. Unless he were careful, instructions written in the right margin of 3^v might extend into the left margin of 2^r and, if the ink of his pen had not dried when he made this second fold, marks in the body of 3^v (indicating the places the marginal symbols referred to) would be offset at the corresponding lines in the body of 2^r. This combination of errors could produce what would appear to be corrections to 2^r, especially if the compositor subsequently folded the sheet to see one page at a time, as our earliest authority on printing, Joseph Moxon, tells us he should.¹⁵ Recreating the same process for the outer forme shows that page 3^r stands in danger of such miscorrection, picking up marks from the body and right margin of page 2^v. (This is somewhat less likely than the corresponding error on the inner forme, because proceeding in reading order the proofreader's ink marks on 2^v would start to dry while he was working on 3^r, whereas on the inner forme the unwanted transfer would be from a later to an earlier page, 3^v to 2^r, before the ink had time to dry.) We need to be on the alert, therefore, for unnecessary alterations in

13. Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of "King Lear" and their Origins*, vol. 1, *Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto*, New Cambridge Shakespeare Studies and Supplementary Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 219–57.

14. *Ibid.*, 249–50.

15. Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises, or, The Doctrine of Handy-works*, vol. 2, *Applied to the Art of Printing* (London: Joseph Moxon, 1683), Kk3^v (Wing M3014).

pages 2^r and 3^r of each sheet. There need not be variants on the corresponding lines of pages 3^v and 2^v since, as Blayney showed, proofreader's instructions could simply be ignored by the compositor, but there ought to exist on or near those corresponding lines something likely to attract a proofreader's attention.

With the above principles in mind, let us turn to the variants in Q2 *Hamlet*.¹⁶ The most recent Arden edition of *Hamlet*, by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, offers a convenient table of these variants as uncovered by the latest investigations,¹⁷ which I have reorganized to produce Table 1 using Thompson and Taylor's labels of the exemplars,¹⁸ cross-referenced with the labels used by John Dover Wilson in his foundational study of the problem.¹⁹ The order of alteration is as determined by Wilson and by Thompson and Taylor, with virgules isolating the exemplars into sets witnessing the same state of the type for each forme. Thus on

16. For each variant, images from the online databases called Shakespeare Quartos Archive (<http://www.quartos.org>) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Shakespeare Electronic Archive (<http://shea.mit.edu>) were exported to the free open-source graphics software package GIMP, within which were performed computerized versions of two of the comparison techniques described above. For both techniques the images were resized, rotated, and translated to produce perfect superimposition of images of pages (or parts thereof) from different exemplars. The first technique presented the two images to the investigator in rapid succession, making differences between them appear as type shifting across the computer screen, as in the Hinman Collator. For the second technique the images were made opaque and slid across one another, as with McLeod's transparencies.

17. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 524–5.

18. I have departed from Thompson and Taylor's table for one reading. They include, but do not confirm, a recently claimed discovery of a previously undetected reading of "here" (D2^v) in the Yale exemplar (Paul Bertram and Bernice Kliman, *The Three-Text "Hamlet": Parallel Texts of the First and Second Quartos and First Folio*, 2nd ed., with an introduction by Eric Rasmussen, AMS Studies in the Renaissance 39 [New York: AMS Press, 2003], 264). The digital reproduction of it in the MIT Shakespeare Electronic Archive shows Bertram and Kliman to be wrong: the Yale exemplar shares the Huntington exemplar's reading of "hear".

19. John Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and the Problems of Its Transmission: An Essay in Critical Bibliography*, vol. 1, *The Texts of 1605 and 1623*, Shakespeare Problems 4 (New York: Macmillan; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).

TABLE I

The Wilson-Thompson-Taylor View of Stop-Press Correction
in *Q₂ Hamlet*

| Forme | Page | Exemplars in Each State | Readings in Each State |
|-----------|----------------|--|---|
| A (inner) | 1 ^r | F HN Y ² L C ² VER Wro | 1604 1605 |
| B (outer) | 2 ^v | L VER Wro F HN Y ² C ² | Romeage Romadge |
| C (inner) | 2 ^r | F HN Y ² L C ² Ver Wro | pre thee prethee |
| | 3 ^v | | step steepe |
| | 4 ^r | | by buy |
| C (outer) | 2 ^v | C ² Ver Wro HN Y ² FL | watch, watch watcl |
| D (inner) | 2 ^r | HN Y ² FL C ² VER Wro | my my Lord, |
| | 3 ^v | | gines gins |
| D (outer) | 2 ^v | Y ² HN FL C ² VER Wro | hear heare. |
| G (outer) | 1 ^r | L Wro F HN Y ² C ² VER | braues braines |
| | 3 ^r | | [<i>no SD</i>] <i>Exit</i> . |
| L (outer) | 1 ^r | L F HN Y ² C ² VER Wro | Ore beares Ore-beares |
| | 1 ^r | | Officres Officers |
| | 1 ^r | | . <i>A</i> . <i>A</i> |
| N (inner) | 4 ^r | F HN Y ² Wro L C ² VER | Vnice Onixe |
| N (outer) | 1 ^r | F HN Y ² Wro L C ² VER | thirtie thereby thereby |
| | 1 ^r | | pall fall fall |
| | 2 ^v | | sellingly sellingly fellingly |
| | 2 ^v | | dosie dazzie dazzie |
| | 2 ^v | | yaw raw raw |
| | 2 ^v | | neither in neither,in neither,in |
| | 2 ^v | | too't doo't doo't |
| | 2 ^v | | reponsiue reponsiue responsiue |
| | 3 ^r | | be be might be might |
| | 3 ^r | | sir so sir so sir |
| O (inner) | 2 ^r | F HN Y ² C ² VER Wro | G ₂ O ₂ |

Abbreviations for identification of exemplars: HN = Huntington Library = Dev[onshire]; Y² = Yale Elizabethan Club = Huth; F = Folg[er] Shakespeare Library; L = British Library = B[ritish] M[useum]; C² = Trinity College Library Cambridge = Cap[ell]; VER = the earl of Verulam's exemplar at the Bodleian Library = Grim[ston]; Wro = University of Wroclaw = Unknown to Wilson.

forme G (outer) there are two variants: on G₁^r “braues” (witnessed in L and Wro) was, according to the Arden editors, altered to “braines” (witnessed in the other five exemplars) and on G₃^r a stage direction (absent from L and Wro) was added (as witnessed in the other five exemplars).

Two of the formes, C (outer) and N (outer), changed twice, hence two virgules divide the exemplars into three sets, each set witnessing a distinct state of the type. Because Thompson and Taylor write that in their table “the uncorrected state is given first,” it is unclear which they think are the second and third states of “watch, | watch | watcl” in C₂^v, but I have assumed that they list them with the order of correction running down their table. There is no such ambiguity for N (outer) because its third state arises not from one variant containing three readings but from one exemplar, L, being intermediate, having only eight of the ten changes that distinguish exemplars F, HN, Y², and Wro from exemplars C² and VER.²⁰ Thompson and Taylor’s designation of “watch,” as the “uncorrected state” usefully highlights the problem of terminology here, since strictly speaking all the readings are wrong and only “watch.” would be correct. It is more helpful at this stage to refer to the successive states of the type rather than correctness. Wilson rightly determined that this variant is not a matter of intentional alteration since what looks like an “l” at the end of “watcl” is an imperfectly printed “h” and any following punctuation may also be lost.²¹ It is impossible to tell if the incorrect comma was at any stage altered to a period.

The first variant is on the title-page, which in the exemplars F, HN, and Y is dated “1604” and in the rest “1605” (Illus. 1a and 1b).²² Wilson

20. L must be the intermediate state unless one of the rounds of alteration undid the alterations of a previous round, which would be impossible to explain. However, we must still determine which exemplars witness the state of the type before and after L.

21. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet,”* 93–4. Wilson attributed this problem to the edge of the frisket — a mask used to keep the margins clean — obscuring the edge of the block of type, but this is most unlikely. The line in question is not the longest on the page so only a most peculiar non-rectangular frisket could harm the end of this line without harming the ends of longer ones.

22. Illustrations from the Huntington Library and Folger Library exemplars are reproduced from digital images provided online by the Shakespeare Quartos Archive under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 United States Licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/us>), and illustrations from the British Library exemplar are reproduced from the same

argued that the date was changed during the print run because the book was made around the turn of the year;²³ this is possible but would have been rather fussy behavior. It is equally likely that one or other date was simply a compositor's mistake corrected during the run; we have no evidence about the actual year of publication. There is no evidence from type disturbance that could help determine the direction of alteration. The second variant arises in Horatio's account "Of this post hast and [Romeage | Romadge] in the land." (B₂^v, Illus. 2a and 2b), which invokes an unfamiliar sense of the word *rummage* meaning commotion.²⁴ Both spellings are non-standard for the period and equally acceptable, so F's spelling "Romage" (nn5^r) tells us nothing. Nor does anything about the spacing of type indicate the direction of alteration. Possibly the thinnest of spaces was added or removed later in the line to adjust for the difference in width between "e" and "d". Since the change does nothing to improve the reading, it is hard to understand why the printers bothered with it.

The next three variants fall on forme C (inner), starting with Hamlet's rebuke to Horatio — "I [pre thee | prethee] doe not mocke me fellowe student," (C₂^r, Illus. 3a and 3b). Setting "prethee" would be the more usual form, but "pre thee" could arise by unwanted movement of the type in the press during the run. F's reading of "pray thee" (nn6^r) is just another spelling of the same thing, so of no help here. We could rule out such an accident if spacing elsewhere on the line were also adjusted, but it is not: the entire block from "thee" to "student," moved as a unit, left or right depending on our view of the direction of change. Either "pre thee" was intentionally altered to "prethee" by removing the space

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23. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet,"* 124.

24. In the descriptions given here the variant appears within square brackets and its alternative readings are separated by virgules and listed left to right from least-corrected to most-corrected as claimed by Wilson and accepted by Thompson and Taylor. Thus with this variant, some exemplars read "and Romeage in" and others "and Romadge in" and Wilson and Thompson and Taylor believe that the former was corrected to the latter.

Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his
shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in
Fleeststreet. 1604.

Illus. 1a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) title-page.

Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his
shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in
Fleeststreet. 1605.

Illus. 1b: British Library exemplar (L) title-page.

The source of this our watch, and the chiefe head
Of this post hast and Romeage in the land.

Bar. I thinke it be no other, but enso;

Illus. 2a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. B2^v.

The source of this our watch, and the chiefe head
Of this post hast and Romadge in the land.

Bar. I thinke it be no other, but enso;

Illus. 2b: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. B2^v.

Hora. My Lord, I came to see your fathers funerall.

Ham. I pre thee doe not mocke me fellowe student,
I thinke it was to my mothers wedding.

Illus. 3a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. C2^r.

Hora. My Lord, I came to see your fathers funerall.

Ham. I prethee doe not mocke me fellowe student,
I thinke it was to my mothers wedding.

Illus. 3b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. C2^r.

and shifting the rest of the line leftwards²⁵ (leaving a hole at the end into which the removed space could be inserted), or the reverse alteration was made intentionally, or else “prethee” simply became “pre thee” by type shifting. We cannot decide between these explanations. There is nothing obvious at the corresponding point on C₃^v that might have drawn the proofreader’s attention and so, by the combined margin-overrun and ink-offset error described by Blayney, lead to unwanted interference on C₂^r.

Also on forme C (inner), the variant “Showe me the [step | steepe] and thorny way to heauen” (C₃^v, Illus. 4a and 4b) looks like an intended correction since “step” is meaningless. F’s reading is the obviously correct “steepe” (nn6^v) and does not help in determining the order of change here. The type for “and thorny way to heauen” was not internally adjusted but moved as a block, to the right if we think that two additional letters “e” were inserted, or to the left in the somewhat less plausible hypothesis that two letters “e” came out of the forme when it was being inked and the careless compositor simply shifted the line’s remaining type leftwards and plugged the hole at the end with spaces. The last variant on this forme — “Costly thy habite as thy purse can [by, | buy,]” (C₄^r, Illus. 5a and 5b) — looks like a relatively under-motivated spelling alteration, since “by” was acceptable for this verb although “buy” was more modern. F’s reading — “buy;” (nn6^v) — is irrelevant. It is possible that the letter “u” came out of the forme by accident and the compositor recovered the situation by shifting “y,” to the left to fill the gap — this being the only movement in the line — and putting a space after it, but more plausibly a space was removed from the end of the line and “y,” was moved to the right to permit insertion of the letter “u”. Taken individually none of the three variants on forme C (inner) clinches the direction for the change of the forme, but since (to differing degrees) all three show improvement in readings it is considerably more likely that intention rather than chance produced them and so the Wilson-Thompson-Taylor claim about correction should be accepted. None of these corrections required consultation of the copy.

As noted above, the sole variant on forme C (outer) — “watch, | watch | watcl” (C₂^v, Illus. 6a, 6b, and 6c) — might well have arisen only by accident, with no intervention to adjust the type, and no order can be

25. Actually rightwards for the compositor looking at the mirror-image type, but this reversal will be taken as read in the hypotheses that follow.

**Doe not as some vngacious pastors doe,
Showe me the step and thorny way to heauen
Whiles a puffed, and reckles libertine**

Illus. 4a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. C3^v.

**Doe not as some vngacious pastors doe,
Showe me the steepe and thorny way to heauen
Whiles a puffed, and reckles libertine**

Illus. 4b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. C3^v.

**Take each mans censure, but referue thy iudgement,
Costly thy habite as thy purse can buy,
But not exprest in fancy; rich not gaudy,**

Illus. 5a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. C4^r.

**Take each mans censure, but referue thy iudgement,
Costly thy habite as thy purse can buy,
But not exprest in fancy; rich not gaudy,**

Illus. 5b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. C4^r.

inferred from the physical evidence. F's reading — "watcht." (nn6^r) — throws no light on the matter. In Horatio's cautionary question on forme D (inner) — "What if it tempt you toward the flood [my | my Lord.]" (D2^r, Illus. 7a and 7b) — the latter reading is obviously correct, as is "my Lord?" (oor^r) in F. Q₂'s incorrect reading might be due to the whole of "Lord." failing to print in some exemplars, as Wilson and Harold Jenkins thought.²⁶ However, in the absence of other evidence for an accident, as we have with "watch, | watch | watcl" where only part of a piece of type deposited ink, it is impossible to say. The variant occurs at the end of a line and no preceding type was disturbed so far as we can tell, nor needed to be since "Lord." could simply occupy the place held (later or earlier) by a few spaces used to justify the line.

It is possible that "Lord" was intentionally removed by a compositor who misunderstood the proofreader's intentions because of the paper-folding processes described by Blayney. "Lord" is the last word on the fourth line of D2^r, and at the corresponding place in D3^v (that is, the first word on the fourth line) the word "Tain't" appears, which ought not to have an apostrophe. The correspondence is exact in the vertical dimension but only approximate in the horizontal dimension, since there are spaces after "Lord" but before "Tain't" there are none. The former's distance from the fold in the finished book is 5 to 10% less than the latter's (the uncertainty is due to tightness in the bindings preventing precise measurement), so the following speculation assumes that the proofreader and/or compositor did not fold the sheet precisely midway between its type pages. Indeed, type pages on conjugate leaves in the finished book also show about this much variation in their distances from their common folds. No other books from this period in the databases of Literature Online (LION) and the Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership Phase One (EEBO-TCP-1) have an apostrophe in *taint*. If the proofreader wrote something upon or beneath the apostrophe to indicate its removal, that mark could transfer to the word "Lord" when the proof-sheet was folded, and a right-marginal deletion mark on D3^v could, if written too far to the right, extend into the left margin of D2^r. Taken together, a left-marginal deletion mark four lines down on D2^r and a corresponding mark upon or near the word "Lord" in the fourth line could induce an overly obedient compositor to remove

26. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet,"* 123n1; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1982), 53.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My Lord vppon the platforme where we watch,

Ham. Did you not speake to it?

Illus. 6a: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. C2^v.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My Lord vppon the platforme where we watch,

Ham. Did you not speake to it?

Illus. 6b: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. C2^v.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My Lord vppon the platforme where we watch,

Ham. Did you not speake to it?

Illus. 6c: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. C2^v.

It waues me forth againe, Ile followe it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood my Lord,
Or to the dreadfull somner of the cleefe

Illus. 7a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. D2^r.

It waues me forth againe, Ile followe it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood my Lord,
Or to the dreadfull somner of the cleefe

Illus. 7b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. D2^r.

the word entirely. What might so crowd the right margin at this point on D₃^v that the deletion mark was written too far to the right? One possibility is a cluster of alterations to the rare word “howsomeuer” in the line above “Tain’t” (LION has no other examples in this period and EEBO-TCP-1 just two). A proofreader’s aborted (or unactioned) attempt to “correct” this unfamiliar word might push to the right a deletion mark for the apostrophe to be removed from “Tain’t” in the line below. Since we have assumed already that the proofreader and/or compositor did not fold the paper precisely halfway between the type pages, a right-marginal mark drifting into the neighboring left margin is possible.

On purely lexical grounds, the other alteration on forme D (inner) — the Ghost’s observation that the glow-worm marks the approach of dawn “And [gines | gins] to pale his vneffectual fire,” (D₃^v, Illus. 8a and 8b) — could be argued either way since in 1604–5 *begine* was an acceptable, albeit old-fashioned, spelling of *begin*. F’s reading — “gins” (001^v) — tells us nothing. Collation using digital images, however, shows that the alteration was made by disturbing only the type of the variant and the following word (“to”); also the spacing on either side of “gins to” appears suspiciously large. It is likely that “gines to” became “gins to” through the removal of “e” and shifting left of the type for “s to” to close the gap, as well as the insertion of extra space before and after “gins to” — rather than that unusually large spacing was available around “gins to” enabling “e” to be inserted. Thus we can be fairly sure of the order of alteration on forme D (inner) and the Wilson-Thompson-Taylor claim about correction should be accepted. A competent proofreader could have supplied the missing word “Lord” without consulting the copy.

The forme D (outer) contains one variant — the Ghost’s “So art thou to reuenge, when thou shalt [hear | heare.]” (D₂^v, Illus. 9a and 9b). F’s spelling of “heare” (001^t) is of no help. Wilson thought that “heare.” was set in type throughout the run but that a problem with the frisket (the same problem in roughly the same part of a page that produced the variant “watch, | watch | watcl” on C₂^v) prevented the last two pieces of type (“e.”) from impressing ink onto the paper in some exemplars.²⁷ An overhanging frisket is implausible for the reason given in relation to “watch, | watch | watcl” (see above), since this too is not the longest line

27. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet,”* 93–4.

The Gloworme shewes the matine to be neere
And gines to pale his vneffectuall fire,
Adiew, adiew, adiew, remember me.

Illus. 8a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. D3^v.

The Gloworme shewes the matine to be neere
And gins to pale his vneffectuall fire,
Adiew, adiew, adiew, remember me.

Illus. 8b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. D3^v.

Ham. Speake, I am bound to heare.
Ghost. So art thou to reuenge, when thou shalt heare.
Ham. What?

Illus. 9a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. D2^v.

Ham. Speake, I am bound to heare.
Ghost. So art thou to reuenge, when thou shalt heare.
Ham. What?

Illus. 9b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. D2^v.

on the page, but it is nonetheless possible that the variant is explained by the failure of the type for “e.” to deposit ink on the sheets used in the Yale and Huntington exemplars. Punctuation aside, the two readings are equally good, and because the variant is at the end of a line with no preceding type disturbance, there is nothing to help us choose between them. Thus, we cannot tell the order of alteration on D (outer).

The forme G (outer) contains two variants. The first is Hamlet’s line — “About my [braues | braines]; hum, I haue heard,” (G1^r, Illus. 10a and 10b) — before he reveals his plan for a play to catch Claudius’s conscience. The adjustment of type involved the removal of one or more spaces at the end of the line, the shifting rightward of “es ... heard,” as a block to close the gap thus created, and the replacement of “u” with “in”; perhaps also a now-undetected hair space or two was added or removed to rejustify the line. (Or, of course, the opposite adjustment took place.) Although Hamlet appears here to develop his idea of a truth-revealing performance, on the previous page he asked the players to perform *The Murder of Gonzago* with a speech of his own added, which insertion seems to be part of the same plan. Just when the idea of a conscience-pricking performance occurred to Hamlet is unclear, and the script might represent two ways of handling the matter, only one of which was supposed to be performed. If the word “hum” is meant to indicate that Hamlet thinks hard and comes up with his plan, then “braines” is preferable to “braues” as a reading, but equally plausibly “About my braues” (meaning *To it, men*) could be directed to the off-stage players who left forty lines earlier (about two minutes of stage time) to prepare for their performance. Then again, Shakespeare repeatedly uses *braves* to mean cries of aggressive defiance (*I Henry 6* 3.6.9, *The Taming of the Shrew* 3.1.15, *Titus Andronicus* 2.1.30²⁸) so perhaps Hamlet, who has just been rebuking himself for a feminine linguistic response to his situation — “like a whore vnpacke my hart with words” and “cursing like a very drabbe” — is steeling himself for open verbal conflict. The reading “braues” instead of “braines” has the advantage of preventing Hamlet appearing to twice engender the idea for the pointed performance: once while talking to the actors and once again after they have left.

28. All references to Shakespeare by act, scene, and line-number rather than specific editions are keyed to William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, Electronic ed. by William Montgomery and Lou Burnard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Somewhat against Q₂'s reading of "braues" is F's reading of "About my Braine. | I haue heard" (004^v), which if derived from an independent authoritative manuscript would support Q₂'s reading "braines" even though it lacks the "hum" that indicates deep thought. However, we cannot assume that F's reading came from an independent manuscript, since most editors think that F and Q₂ agree in error (against Q₁ and Q₃) four lines earlier in omitting the word *father* from "the Sonne of the Deere murdered" (F's reading where Q₂ has "the sonne of a deere murdered") and that they do so because Q₂ was consulted at this point in the setting of F.²⁹ If that agreement-in-error is accepted, then F's "Braine" four lines later might also derive from consultation of an exemplar of Q₂ containing the reading "braines" rather than from an independent manuscript that would confirm Q₂'s reading. On the other hand, if one agrees with the editors of the Oxford *Complete Works* that this is not an error at all, because poetically *father* may be implied rather than stated, then the agreement-in-omission comes not from consultation of Q₂ by F's compositor but from *father's* omission in the two independent manuscripts that provided printer's copy for the two editions, in which case no suspicion is cast upon F's near-agreement with one of the two Q₂ readings ("Braine" for "braines") four lines later.

A final consideration for this variant is that "About my braines" would be an innovative locution, since no writer appears to have used *about* in the imperative mood in connection with the *brain(s)* — that is, in the sense *Go about it brain(s)* — before *Hamlet*. This locution, however, occurs in four plays in the four decades after *Hamlet*. The LION/EEBO-TCP-1 search underpinning this assertion was for *brain** within three words of (before or after) *about*, with the search engine's "variant spellings" and "variant forms" options switched on; each occurrence was manually checked and those not in the imperative mood were eliminated. The occurrences are "My brayne about againe" in Thomas Heywood's play *2 The Iron Age* (first performed 1612), "about it bryne" in Heywood's play *The Captives* (first performed 1624), "My braine, about it then" in Heywood's play *The English Traveller* (first performed c. 1627), and "work and about my brain" in William Hemmings's play *The Fatal Contract* (first performed 1639).³⁰

29. Wells et al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, 397.

30. Thomas Heywood, *The Second Part of the Iron Age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1632), H2^r (STC 13340); Thomas Heywood, *The Captives*, ed. Arthur Brown, Malone Society Reprints (London: Malone Society, 1953), fol. 68a; Thomas Heywood,

(The occurrence involving “bryne” was missed by LION/EEBO-TCP-1 because of the manuscript’s habitual dropping of a vowel, here *a*, before *w* or *y* and it was found by chance; there may be more such missed occurrences.) Heywood’s and Hemmings’s locutions might all derive from printings of the highly popular play *Hamlet*. The strength of F’s reading of “Braine” as corroboration of Q₂’s “braines” rests on the unresolved matter of whether F agrees in error with Q₂’s omission of *father* four lines earlier. If it does, then F might agree with one of the two readings in Q₂’s “braues | braines” variant merely because an exemplar of Q₂ was consulted when F was being set. Thus, evaluation of this Q₂ variant draws in other matters upon which no consensus has been reached.

The second variant on forme G (outer) is Ophelia’s “T”haue seene what I haue seene, see what I see. [| *Exit.*]” (G₃^r, Illus. 11a and 11b). Being on its own at the end of a line, there is no visible disturbance to other type to help determine whether “*Exit.*” was added or removed. Dramatically, the exit, which F also omits (005^v), is erroneous since on the next page Polonius addresses Ophelia, yet Wilson argued that “*Exit.*” is the intentionally altered state of the forme since “it is far more likely to have been added by him [the corrector] than deleted once it was set up.”³¹ Since the exit is wrong, it is perfectly plausible that it was set in error (perhaps even from an error existing in the printer’s copy if Shakespeare once intended Ophelia to leave after her soliloquy) and that a careful proofreader caught the mistake and fixed it. Additionally, Blayney’s hypothesis of combined margin-overflow and ink-offset coincidence could also account for the removal of “*Exit.*”. The first word on the last line of G₂^v — “euocutat” — is meaningless, and editors generally take it as a misreading of Shakespeare’s *inoculate* (F reads “innoculate”). If the proofreader made marks on or under “euocutat” and corresponding marks in the margin, Blayney’s two criteria are met: G₂^v’s right margin would be crowded with marks, either to change some letters of “euocutat” and retain others or else to write out the new word in full, and these marks might overrun into the left margin of G₃^r; and the proofreader’s ink-marks on or under “euocutat” could have offset, when the

The English Traveller (London: Robert Raworth, 1633), D4^v (STC 13315); William Hemmings, *The Fatal Contract* (London: John Marriot, 1653), E2^v (Wing H1422).

31. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet,”* 126n1.

And fall a cursing like a very drabbe; a stallyon, sic vppont, foh,
About my braues; hum, I haue heard,
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,

Illus. 10a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. G1^r.

And fall a cursing like a very drabbe; a stallyon, sic vppont, foh.
About my braines; hum, I haue heard,
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,

Illus. 10b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. G1^r.

Blasted with extacie, ô woe is mee
Thaue seene what I haue seene, see what I see.
G 3 Enter

Illus. 11a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. G3^r.

Blasted with extacie, ô woe is mee
Thaue seene what I haue seene, see what I see. Exit.
G 3

Illus. 11b: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. G3^r.

proof-sheet was folded, to the end of the last line on G₃^r, where the stage direction “*Exit*” stood. (G₂^v has thirty-nine lines and G₃^r only thirty-eight, so the offset would not be to exactly the last word of the last line of the latter, but it could be close enough to mislead the compositor, especially if the sheet were not carefully folded.) As before, we cannot discount this possibility simply because no exemplar shows “*eu-ocutat*” in a corrected state, since compositors were capable of simply overlooking or ignoring proofreader’s instructions. However, the over-run-plus-offset explanation is less plausible in this case than in the previous one (the deletion of “*Lord.*” on D₂^r) because the misplaced marginal mark would not be a simple deletion symbol in this case and the ink of the proofreader’s pen on G₂^v would have time to dry while the proofreader examined G₃^r. Nonetheless, we have two possible ways in which “*Exit.*” could have been removed during the print-run (as a genuine correction and as an accidental deletion) and none to explain its being added, other than a proofreader’s faulty guesswork. In the forme’s other variant — “*braues | braines*” — the reading “*braues*” is at least as likely as the alternative, and perhaps more so. Thus, the order of alteration on forme G (outer) was probably the opposite of that supposed by Wilson-Thompson-Taylor and shown in Table 1. A case can be made for either “*braues*” or “*braines*”: neither is markedly inferior and their meanings are quite distinct. It is hard, then, to see why a proofreader would alter one to the other, unless consultation of copy showed it to be wrong.

The three variants on forme L (outer) all fall on the same page, the first two occurring on the same line when a messenger reports to Claudius that Laertes “[*Ore beares | Ore-beares*] your [*Officres | Officers*]: the rabble call him *Lord*,” (L₁^r, Illus. 12a and 12b). The only pieces of type that show disturbance are the hyphen, the “*e*” and the “*r*” in the two variants, and although “*Ore-beares*” and “*Officers*” are the better readings, we cannot discount the possibility of this line of type working loose during the print run and the hyphen, the “*e*” and the “*r*” lifting out during inking, with only the “*e*” and “*r*” being reinserted and in the wrong order. F includes the hyphen in “*Ore-beares*” and spells “*Officers*” correctly (pp₃^v), but that is neither here nor there. Eight lines below comes Gertrude’s “*How cheerefully on the false traile they [cry. A noise within. | cry. (A noise within.)]*” (L₁^r, Illus. 13a and 13b). Bracketing off such a stage direction would not be unusual, and there is no discernible disturbance

Then young *Laertes* in a riotous head
Ore beares your Officres: the rabble call him Lord,
And as the world were now but to beginne,

Illus. 12a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. L1^r.

Then young *Laertes* in a riotous head
Ore-beares your Officers: the rabble call him Lord,
And as the world were now but to beginne,

Illus. 12b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. L1^r.

Laertes shall be King, *Laertes* King.
Quee. How cheerefully on the false traile they cry. *(A noise within.)*
O this is counter you false Danish dogges.

Illus. 13a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. L1^r.

Laertes shall be King, *Laertes* King.
Quee. How cheerefully on the false traile they cry. *A noise within.*
O this is counter you false Danish dogges.

Illus. 13b: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. L1^r.

except the presence of an italic parenthesis, or a space, immediately after the period following “cry”. Thus, a space may have been replaced by the parenthesis or vice versa, or the parenthesis might simply have come out during inking and nobody noticed. F has no stage direction at this precise moment, instead combining the offstage noise with Laertes’s entrance two lines later (pp3^v). There is nothing on forme L (outer) to show the directions of the changes, or even if they were intentional.

The sole variant on forme N (inner) is Claudius’s “And in the cup an [Vnice | Onixe] shall he throwe,” (N4^r, Illus. 14a and 14b). Because F’s reading at this point is “vnion” (pp6^v), meaning a large pearl, Wilson concluded that “Vnice” was the Q₂ compositor’s initial attempt to set this word, albeit bungled to make nonsense, and that stop-press alteration to “Onixe” shows a proofreader’s attempt to turn this nonsense into something meaningful.³² The stone is referred to again two pages later in Q₂ when Hamlet says to Claudius “Drinke of this potion, is the Onixe heere?” (O1^r), at which point the Folio again uses “Vnion” (qq1^r). Wilson decided that Q₂’s second use of “Onixe” was the result of another “Vnice” > “Onixe” stop-press correction, for which we happen to have no exemplars in the uncorrected state, or else the compositor set this page having learnt from the proofreader’s work on N4^r that “Onixe” was the correct word, and so he set that. For the variant in question, “V | O” and “ce | xe” are the pieces of type that show disturbance in this line, with “ni” keeping its place. There is a small unwanted space between “V” and “n” and the “c” sits lower than the other pieces of type in this line, but these displacements are within the normal tolerances of setting and are not enough to suggest that “Vnice” is the post-alteration state. Even if there were evidence that the Folio compositor consulted Q₂ at this point (and there is not), F cannot be dependent on Q₂ for its reading of “vnion” since this word does not appear in Q₂. Since “vnion” must have appeared in the copy for F we have to discount the slight signs of type adjustment in Q₂ and agree with Wilson that “Vnice” was the Q₂ compositor’s first stab at it and that “Onixe” reflects a subsequent alteration of the type. Either the proofreader did not consult copy to make this change, or he decided the copy was unreadable.

Forme N (outer), which survives in three states, contains ten variants (more than a third of the book’s total), the British Library exemplar

32. *Ibid.*, 127.

showing eight of the ten changes. There is evidence that the compositors altered their established practices at this point in the job, swapping headlines in a way likely to cause an accident during the print run.³³ The first variant is Claudius's ambiguous vow that Ophelia's grave will have a "liuing monument" and hence "An houre of quiet [thirtie | thereby] shall we see" (N₁^r, Illus. 15a and 15b). The reading "thereby" makes better sense, but because the Folio reads "shortly" at this point (pp6^r) editors generally agree with Wilson that the reading "thirtie" was the compositor's initial setting (a bungling of his copy's "shortlie"), and that the proof-corrector changed it to "thereby" in an attempt to bring this to good sense.³⁴ The letters "th" in the variant, and everything to the left of them, show no sign of disturbance, but "ereby" is longer than "irtie" and the rest of the line is displaced right or left, depending on our view of the direction of alteration. The reading "thirtie" is just possible: Claudius might be specifying one hour and then instantly revising it to thirty hours (in modernized form, *an hour of quiet — thirty — shall we see*), which would be unusual but acceptable. If this is correct, then the sharing of a few letters between Q₂'s "thirtie" and F's "shortly" (or rather its copy's presumed "shortlie") is merely coincidence. The whole line is in any case difficult, since it is far from clear what Claudius means by giving the grave a living monument.

The second variant on forme N (outer) is Hamlet's evenly balanced observation that indiscretion serves us well "When our deepe plots doe [pall | fall], & that should learne vs" about divinity shaping our ends (N₁^r, Illus. 16a and 16b). The only disturbance of type is within "pall | fall" where the difference in the widths of "p" and "f" is taken up by insertion or removal of a thin space after the comma, depending on our view of the direction of alteration. At this point, F's reading — "When our deare plots do paule, and that should teach vs," (pp6^r) — would support Q₂'s "pall" if derived independently of Q₂. However, Wilson and Alice Walker thought that twenty-two lines later in F Hamlet's description of himself "Being thus benetted round with Villaines" was a clear agreement-in-error with Q₂'s "Being thus benetted round with villaines" (N₁^v), since the meter and sense require the last word to be *villainies*, the

33. Gabriel Egan, "Press Variants in Q₂ Hamlet," *Studies in Bibliography* (forthcoming).

34. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet,"* 125.

The King shall drinke to *Hamlets* better breath,
And in the cup an Vnice shall he throwe,
Richer then that which foure successiue Kings

Illus. 14a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. N4^r.

The King shall drinke to *Hamlets* better breath,
And in the cup an Onixe shall he throwe,
Richer then that which foure successiue Kings

Illus. 14b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N4^r.

This graue shall haue a liuing monument,
An houre of quiet thirtie shall we see
Tell then in patience our proceeding be. *Exeunt.*

Illus. 15a: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. N1^r.

This graue shall haue a liuing monument,
An houre of quiet thereby shall we see
Tell then in patience our proceeding be. *Exeunt.*

Illus. 15b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N1^r.

emendation first supplied by Edward Capell.³⁵ F's dependence on Q₂ at this point would diminish the significance of its agreement with one of the two readings in the Q₂ variant 22 lines earlier. G. R. Hibbard, however, saw no error here, thinking that "villaines" makes "admirable sense, provided one takes 'with' in its frequent Elizabethan and Shakespearian meaning of 'by' . . . and is metrically unexceptionable; so there is no need whatever for Capell's emendation."³⁶ The Oxford English Dictionary records *villane* as an acceptable fifteenth-century spelling of modern *villainy*, so one might argue that although it generated ambiguity "villaines" was an acceptable spelling of modern *villainies* (LION and EEBO-TCP-1 show dozens of occurrences of "tyrannes" for modern *tyrannies*), and thus the conventional sense and metre are in fact present; hence there is no agreement-in-error. With doubt surrounding the significance of F's agreement with Q₂ 22 lines later, the variant "pall | fall" is finely balanced.

The third variant on forme N (outer) is of considerable lexical interest. Osric says of Laertes "in-|deede to speake [sellingly | fellingly] of him, hee is the card or kalender of gen-|try" (N₂^v, Illus. 17a and 17b). There is no corresponding moment in F because it lacks this exchange. The letters "s" and "f" are the same width and no other type is disturbed on this line. The word "fellingly" has generally been taken as an alternative spelling of *feelingly*, and Thompson and Taylor's preference for "sellingly" is one of the stimulating surprises of their Arden edition.³⁷ Since they agree with Wilson about the order of correction on forme N (outer), they are treating "sellingly" > "fellingly" as a miscorrection. The word *feelingly* was certainly Shakespearian (*As You Like It* 2.1.11, *Tragedy of King Lear* 4.5.145, *Measure for Measure* 1.2.34, *Twelfth Night* 2.3.153, and *Lucrece* 1112, 1492), and LION shows that it was common, appearing in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, poetry by George Gascoigne and Edmund Spenser, and in plays preceding Shakespeare's, such as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, as well as others of his time and shortly after. In its favor, *sellingly* occurs nowhere else in the electronic texts held by LION

35. Ibid., 297; Alice Walker, "The Textual Problem of *Hamlet*: A Reconsideration," *Review of English Studies* 2 (1951): 328–38, 332.

36. G. R. Hibbard, "Common Errors and Unusual Spellings in *Hamlet* Q₂ and F," *Review of English Studies* 37 (1986): 55–61, 56.

37. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 5.2.95.

Our indiscretion sometime serues vs well
When our deepe plots doe pall, & that should learne vs
Ther's a diuinity that shap^es our ends,

Illus. 16a: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. N1^r.

Our indiscretion sometime serues vs well
When our deepe plots doe fall, & that should learne vs
Ther's a diuinity that shap^es our ends,

Illus. 16b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N1^r.

excellent differences, of very soft society, and great showing: in
deede to speake fellingly of him, hee is the card or kalender of gen-
try: for you shall find in him the continent of what part a Gentle-

Illus. 17a: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N2^v.

excellent differences, of very soft society, and great showing: in
deede to speake fellingly of him, hee is the card or kalender of gen-
try: for you shall find in him the continent of what part a Gentle-

Illus. 17b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. N2^v.

and EEBO-TCP-1, so if accepted it seems a genuinely Shakespearian coinage. Here an editor is caught between two contradictory guiding principles: *usus scribendi* (look for the author's usual practice) would favour *feelingly* and *lectio difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is preferable) would favour *sellingly*.

The fourth variant on forme N (outer) continues Hamlet and Osric's exchange, the former saying I "know to deuide him inuentorially, would [dosie | dazzie] th'arithmaticke of" memory (N₂^v, Illus. 18a and 18b). F has no corresponding moment. Both readings are unusual but poetically defensible. Wilson pointed out that to "dosie" meant to make giddy or dizzy, and thought that the proofreader may have called for this to be altered to "dazzle" but that the compositor misread this as "dazzie".³⁸ Assuming that Wilson is right about the direction of alteration in "dosie" > "dazzie" and because the physical space occupied by "dazzie" is the greater, a small space either side of "to" must have been removed and "to" together with the whole of "deuide him inuentorially" shifted left as a block, with the space before "would d" taken out so it could be moved left to abut the preceding comma. Thus a gap big enough to permit "azz" to replace "os" was created, and the remainder of the line was left undisturbed. If Wilson is wrong, the opposite set of adjustments was made, but there is strong physical evidence that Wilson is right. The letters "zz" sit considerably higher than the rest of the line, which is hard to explain if they were in the original setting (it would have to be just coincidence that they were the ones subject to stop-press correction), but it is easily understood if they were inserted during stop-press correction, especially if, as other evidence suggests, they were inserted in haste at the press rather than with the forme removed to the imposing stone.³⁹

The fifth and sixth variants on forme N (outer) are on the next line — also absent from F — in which Hamlet continues his speech — "memory, and yet but [yaw | raw] [neither in | neither,in] respect of his quick saile" (N₂^v, Illus. 18a and 18b). The letter "r" is narrower than "y" here, and if Wilson is right about "yaw" > "raw" and the replacement of the space between "neither" and "in" by a comma, then the letters "aw neither" were moved left a fraction to take up the difference. This did

38. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet,"* 132.

39. Egan, "Press Variants in Q₂ *Hamlet*."

not create enough room for the comma, however, so a small space was removed between “quick” and “saile” and “his quick” was moved rightwards to close the gap. This gave room for the insertion of the comma (with “in respect” pushed a fraction to the right), and finally the line was justified by insertion before “quick” of a hair space or two. Nothing in this process is irreversible, so these two variants tell us nothing about the order of alteration. The meanings of “yaw” and “raw” are obscure, which of course is the point of the speech: Hamlet is mocking obscure and convoluted courtly affectations. The nautical term “yaw” means the difference between the direction towards which a ship is pointing and the direction in which it is travelling, and it has the poetical merit of agreeing with the metaphorical “saile”, but the choice is subjective. The comma between “neither” and “in” is semantically indifferent.

The seventh variant on forme N (outer) is lexically indifferent. In an obscure contribution to the Hamlet-Osric exchange, again absent from the Folio, Horatio says to either Osric or Hamlet (editors are divided on this) that they might continue the conversation in “another tongue” (a foreign language? more plainly?), adding that he (Osric or Hamlet) will “[too’t | doo’t] sir really.” (N₂^v, Illus. 19a and 19b). These three words appear on a line of their own, and the extra width of “d” over “t” was taken up by moving everything to the right after a space had been taken out from the end of the line. (Or vice versa if Wilson is wrong about the direction of alteration.) The expression *to it* is implicitly accompanied by the verb *to go* (so, *go to it*), and in this context is as acceptable as *do it*, and there is no physical evidence to help decide the direction of alteration. The eighth variant on forme N (outer) appears at first to be quite straightforward, since one reading seems to be nonsense. Describing the swords and their accessories that are to be prizes in the proposed duelling contest, Osric says that three “of the carriages in faith, are very deare to fancy, very [reponsiue | responsiue] to” the hilts (N₂^v, Illus. 20a and 20b). Changing the meaningless “reponsiue” to the familiar “responsiue” seems a clear correction, whereas it is hard to see why “responsiue” would be changed to “reponsiue” by the proofreader. The Folio also has “responsiue” (pp6^v) at this point. To insert the “s” necessary to make the change from “reponsiue” required only that the space before the preceding word “very” and perhaps also a hair space before “reponsiue” were removed. No other type was disturbed. The reverse procedure is equally trivial. The first “s” in “responsiue” appears to sit a little high on

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though I know to deuide him inuentorially, would dosie th'arithmaticke of memory, and yet but yaw neither in respect of his quick faile, but in the veritie of extolment, I take him to be a soule of great article,

Illus. 18a: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. N2^v.

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though I know to deuide him inuentorially, would dazzie th'arithmaticke of memory, and yet but raw neither, in respect of his quick faile, but in the veritie of extolment, I take him to be a soule of great article,

Illus. 18b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N2^v.

Hor. Ist not possible to vnderstand in another tongue, you will too't fir really.

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman.

Illus. 19a: Folger Shakespeare Library exemplar (F) sig. N2^v.

Hor. Ist not possible to vnderstand in another tongue, you will doo't fir really.

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman.

Illus. 19b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N2^v.

the line, which, by the logic used for “zz” in the reading “dazzie” above, could count as evidence for its insertion rather than removal. However, the shape of a long-s makes the truncation of the lower part (by imperfect inking or damage to the face) harder to spot than with other letters, and the proportions of this particular one (that is, the relative size the part of the face above the horizontal bar compared to the part below it) suggest such truncation rather than vertical displacement. The absence of serifs at the bottom of the letter is evidence neither way, since these might easily fail to print even in a letter that otherwise appears normal.

The ninth variant on forme N (outer) is tricky because we have to weigh what might have been an improvement if it had not been bungled and because it involved extensive movement of type. Hamlet objects to Osric using the word “carriages” for the hangers by which rapiers are suspended from a belt, since the word would be apt only if we “could carry a cannon by our sides, I would it [be | be might] hangers till then” (N₃^f, Illus. 21a and 21b). If the word “might” were essential to Hamlet’s meaning, we could hypothesize a press correction that was intended to put “might” before “be” but mistakenly put it after, as Wilson argued.⁴⁰ But the word “might” is not essential to the meaning, for Hamlet’s “I would” makes the optative mood clear. Indeed, one could argue that there is more sense in seeing correction going the other way, from the ungrammatical “be might hangers” to the acceptable “be hangers”. The Folio, however, reads “I would | it might be Hangers till then” (pp6^v) and with no evidence of quarto consultation here we must suppose that “might” appeared in the copy for both editions. The movement of type needed for the alteration is complex and will be described on the assumption that “be hangers” was changed to “be might hangers”. Because the speech is prose and continues for three more lines, the insertion of “might” required substantial alterations on four lines. The space between “sides” and its following comma was removed, and the following four words (“I would it be”) were shifted left to fill the gap created. But this made nothing like enough room for the word “might” to be inserted, so the last word on the line (“then”) and its following comma were taken out to be moved to the second line. To enable this, the second line had therefore to lose the last six letters of its last word (“assignes”) plus its following comma, which were taken out to be moved to the third line (the initial “s” of “signes” being changed to a long-s because now in an

40. Wilson, *Manuscript of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet,”* 126–7.

and Poynards, with their asignes, as girdle, hanger and so. Three of the carriages in faith, are very deare to fancy, very responſiue to the hilts, moſt delicate carriages, and of very liberall conceit.

Illus. 20a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. N2^v.

and Poynards, with their asignes, as girdle, hanger and so. Three of the carriages in faith, are very deare to fancy, very responſiue to the hilts, moſt delicate carriages, and of very liberall conceit.

Illus. 20b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. N2^v.

Han. The phraſe would bee more Ierman to the matter if wee could carry a cannon by our ſides, I would it be hangers till then, but on, ſix Barbry horſes againſt ſix French ſwords their aſignes, and three liberall conceited carriages, that's the French bet againſt the Daniſh, why is this all you call it?

Cour. The King ſir, hath layd ſir, that in a dozen paſſes betweene

Illus. 21a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. N3^f.

Han. The phraſe would bee more Ierman to the matter if wee could carry a cannon by our ſides, I would it be might hangers till then, but on, ſix Barbry horſes againſt ſix French ſwords their aſignes, and three liberall conceited carriages, that's the French bet againſt the Daniſh, why is this all you call it?

Cour. The King ſir, hath layd ſir, that in a dozen paſſes betweene

Illus. 21b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N3^f.

initial position). To enable this, the third line had to lose its last letters (“bet a-”), which were taken out to be moved to the fourth line (the word-breaking hyphen being removed as no longer needed), where the adjustments could stop because the line was not full and spaces could be taken from its end. In this adjustment of four lines, three runs of words seem to have been moved as unbroken units, for there is no sign of adjustment within them: “but on, six Barbry horses against six French swords their as” and “and three liberall conceited carriages, that’s the French” and “gainst the Danish, why is this all you call it?” As far as one can tell, the smaller units of type that had to be moved around these longer runs also underwent no internal adjustment, only repositioning as units. The resetting seems, then, to have involved the orderly removal or shifting along of small and large groups of type and their replacement in new positions; this is not recovery from an accident in which furniture failed and extensive pieing occurred. There is nothing irreversible in this alteration of type, and the conditions for Blayneian margin-over-run and ink-offset error are not met since there is nothing in the vicinity of the corresponding point four lines down on N₂’ that would draw a proofreader’s attention.

The tenth variant on forme N (outer) appears in Hamlet’s response to Horatio’s application to Osric of the proverb “This Lapwing runnes away with the shell on his head” with the most odd comment that “A did [sir | so sir] with his dugge before a suckt it, thus has he and” many others (N₃’, Illus. 22a and 22b). F’s reading at this point — “He did Complie with his Dugge before hee | suck’t it” (pp6^v) — makes better sense, but is so different that it can shed no light on Q₂’s variant. Lexically the two readings in the Q₂ variant are equivalent. Assuming that “so” was inserted rather than removed, room was made for it by reducing the space between Hamlet’s speech prefix and the first word of his speech and sliding “A did” leftwards as a block, then removing the space between “his” and “dugge” and between the comma and “thus” and shifting the block “with...it,” rightwards to meet “thus” and making enough of a gap for “so” to be inserted. (It would be lucky if “so” took up exactly the room vacated by the removal of these spaces and the compositor might have used a hair space or two in the final justification, but if so they cannot now be detected.) Alternatively, the opposite operations were performed. However, the insertion rather than the removal of “so” is more likely, since its presence coincides with an unusually small

gap between the speech prefix and the first word of the speech (smaller than all the others on this page) and there being within “hisdugge” and “it,thus” no gaps at all. Either this line happened to be unusually crowded for no obvious reason (there is plenty of space elsewhere within and at the end of this prose speech) and was coincidentally the subject of stop-press correction, or else (and more likely) it is crowded as a result of alteration. There is nothing in the vicinity of the corresponding point twenty-five lines down on N₂^v that might draw a proofreader’s attention and so cause a margin-overflow and ink-offset error of the kind described by Blayney. Thus, the order of alteration on forme N (outer) is confirmed as the one Wilson asserted, because the physical evidence shows that “dazzie” and “so sir” are the post- rather than the pre-alteration readings and because F’s use of the word “might” shows that it was recovered from Q₂’s copy.

The final press variant known in Q₂ *Hamlet* has no Folio counterpart because it is in the signature printed on the last page of the text of the play: “G₂ | O₂” (O₂^r, Illus. 23a and 23b). This was a matter of just switching one letter on a line of two, so we get no help from adjacent type in determining the order of change. Since “O₂” is the correct reading, the simplest explanation is that “G₂” was the initial incorrect setting, and it was fixed to “O₂” during the print run. In the standard type case layout the box of capital letters, G was directly above the box of capital letters O,⁴¹ so spillover could easily put a G into the O box to produce the original mistake. The alternative direction — a miscorrection of “O₂” to “G₂” — is harder to explain unless there was a major accident of the press (of which evidence has not survived) that forced resetting of the bottom of page O₂, at which point the unwanted G intruded. The O gathering was presumably printed by half-sheet imposition with the unsigned title-page so there is no page O₃^v that might, by Blayney’s hypothesis of margin-overflow and ink-offset error, have induced unwanted alteration on page O₂^r. Depending on how it was managed, half-sheet imposition might have resulted in the title-page sharing a forme of type with page O₂^r, in which case their variants are linked and acceptance of “O₂” as the post-alteration reading on page O₂^r would entail acceptance of “1605” as the post-alteration reading on the title-page.

41. Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, D₂^v.

Hov. This Lapwing runnes away with the shell on his head.
Han. A did fir with his dugge before a suckt it, thus has he and
many more of the same breede that I know the drossly age dotes on,

Illus. 22a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. N3^r.

Hov. This Lapwing runnes away with the shell on his head.
Han. A did so fir with his dugge before a suckt it, thus has he and
many more of the same breede that I know the drossly age dotes on,

Illus. 22b: British Library exemplar (L) sig. N3^r.

Goe bid the souldiers shoote. *Exeunt.*

FINIS.

G 2

Illus. 23a: Huntington Library exemplar (H) sig. O2^r.

Goe bid the souldiers shoote. *Exeunt.*

FINIS.

O 2

Illus. 23b: Verulam exemplar (VER) sig. O2^r.

From Q₂'s physical evidence and the Folio readings, then, we find that for five of the eleven formes showing press variants — C (inner), D (inner), G (outer), N (inner) and N (outer) — we can be tolerably sure about the order of alteration, and for five — A (inner), B (outer), D (outer), L (outer) and O (inner) — we cannot tell. For forme C (outer) it makes no sense to speak of alteration, since the variant seems to arise from type failing to impress ink onto the paper in certain exemplars. Is there any other knowledge about early-seventeenth century printing that can be brought to bear to help determine the order of alteration for the uncertain formes? In fact there is, since there is a reasonably good chance that for a given exemplar whatever state is shown on one side of a sheet (pre- or post-alteration) the same state will be witnessed by the other side of that sheet. Moreover, it is likely that an exemplar showing some formes in the pre- or post-alteration state will have all its formes in the same state, all being either pre- or post-alteration. These surprising assumptions can be made because, as Joseph A. Dane proved, the integrity of the heap of sheets was generally maintained during the perfecting and gathering of sheets in early quartos.⁴²

R. B. McKerrow seems to be the source of the common but mistaken belief that each exemplar of a book was put together from a random mix of sheets, each of which had its two sides in a random mix of pre- and post-alteration states, arising from his mistaken view that sheets were hung up so that the ink of the first-printed side could dry before the sheet was perfected by impression on the other side.⁴³ (Recent examination of his personal correspondence revealed that shortly before his death McKerrow realized that he had been wrong about drying before perfecting.⁴⁴) If sheets were hung up to dry, some random shuffling might be expected, but surveying fifty-nine early quartos for which press-variant collation has been undertaken, Dane's meta-analysis showed that overwhelmingly an early state of one forme was backed by an early state of the forme on the other side, and a late state backed by a late. This shows integrity of the heap between the white-paper machining and

42. Joseph A. Dane, "Perfect Order and Perfected Order: The Evidence from Press-Variants of Early Seventeenth-Century Quartos," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 90, no. 3 (1996): 272–320.

43. *Ibid.*, 275–6.

44. A. C. Green, "The Difference between McKerrow and Greg," *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 4, no. 2 (2009): 31–53, 45–6.

reiteration. As sheets came off the press after white-paper machining, they were piled into a heap with their inked sides face-up, and thus the sheets at the bottom of the heap witnessed the earliest state of the type and sheets further up showed successive states of alteration if the type were changed during the run. To perfect the sheets the heap was inverted, and if this was done without disturbing the order of the sheets — the entire heap being flipped as a unit, or else subsections carefully inverted in turn — then the new heap presented for reiteration would have the earliest state at the top and the sheets further down would show successive states of alteration. Thus early states of one side met early states of the other, and late met late, although of course unless the alterations happened to be made at the same point in the run for both sides, one side would get ahead of the other. Therefore, the first state of one side was, for some sheets, backed with the second, third, or later of the other, and likewise for the second state and so on. But this is far from a random mix since there remains a steady progression of both sides' states within the heap.

Dane's meta-analysis showed that the integrity of the heap was maintained not only in perfecting but also in gathering. After perfecting, the heap was inverted again as a unit so that for each heap the top sheets reflected the initial setting of type of both its formes and the sheets further down reflected the successive states of alteration to the type. The first exemplar to be gathered from such a collection of well-ordered heaps would receive every sheet in its initial state, and the last exemplar to be gathered would receive every sheet in its final state. Thus, the first exemplars to be gathered would be the least corrected and the last gathered would be the most corrected, assuming that the alterations were indeed corrections. For this reason, we are entitled to try categorizing entire exemplars of *Q₂ Hamlet* as witnesses of early and late states of the type (or earlier and later where there are more than two states), on a tentative assumption of integrity in perfecting and gathering. For formes C (inner), D (inner), G (outer), N (inner) and N (outer), the order of alterations in the type is tolerably secure from the above analyses, so these we must respect. For the others we may reverse the order of alteration shown in Table 1 (which reflects the Wilson-Thompson-Taylor view) in order to produce regularity in the progression from lesser to greater correction.

Table 2 shows the variants and exemplars listed in Table 1 reordered

on the assumption of maximum integrity in perfecting and gathering and in the light of the above analyses. Dane cautioned that “rare later states” (rare in the sense of being represented by a small proportion of the exemplars) “are not common” (usually the rare state is amongst the early) and that “analysis that so classifies them is questionable.”⁴⁵ This might seem to cast doubt on my classification of exemplars L and Wro’s state of forme G (outer) and exemplar L’s state of forme L (outer) as late, but the former contains a genuine correction of some importance (the removal of a spurious stage direction) and the latter could easily be the result of type accidentally pulled out during inking, for which Dane’s rule would not apply. Importantly, exemplars L and Wro contain no rare early states, which is the combination (rare late states gathered with rare early states) that Dane’s analysis showed to be especially unlikely. For each forme, the order in which the exemplars are here listed within their various sets (each reflecting one state) is arbitrary: it is the relationships between sets that matter. However, I have attempted to arrange the exemplars in a single order from least to most corrected, since Dane’s demonstration that heap integrity was maintained in gathering encourages such a generalization. Thus the set of Y² and HN containing the original settings of formes C (outer), D (inner), and D (outer) could equally be stated as HN and Y² for that forme, and indeed this reversed order of gathering would fit the readings of all the formes. No other pair is reversible since in each case the reading(s) of one of the formes splits the pair into different sets.

In the event, it was possible in the making of Table 2 to assume perfect integrity of the heaps in reiteration, as witnessed in the order of states (by exemplar) being the same on both sides of sheets C, D, and N, the only three with variants on both sides. Perfect integrity of the heaps in gathering cannot have been maintained since the order of states (by exemplar) differs for certain sheets. The commonest order of states is Y², HN, F, Wro, L, C², and VER, as found on formes A (inner), D (inner), D (outer), N (inner), N (outer), and O (inner), if we assume that exemplar L’s missing page O₂^r had “O₂” as its signature. For the other formes, the integrity of the heap must have been disrupted prior to gathering. To see just how irregular the heap management must have been to produce the states of type witnessed in the exemplars, we may reconstruct

45. Dane, “Perfect Order and Perfected Order,” 288.

TABLE 2

The Progression of States of Q_2 *Hamlet* Arising
from this Study

| Forme | Page(s) | Exemplars in Each State | Readings in Each State |
|-----------|----------------|--|---|
| A (inner) | 1 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} L C ² VER | 1604 1605 |
| B (outer) | 2 ^v | Y ² HN F C ² W _{ro} L VER | Romadge Romeage |
| C (inner) | 2 ^r | Y ² HN F L C ² VER W _{ro} | pre thee prethee |
| | 3 ^v | | step steepe |
| | 4 ^r | | by buy |
| C (outer) | 2 ^v | Y ² HN F L C ² VER W _{ro} | watch watcl watch, |
| D (inner) | 2 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} L C ² VER | my my Lord, |
| | 3 ^v | | gines gins |
| D (outer) | 2 ^v | Y ² HN F W _{ro} L C ² VER | hear heare. |
| G (outer) | 1 ^r | Y ² HN F C ² VER L W _{ro} | braines braues |
| | 3 ^r | | <i>Exit</i> [<i>no SD</i>] |
| L (outer) | 1 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} C ² VER L | Ore-beares Ore beares |
| | 1 ^r | | Officers Officres |
| | 1 ^r | | .A .(A |
| N (inner) | 4 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} L C ² VER | Vnice Onixe |
| N (outer) | 1 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} L C ² VER | thirtie thereby thereby |
| | 1 ^r | | pall fall fall |
| | 2 ^v | | sellingly sellingly fellingly |
| | 2 ^v | | dosie dazzie dazzie |
| | 2 ^v | | yaw raw raw |
| | 2 ^v | | neither in neither,in neither,in |
| | 2 ^v | | too't doo't doo't |
| | 2 ^v | | reponsiue reponsiue responsiue |
| | 3 ^r | | be hangers be might hangers be might hangers |
| | 3 ^r | | A did sir A did so sir A did so sir |
| O (inner) | 2 ^r | Y ² HN F W _{ro} [L] C ² VER | G ₂ O ₂ |

the heaps themselves, representing their progressive changes using the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on to stand for the order of states (original setting, second state, third, and so on). Table 3 shows the heaps as they would have stood prior to gathering if integrity had been maintained in perfecting.

There would have existed one heap for each sheet, but Table 3 shows only the heaps for the formes containing the known press variants. Its seven rows correspond to the seven extent exemplars, leaving out the hundreds of other sheets (interleaved between these seven) that ended up in exemplars now lost. Table 3 was derived from Table 2 by asking for each forme how many exemplars witness each state. Thus for forme C (inner) there are four exemplars witnessing the first state (namely Y², HN, F, and L) and three witnessing the second state (namely C², VER, and Wro), so that reading down the C (inner) column in Table 3 are the numbers 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2 representing the four first-state and three second-state sheets. If Table 3 represented the actual composition of the heaps when gathering was done in the order proposed here (Y², HN, F, Wro, L, C², and VER) then reading across the first row would show the states witnessed in exemplar Y², the second row the states witnessed in exemplar HN, the third F, and so on. But in fact Table 3 cannot represent the real order of states in the heaps, since although gathering in this order would indeed produce the states found in exemplars Y² (1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1), HN (1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1), and F (1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1), it would not produce the states found in the exemplar Wro (2, 2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2) nor the rest.

TABLE 3

The Idealized Order of States in Heaps of Sheets
for Q₂ *Hamlet*

| A (inner) | B (outer) | C (inner/ outer) | D (inner/ outer) | G (outer) | L (outer) | N (inner/ outer) | O (inner) |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1,1 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1,1 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 1,2 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 1,2 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 2,2 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 2 | 1 | 2,3 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2 |

TABLE 4

The Real Order of States in Heaps of Sheets
for *Q₂ Hamlet*

| A (inner) | B (outer) | C (inner/ outer) | D (inner/ outer) | G (outer) | L (outer) | N (inner/ outer) | O (outer) | |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1,1 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 | Y ² |
| 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1,1 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 | HN |
| 1 | 1 | 1,2 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 1,1 | 1 | F |
| 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 2 | 1 | 1,1 | 2 | W _{ro} |
| 2 | 2 | 1,2 | 2,2 | 2 | 2 | 2,2 | 2 | L |
| 2 | 1 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 2,3 | 2 | C ² |
| 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 1 | 1 | 2,3 | 2 | VER |

How much disturbance to the heaps would be required to turn Table 3's ideal order into the real order needed for the gathering of the exemplars in the sequence Y², HN, F, W_{ro}, L, C², and VER? Surprisingly little. Table 4 shows what would be necessary, with five sheets marked by bold type having moved from their original places (as shown in Table 3) in order to produce the heap orders implied by the exemplars.

The question, then, is whether such a disruption in the heaps is plausible given the practices described by Moxon. Dane quotes Moxon's account of the drying of sheets prior to gathering, with its concern for the sheets not getting turned nor being mixed with sheets bearing a different signature.⁴⁶ As Dane observes, nothing is said about retaining the order of the sheets within the heap as it is spread out on lines and then reformed as a pile, and "there is simply too much handling of the fully printed paper in small units (or "grasps") for perfect order to be maintained" for gathering.⁴⁷ The result is not chaos, but minor reshuffling, as in our hypothetical reconstruction of the heaps for *Q₂ Hamlet*.

CONCLUSION

Dane's discovery of heap integrity (strong in the process of perfecting and normative in the process of gathering) presents a challenge to the editorial principle of treating each forme individually when dealing with

46. *Ibid.*, 275.

47. *Ibid.*, 277-8.

stop-press correction. In particular, because rare early states of one forme are unlikely to be gathered with rare late states of another, the treatment of press variants must look beyond the individual forme to consider the character of the exemplar as a whole and its place within the edition. Table 2 gives the conclusions of this investigation regarding which exemplars and which readings present the latest available state of the type for *Q₂ Hamlet*, as it existed after interventions in each forme. Of course the final state must not be assumed to be the correct state in the sense of reflecting copy, since miscorrections and accidents altering the type are present. For six of the formes showing variants — A (inner), B (outer), C (outer), D (outer), L (outer), and O (inner) — we cannot from the readings and the appearance of the type alone tell the direction of alteration, intentional or otherwise, so the order chosen here is the one consistent with maximal heap integrity in perfecting and gathering. For the other five formes we can be tolerably sure of the direction of alteration, and this allows us also to say something about the likelihood that copy was consulted. For those five formes the summary is:

Forme: C (inner)

Variants: pre thee > prethee
step > steepe
by > buy

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by all three improving the reading. Copy need not have been consulted: the proofreader's judgement would have been sufficient.

Forme: D (inner)

Variants: my > my Lord
gines > gins

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by the spacing around "gins". Consultation of copy perhaps recovered "Lord," but the proofreader could simply guess it from context.

Forme: G (outer)

Variants: braines > braues
Exit. > [no SD]

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by the improvement of readings. Consultation of copy was necessary to recover “braues”.

Forme: N (inner)

Variant: Vnice > Onixe

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by “vnion” in the Folio. If copy was consulted it was rejected as illegible.

Forme: N (outer) first round of alterations

Variants: thirtie > thereby

pall > fall

dosie > dazzie

yaw > raw

neither in > neither, in

too't > doo't

be > be might

sir > so sir

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by i) the vertical displacement of “zz” in “dazzie”; ii) the Folio having the reading “might”; and iii) the crowding around “so sir”. Copy must have been consulted to recover the word “might” and the copy was probably illegible for “thirtie”; otherwise, the Folio’s reading “shortlie” (there spelt “shortly”) would have been recovered from it.

Forme: N (outer) second round of alterations

Variants: sellingly > fellingly

reponsiue > responsiue

Conclusions: The direction of alteration is established by determination of the direction in the first round and the necessity that exemplar L witnesses an intermediate state.⁴⁸ Consultation of copy need not have occurred.

48. Unless a second round of alteration undid the first (which is most unlikely), the order of alteration for N(outer) must be either Y₂ HN F W_{ro} > L > C₂ VER or C₂ VER > L > Y₂ HN F W_{ro} (remembering that there is no implied ordering

There is some evidence, then, that the copy was consulted by the proofreader when calling for changes to the type. It would be perverse to assume that the proofreader behaved randomly in this regard, so we should assume that except where it was clearly unnecessary (as when adding a second “s” to make “responsiue”) he consulted his copy. This gives the later states greater general authority than the earlier ones except where we think the copy was illegible and the proofreader took a guess (“Vnice > Onixe” and “thirtie > thereby”) or where the variants came about by accident (“watch > watcl > watch,”; perhaps “hear > heare.”; “Ore-beares > Ore beares”; “Officers > Officres”; and perhaps “.A > .(A)”) or where we have to factor in the compositor’s failure to follow the proofreader’s instructions faithfully (“be > be might”). These eight exceptions comprise fewer than a third of the press variants in the edition, and for the rest an editorial assumption of orderly and successful intervention within a wider scheme of orderly handling of the materials is more likely to bring readers closer to what Shakespeare wrote than the orthodox editorial practice of choosing between readings on a forme-by-forme basis or, worse still, treating each in isolation.

within each of the three sets). Once the former order is accepted (because of the evidence in the first round of alteration) the readings in exemplar L must precede the readings in C₂ and VER.