



Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge  
Classique et les Lumières

UMR 5186 du Centre national de la recherche scientifique &  
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3

**THE QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE'S TEXT  
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND**

© Jean-Christophe Mayer, 2023

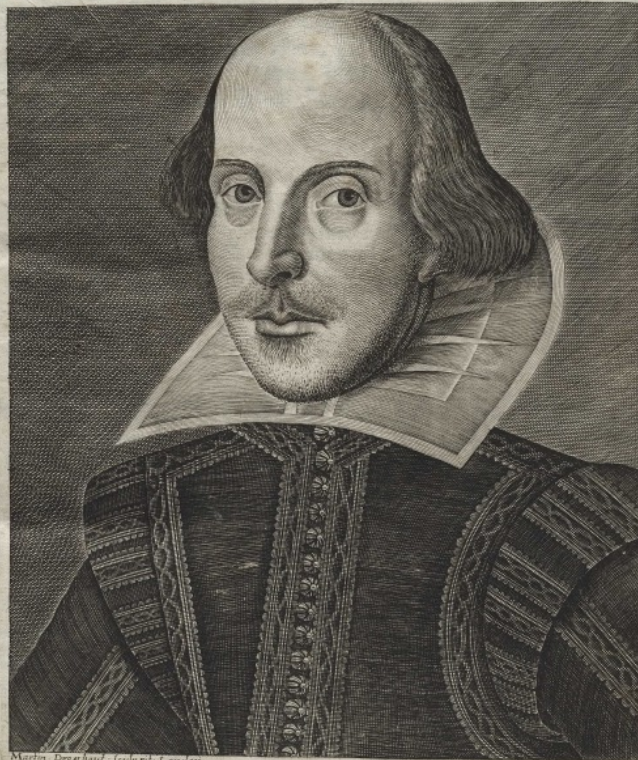


# **INTRODUCTION**

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, FOLIO I,  
N. 5 (BY PERMISSION)

MR. WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARES  
COMEDIES,  
HISTORIES, &  
TRAGEDIES.

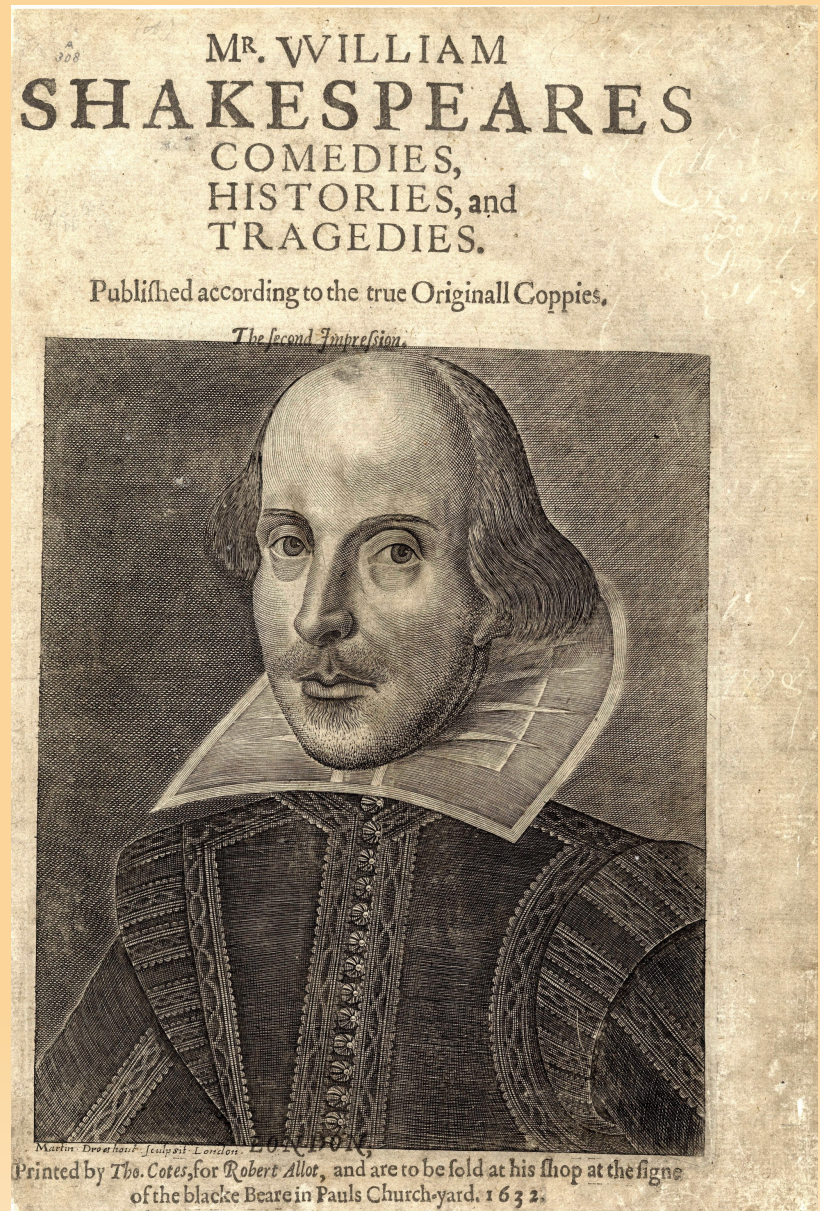
Published according to the True Originall Copies.



Martin Droghda Sculptor London.

LONDON  
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

THE SECOND FOLIO OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS (1632)  
(FOLGER ART BOX D783 NO.2, BY PERMISSION)



THE THIRD FOLIO (PRINTED IN 1663/1664)  
FOLGER S2914 FO.3 NO.18 (BY PERMISSION)

MR. WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEAR'S

Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies.

Published according to the true Original Copies.

*The third Impression.*

And unto this Impression is added seven Playes, never  
before Printed in Folio.

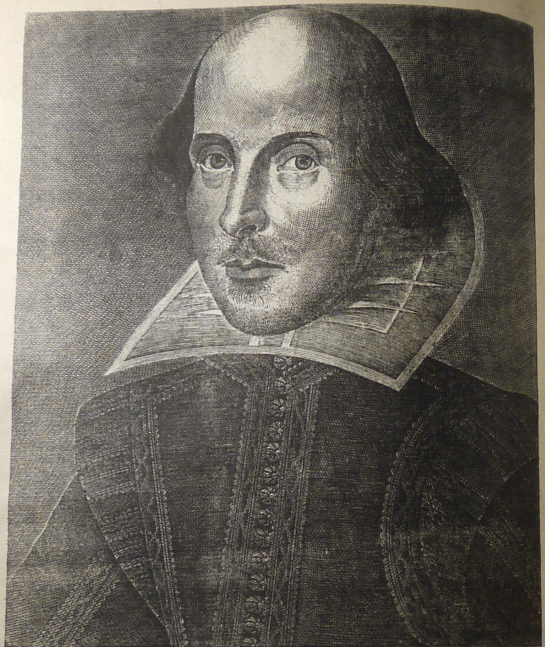
*viz,*

*Pericles Prince of Tyre.*  
*The London Prodigall.*  
*The History of Thomas L<sup>d</sup> Cromwell.*  
*Sir John Oldcastle Lord Cobham.*  
*The Puritan Widow.*  
*A York-shire Tragedy.*  
*The Tragedy of Locrine.*



LONDON, Printed for P. C. 1664.

THE FOURTH FOLIO PUBLISHED IN 1685  
FOLGER S2915 FO.4 NO.3 (BY PERMISSION)



*Walter Dowland Sculpsit London*

*To the Reader.*

This Figure that thou here seest put,  
It was for gentle *Shakespeare* cut ;  
Wherein the *Graver* had a strife  
With Nature to outdo the Life.  
O, could he but have drawn his Wit  
As well in *Brass*, as he has hit  
His Face ; the Print would then surpass  
All that was ever writ in *Brass*.  
But since he cannot, Reader, look  
Not on his Picture, but his *Book*.

B. J.

M<sup>R</sup> William Shakespear's  
COMEDIES,  
HISTORIES,  
AND  
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the true Original Copies.

Unto which is added, SEVEN

PLAYS,

Never before Printed in Folio:

VIZ.

*Pericles Prince of Tyre.*  
*The London Prodigal.*  
*The History of Thomas Lord*  
*Cromwel.*

*Sir John Oldcastle Lord Cobham.*  
*The Puritan Widow.*  
*A Yorkshire Tragedy.*  
*The Tragedy of Locrine.*

*The Fourth Edition.*



LONDON,

Printed for *H. Herringman, E. Brewster, and R. Bentley*, at the *Anchor* in the  
*New Exchange*, the *Crane* in *St. Pauls Church-Yard*, and in  
*Russel-Street Covent-Garden*. 1 6 8 5.

# OUTLINE

- **Part 1: The Ambivalent Dominance of Major Eighteenth-Century Editors lost in a “Wide Sea of Words”**
- **Part 2: The Concurrent and Challenging Rise of The Reader**
- **Conclusion**

**PART I: THE AMBIVALENT DOMINANCE OF MAJOR  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EDITORS  
LOST IN A “WIDE SEA OF WORDS”**

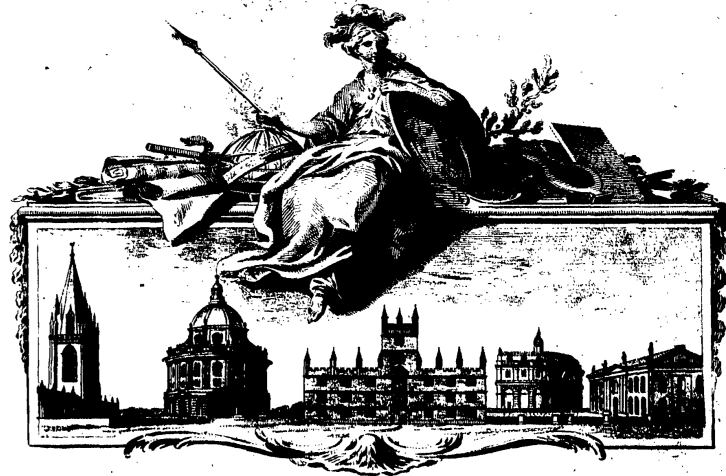


THOMAS HANMER'S 1743-44 EDITION  
(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO), ESTC  
T138604)

THE  
WORKS  
OF  
SHAKESPEAR.  
IN  
SIX VOLUMES.

Carefully REVISED and CORRECTED by the former EDITIONS,  
and ADORNED with SCULPTURES designed and executed by  
the best hands.

— *Nil ortum tale.* — Hor.



OXFORD: Printed at the THEATRE, MDCCXLIV.

LEWIS THEOBALD'S 1733 EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE  
(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO),  
ESTC T138604)

a. 3076.

THE  
WORKS  
OF  
*SHAKESPEARE:*

VOLUME the FIRST.

CONTAINING,

The TEMPEST.	MERRY WIVES of WINDSOR.
The MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.	MEASURE for MEASURE.
The TWO GENTLEMEN of VERONA.	MUCH ADO about NO- THING.

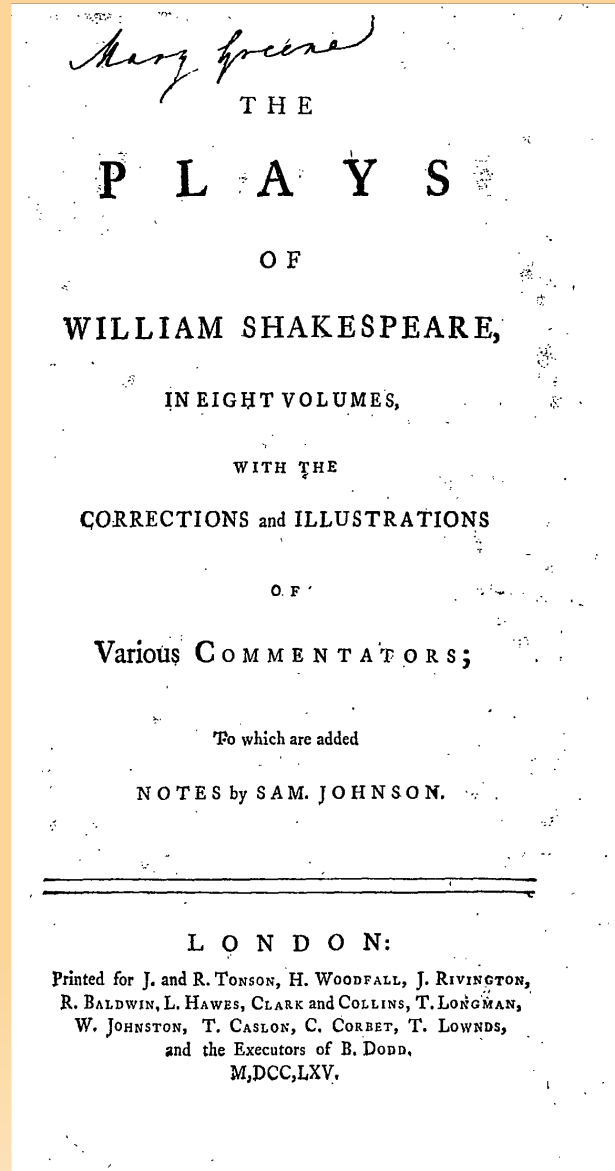
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L O N D O N:

Printed for A. BETTESWORTH and C. HITCH,  
J. TONSON, F. CLAY, W. FEALES,  
and R. WELLINGTON.

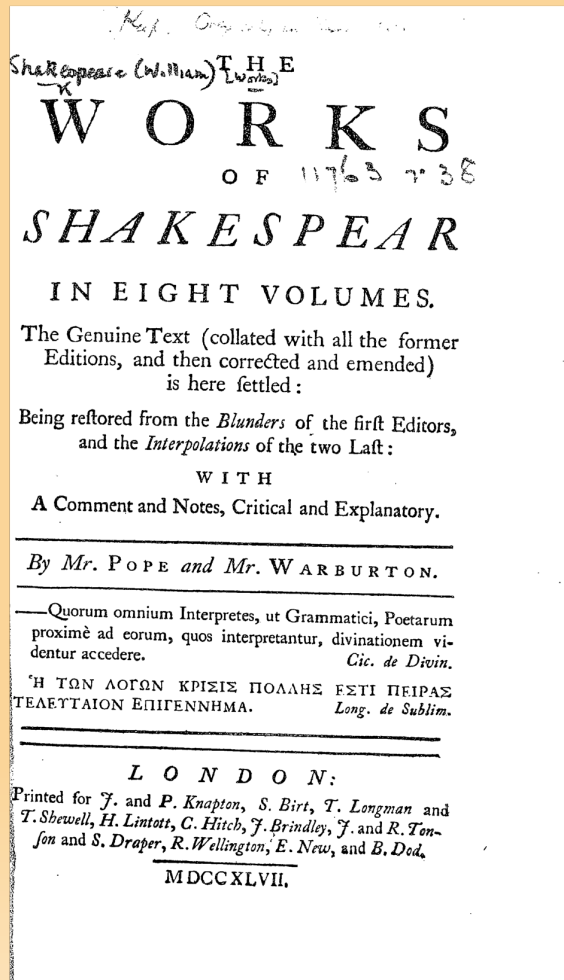
M DCC XXXIII.

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S 1765 EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE  
(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO),  
ESTC N12071 )



WILLIAM WARBURTON'S REMARKS IN HIS 1747 EDITION OF  
SHAKESPEARE

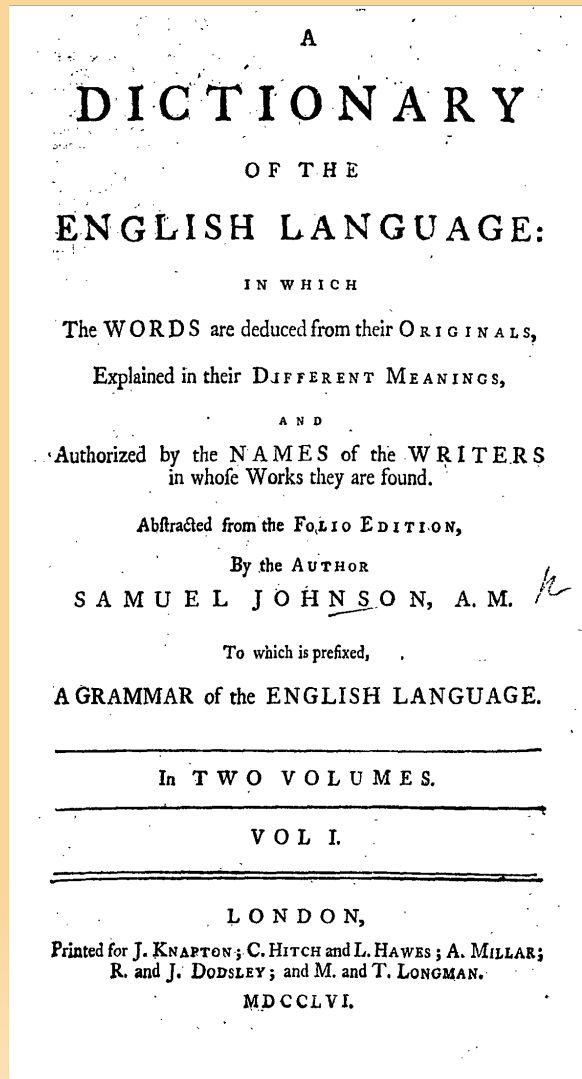
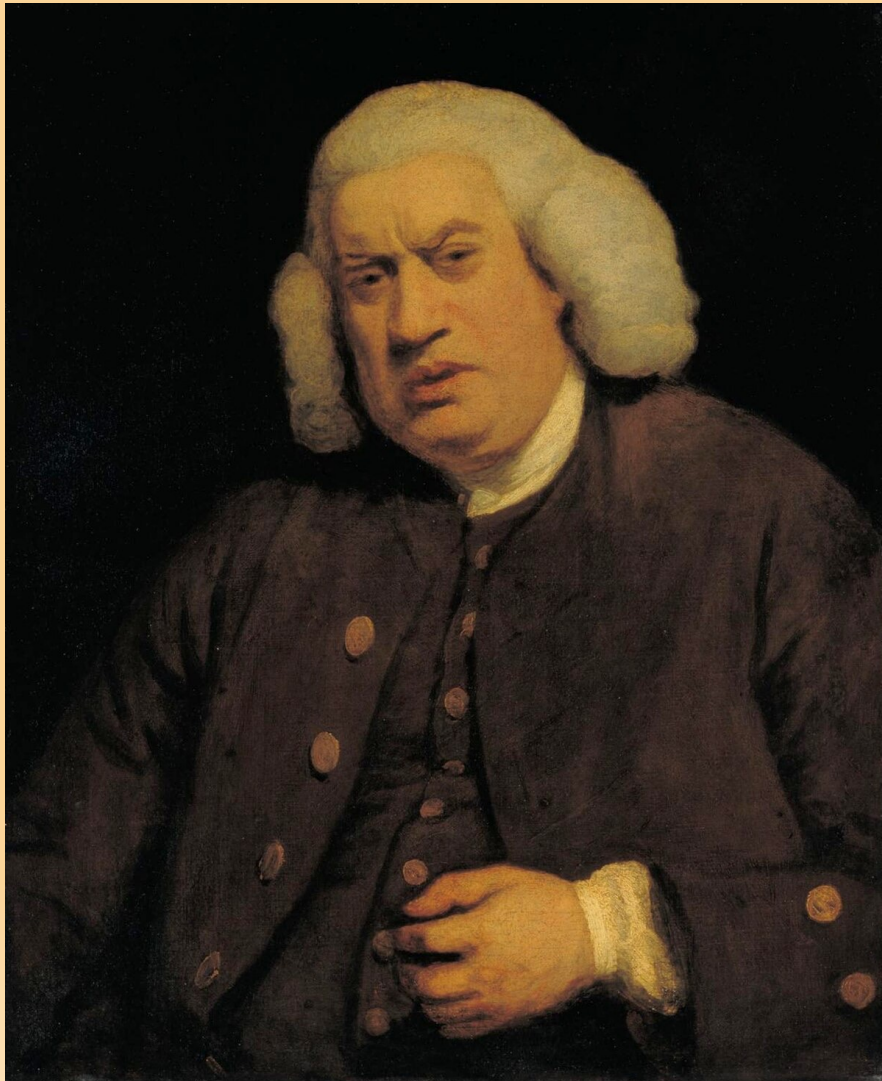
(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO),  
ESTC T138851 )



- For we have neither GRAMMAR nor DICTIONARY, neither Chart nor Compass, to guide us through this wide sea of Words. And indeed how should we? since both are to be composed and finished on the Authority of our best established Writers. But their authority can be of little use till the Text hath been correctly settled, and the Phraseology critically examined.

# SAMUEL JOHNSON AND HIS *DICTIONARY* (1756)

(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO))



**PART II: THE CONCURRENT AND  
CHALLENGING RISE OF THE  
READER**

# LEWIS THEOBALD'S (1688-1744) AND HIS *SHAKESPEARE RESTORED* (1726)

*SHAKESPEARE* restored:

OR, A

S P E C I M E N

OF THE

Many E R R O R S,

AS WELL

Committed, as Unamended, by Mr. POPE

In his Late

EDITION of this P O E T.

DESIGNED

Not only to correct the said EDITION, but to restore the True  
READING of *SHAKESPEARE* in all the Editions ever  
yet publish'd.

---

---

By Mr. THEOBALD.

---

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----- *Laniatum Corpore toto*  
DEIPHOBUM *vidi & lacerum crudeliter Ora,*  
*Ora, manusque ambas,* ----- VIRG.

---

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L O N D O N:

Printed for R. FRANCKLIN under Tom's, J. WOODMAN and D. LYON  
under Will's, Covent-Garden, and C. DAVIS in Hatton-Garden.

M. DCC. XXVI.

- “As SHAKESPEARE stands, or at least ought to stand, in the Nature of a Classic Writer, and indeed, he is corrupt enough to pass for one of the oldest Stamp, every one, who has a Talent and Ability this Way, is at liberty to make his Comments and Emendations upon him”.

NICHOLAS ROWE (1674-1718 ), ALEXANDER  
POPE (1688- 1744) AND THOMAS  
HANMER(1677-1746)



Rowe



Pope

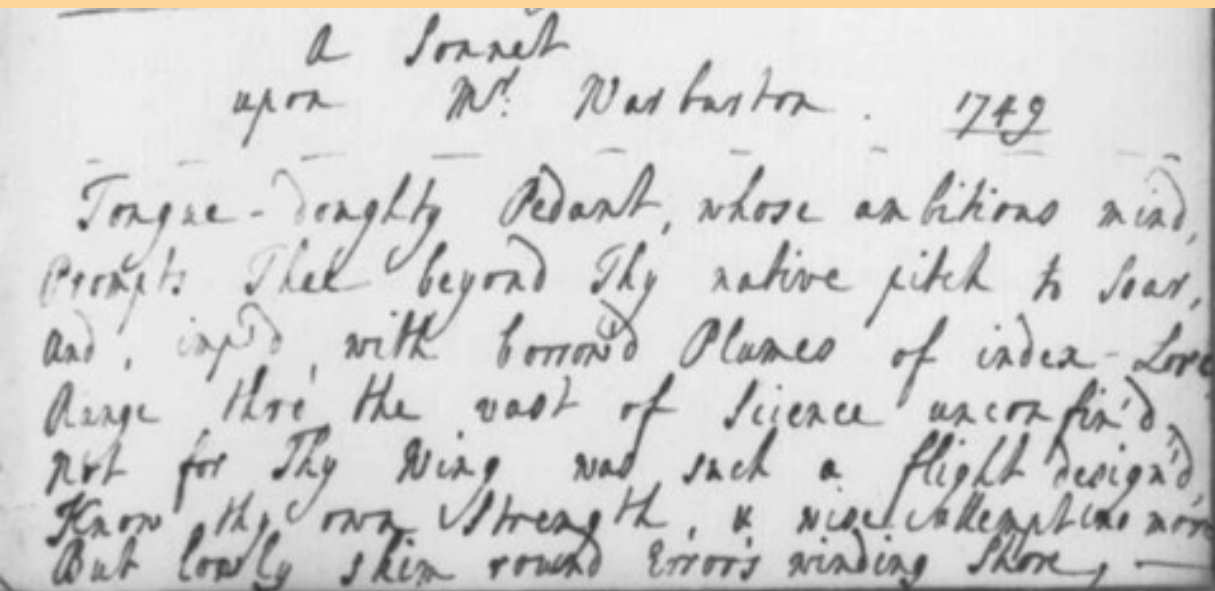


Hamner



MARY CAPELL'S COPY CA. 1740-1751 OF "A SONNET UPON MR:  
WARBURTON"

(© BROTHERTON LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, MS LT. 119,  
FF. 170R-171R).



A Sonnet  
upon Mr. Warburton. 1749

Tongue-doughty Pedant, whose ambitious mind,  
Prompts Thee beyond Thy native pitch to Soar,  
and, imp'd, with borrow'd Plumes of inda-Love  
Auge thro' the vast of Science unconfin'd,  
not for Thy wing was such a flight design'd  
Know thy own Strength, & nice capabilities  
But lowly skim round errors winding shore,

- Tongue-doughty Pedant; whose ambitious mind  
Prompts Thee beyond Thy native pitch to Soar,  
[...]  
Much hast thou written more than will be read;  
Then cease from Shakespear thy unhallow'd rage,  
Not by a fond o'erweening pride mis-led,  
Hope Fame by injuring the Sacred Dead:  
Know, who would comment well his Godlike Page,  
Critic; must have a heart as well as head.

SARAH BURNES'S CRITIQUE OF WARBURTON IN *LOCRINE*

IN FOLGER FO.4 NO.12.

(BY PERMISSION OF FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY)

Warburtons  
Case

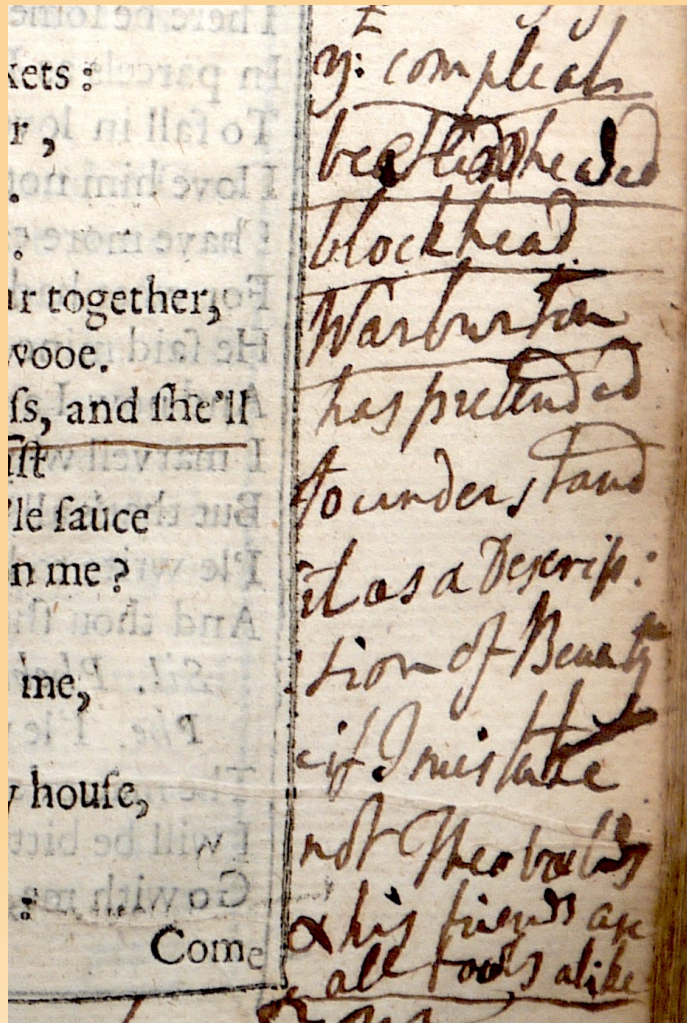
Strum. Alas, Mistrefs Dorothy, this is my luck, that when I most would, I cannot be understood: so that my great learning is an inconvenience unto me. But to speak in plain terms, I love you, Mistrefs Dorothy, if you like to accept me into your familiarity.

- Next to Strumbo's line in *Locrine* where the character complains that "this is my luck, that when I most would, I cannot be understood: so that my great learning is an inconvenience unto me", Sarah Burnes added this short but cutting remark: "Mr Warburtons case" (sig. Bbbb1r).

AN ANNOTATOR IS CONCERNED WITH THE SHORTCOMINGS OF  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EDITIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

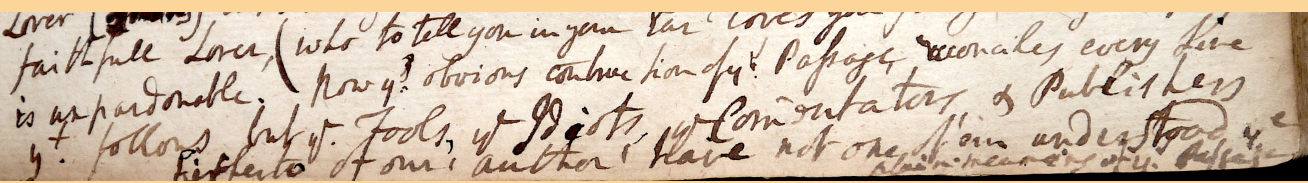
(FOLGER FO.3 NO.22)

(BY PERMISSION OF FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY)



- “that compleat beetleheaded blockhead Warburton has pretended to understand it as a Description of Beauty & if I mistake not Theobald & his friends are all fools alike” (*As You Like It*, sig. R4r).

THE SAME THE ANNOTATOR SEEKS TO CLARIFY A PASSAGE IN  
*AS YOU LIKE IT* AND INSULTS ABOUT EVERYONE FOR NOT  
UNDERSTANDING IT CORRECTLY (FOLGER FO.3 NO.22)  
(BY PERMISSION OF FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY)

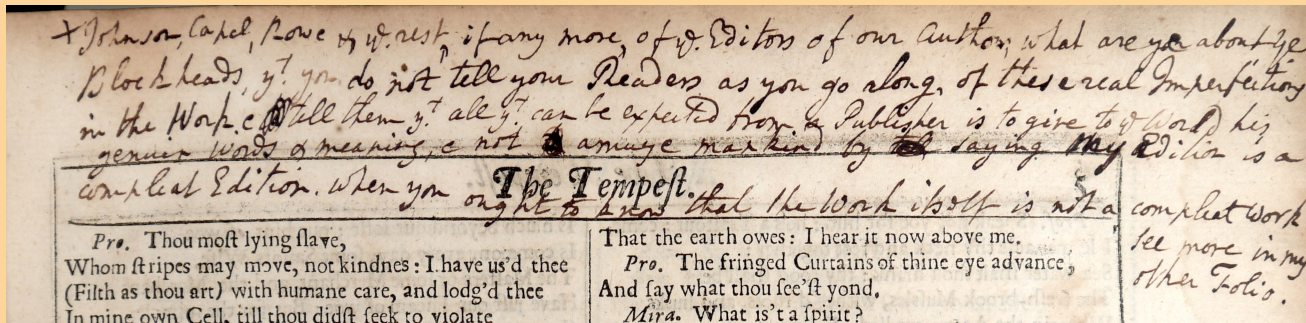


Lover (who to tell you in your ear loves you)  
faithful Lover (who to tell you in your ear loves you)  
is as pardonable. how? obvious construction! Passage reconciles every line  
y. follows. Fools, Idiots, Commentators & Publishers  
hitherto of our Author have not one of 'em understood the plain meaning of the Passage

- “Now *this* obvious construction of *that* Passage reconciles every Line *that* follows but *the* Fools, *the* Idiots, *the* Commentators, & Publishers hitherto of our Author have not one of ‘em understood *the* plain meaning of *the* Passage” (*As You Like It* ; sig. R4r).

THE SAME READER ACCUSES EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EDITORS  
 OF FAILING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE INSTABILITY OF THEIR  
 COPY TEXT (FOLGER FO.3 NO.22)  
 (BY PERMISSION OF FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY)

- Johnson, Capel, Rowe & *the rest*, if any more, of *the* Editors of our Author, what are ye about ye Blockheads, y<sup>t</sup>. you do not tell your Readers as you go along, of these real Imperfections in the Work, & tell them y<sup>t</sup>. all y<sup>t</sup>. can be expected from a Publisher is to give to y<sup>e</sup> World his genuine Words & Meaning, & not to amuse mankind by saying My Edition is a compleat Edition. When you ought to know that the Work itself is not a compleat Work. (*The Tempest*, sig. A3r)



SHAKESPEARE ANNOTATOR, SURGEON AND  
APOTHECARY, JOHN SHERWEN (BAP. 1748, D. 1826)



SAMUEL JOHNSON'S PREFACE TO HIS 1765 EDITION OF  
SHAKESPEARE  
(© EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COLLECTIONS ONLINE (ECCO) ESTC:  
N12071, VOL. 1, P. 60 )

lx            P R E F A C E:

rections, such as every editor has added at his will, and often by comments more laborious than the matter will seem to deserve; but that which is most difficult is not always most important, and to an editor nothing is a trifle by which his authour is obscured.

The poetical beauties or defects I have not been very diligent to observe. Some plays have more, and some fewer judicial observations, not in proportion to their difference of merit, but because I gave this part of my design to chance and to caprice. The reader, I believe, is seldom pleased to find his opinion anticipated; it is natural to delight more in what we find or make, than in what we receive. Judgement, like other faculties, is improved by practice, and its advancement is hindered by submission to dictatorial decisions, as the memory grows torpid by the use of a table book. Some initiation is how-

- The reader, I believe, is seldom pleased to find his opinion anticipated; it is natural to delight more in what we think or make, than in what we receive. Judgement, like other faculties, is improved by practice, and its advancement is hindered by submission to dictatorial decisions [...].

JOHN SHERWEN'S COMMENT ON A PASSAGE OF *HENRY IV*,  
*PART 1*, SIG. G2V, FOLGER FO.3 NO.22.  
(BY PERMISSION OF THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY)

who is substituted 'gainst the French,  
no certaine notice. } They who tell us that Shakesp. never  
Arch. Let us on: } altered or corrected should attend to  
} this excellent Speech added by him  
} after the first Edition

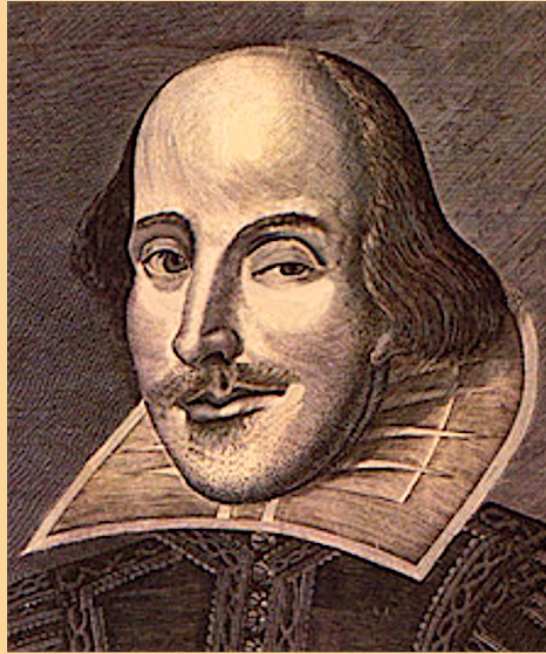


- “They who tell us that Shakesp. never altered or corrected should attend to this excellent Speech added by him after the first Edition”



CONCLUSION

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !*





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