

From Restorer to Editor: The Evolution of Lewis Theobald's Textual Critical Practice

Illustrations

Figure 1 Theobald's marked-up copy for *King Lear* I. 1. 217–36, from the third volume of Pope's 1728 edition. By permission of the Warden and Fellows of Winchester College.

Abstract

This article examines Lewis Theobald's development as a textual critic from his review of Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare's plays in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) to his use of Pope's text as the basis for his own edition (1733) several years later. In *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald argued the need for an editor skilled in conjecturing to remedy the corruption of Shakespeare's text. However, when he came to produce his own edition, Theobald emphasised his commitment to collating the extant texts in search of solutions to textual problems as well as his belief in the value of conjectures. This essay reconstructs Theobald's textual critical practice in the interval between *Shakespeare Restored* and his edition to explain the shift in his editorial theory. It demonstrates that collation became an integral part of Theobald's textual critical practice as his collection of Quarto and Folio editions expanded after 1726. It also shows that he made use of variant readings to correct the text in his edition to a far greater extent than he had in *Shakespeare Restored*. Yet Theobald did not restore many of the variant readings available in Quarto and Folio texts; as a result, a large number of readings introduced on no authority by Pope remain in Theobald's text. The reasons for Theobald's preservation of these readings have been disputed. This essay uses evidence from Theobald's correspondence with William

Warburton in 1729 and 1730 to explain this puzzling aspect of his editorial practice. It argues that far from failing to collate thoroughly enough to discover Quarto and Folio alternatives, Theobald chose to appropriate many readings in Pope's text as part of his mission to produce a more intelligible text of Shakespeare.

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Lewis Theobald's career as a Shakespearean scholar in the public eye began with *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), his unsparing review of Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare's plays, and culminated seven years later with the publication of a new edition (1733) edited by Theobald himself.¹ *Shakespeare Restored* is generally regarded as the blueprint for Theobald's editorial work: Peter Seary has remarked that 'in this early work he laid the foundations of his approach in his edition'.² Yet this emphasis on the continuities of theory and practice between *Shakespeare Restored* and the edition obscures important developments. It is clear that Theobald's conception of the role of the Shakespearean editor changed over the course of his work. In the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald argued the need for a

My research for this article was generously supported by Winchester College and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. I wish to thank Geoffrey Day, former Fellows' Librarian of Winchester College, for his invaluable help and guidance, and Richard Foster, the current Fellows' Librarian, for his kind assistance. I am indebted to Valerie Rumbold, Kate Rumbold, James McLaverty, and the anonymous reader for *The Library* for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this essay.

¹ There are two book-length studies of Theobald: Richard Foster Jones, *Lewis Theobald: His Contribution to English Scholarship With Some Unpublished Letters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919), and Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). In addition, two recent studies of the evolution of textual scholarship contain important discussions of Theobald's textual criticism: Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725–1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Chapter 4, and Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 132–49.

² Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, p. 68. See also Walsh, *Literary Editing*, p. 133.

conjecturing editor to ‘restore Sense to Passages in which no Sense has hitherto been found’.³ Later, in the preface to his edition, he reiterated his case in favour of conjecture, reproducing passages verbatim from *Shakespeare Restored*; however, he went on to emphasise that his editorial practice had been based not on critical intuition but rather on ‘a diligent and laborious Collation [...] of all the older Copies’.⁴

This article traces the developments in Theobald’s practice that underlie this shift in his theory from a conjectural model of editing to one based on collation. It was not until five years after the publication of *Shakespeare Restored* that Theobald secured a contract to produce an edition of Shakespeare’s plays, and in the intervening time he continued to collect early printings and root out errors in the most recent edition, Alexander Pope’s *Works of Shakespear* (1725). Barred by copyright from producing a rival edition, Theobald expanded the work he had done in *Shakespeare Restored* into a complete commentary on the errors and obscurities of Pope’s text. The appearance of a revised second edition of Pope’s *Shakespear* in November 1728 halted the publication of this commentary, but it gave Theobald an opportunity to scrutinise Pope’s latest text in collaboration with a fellow scholar, William Warburton. This article uses Theobald’s surviving letters to Warburton from 1729 and 1730 to build a picture of his textual critical methods in the interval between *Shakespeare Restored* and his edition.⁵ It shows that during this time he laid the groundwork for the editorial approach he described in the preface to his edition by

³ Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored* (London: R. Francklin and others, 1726), p. v.

⁴ *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Lewis Theobald, 7 vols (London: Arthur Bettesworth and others, 1733), I, pp. xli–xlii. Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Theobald (1733).

⁵ Seventy of the letters Theobald and Warburton exchanged were printed by John Nichols in *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1817–58), II, 204–654. A century later a further forty letters were published by Jones in *Lewis Theobald*, Appendix C.

collating Quarto and Folio texts that had not been available to him when he wrote *Shakespeare Restored*. Moreover, it examines for the first time how Theobald made use of the corrections and notes he amassed after 1726 when he came to prepare his edition. Equipped with a record of corrections drawn from his collations, he restored a large number of Quarto and Folio readings to his copy text, Pope's revised text of 1728. However, he sometimes changed his mind about his emendations; in one remarkable case he had second thoughts after marking his corrections in the copy for his edition, parts of which are preserved at Winchester College and the British Library.⁶ More importantly, despite the energy he had invested in collation, he did not restore many of the Quarto and Folio variants available, instead allowing revisions and omissions made by Pope without the support of any seventeenth-century editions to pass undisturbed into his text. Theobald's preservation of many of Pope's readings remains a puzzling and underexplored aspect of his editorial practice.⁷ This essay argues that, far from betraying a lax approach to collation, this aspect of his practice reflects Theobald's commitment to producing a more intelligible text of Shakespeare than any that had hitherto appeared in print.

⁶ The portion of Theobald's printer's copy at Winchester College is bound into three volumes, each containing the copy for three plays: *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Richard III* make up one volume, *Timon of Athens*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Troilus and Cressida* make up another, and the three parts of *Henry VI* make up the third. The volumes came to the College in 1767 as part of a donation of books from Alexander Thistlethwayte (1717/8–1771), MP for Hampshire from 1751 to 1761. Richard Corballis gave an account of the content of the volumes in 'Copy-Text for Theobald's *Shakespeare*', *The Library*, 6th ser., 8 (1986), 156–59. The British Library holds Theobald's copy for *Antony and Cleopatra*. An inscription on one of the flyleaves of the volume (shelfmark C.45.b.11) records that the copy was 'a present from Mr H[enr]y Defoe Baker' to Dawson Turner (1775–1858), the banker and polymath whose collections found their way in part to the British Museum.

⁷ The most important discussions of the issue remain those of early twentieth-century scholars: Thomas R. Lounsbury, *The First Editors of Shakespeare (Pope and Theobald)* (London: David Nutt, 1906), pp. 523–29; David Nichol Smith, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pp. 39–41; Ronald B. McKerrow, 'The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors, 1709–1768', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19 (1933), 89–122 (pp. 111–12).

Recent studies of Theobald by Simon Jarvis and Marcus Walsh have analysed his textual critical practice primarily through the lens of his work on *Hamlet*. This approach foregrounds the play that Theobald himself chose as the basis for a display of his textual critical methods: he devoted the main body of *Shakespeare Restored* to an ‘Examination and Correction of the Tragedy of *Hamlet*’, indicating that he had chosen this play because its popularity had lulled audiences into believing that it was ‘free from Faults and Obscurity’ (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. vii). By 1726, Theobald can be assumed to have invested more time in finding and rectifying errors in the text of *Hamlet* than he had in any other play. To illustrate the development of Theobald’s textual criticism in the years after 1726, this essay focuses instead on *King Lear*, a play on which Theobald seems to have done most of his textual critical work after the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*. *King Lear* was a favourite play of Theobald’s. In 1715, he dedicated two issues of *The Censor*, his short-lived essay periodical, to a groundbreaking reading of Shakespeare’s transmutation of ‘the real History of King Lear’ in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* into a dramatic tragedy.⁸ In the first of these essays, he introduced the play as ‘a *Tragedy of Shakespear*’s, which, with all its Defects and Irregularities, has still touch’d me with the strongest Compassion, as well in my Study, as on the Stage’.⁹ As a critic Theobald admired Shakespeare’s artistry in building the tragedy of *King Lear* on historical foundations. As a textual scholar, however, he had to confront the differences between ‘The Tragedie of King Lear’—the version first published in the First Folio in 1623—and the *True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters*, first printed in quarto in 1608. Unlike recent scholars, Theobald was not inclined to consider what the

⁸ Theobald’s essays on *King Lear* appeared on 25 April and 2 May 1715. The quotation is from the *Censor*, 1.10 (2 May 1715), 66–74 (p. 66). On Theobald’s *Censor* essays, see Seary, pp. 32–35.

⁹ Lewis Theobald, *The Censor*, 1.7 (25 April 1715), 46–52 (p. 47).

differences between the Quarto and Folio versions might reveal about Shakespeare's authorial practice and the integrity of the work.¹⁰ However, the case of *King Lear* affords an opportunity to examine Theobald's handling of a play with a complex textual tradition, as well as one for which he had a longstanding admiration.

I.

The introduction to *Shakespeare Restored* is a manifesto for conjecturing. Pope claimed to have eschewed the practice of conjectural emendation altogether in his edition. In the preface, he declared that he had treated the text of Shakespeare with a reverence traditionally afforded to scripture: 'I have discharg'd the dull duty of an Editor, [...] with a religious abhorrence of all Innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture'.¹¹ In the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald took Pope to task for his 'downright *Superstition*' in investing a secular text with the same authority as a sacred one (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. iv). He insisted that it was an editor's responsibility to supply a reading consistent with the author's language and intention where no such reading existed in any extant text:

I have always thought, that whenever a *Gentleman* and a *Scholar* turns *Editor* of any Book, he at the same Time commences *Critick* upon his *Author*; and that wherever he finds the Reading suspected, manifestly corrupted, deficient in Sense, and unintelligible, he ought to exert every Power and Faculty of the Mind to supply such a

¹⁰ The landmark examinations of textual variation and its implications for authorship are Michael J. Warren, 'Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar', in David Bevington and Jay L. Halio, eds, *Shakespeare, Pattern of Excelling Nature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978), pp. 95–105, and Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, eds, *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

¹¹ *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1725), I, p. xxii. Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Pope (1725).

Defect, to give Light and restore Sense to the Passage, and, by a reasonable Emendation, to make that satisfactory and consistent with the Context, which before was so absurd, unintelligible, and intricate. (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. v)

Theobald's defence of conjecturing in the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored* rested on its effectiveness as an interpretative tool. It was only in the appendix that he emphasised its scholarly pedigree. Here he stressed that conjecture was an established and admired practice in classical textual criticism: 'The Alteration of a *Letter*, when it restores Sense to a corrupted Passage, in a *learned Language*, is an Atchievement that brings Honour to the *Critick* who advances it: And Dr. BENTLEY will be remember'd to Posterity for his Performances of this Sort, as long as the World shall have any Esteem for the Remains of *Menander* and *Philemon*' (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. 193). The Cambridge classicist Richard Bentley, best known in 1726 for his edition of Horace (1711), had courted controversy with strident assertions of the accuracy of his conjectures and attacks on his scholarly predecessors.¹² Theobald's tribute marked him as an imitator of Bentley's provocative and interventionist mode of textual criticism. It also established a classical precedent for *Shakespeare Restored* itself: Bentley's *Emendations* on Menander and Philemon (1710), like Theobald's collection of emendations on Shakespeare, exposed the errors of a recent edition, in Bentley's case the Amsterdam edition (1709) edited by Jean Le Clerc.¹³

Readers of the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored* might reasonably have expected the main body of the work to constitute a display of Theobald's skill in conjecturing. In fact, in his 'Examination and Correction of the Tragedy of *Hamlet*',

¹² On Bentley's Horace, see Kristine Louise Haugen, *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), Chapter 5.

¹³ Haugen, *Richard Bentley*, p. 162.

the centrepiece of *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald proved just as willing to accept readings from earlier editions as he was to make conjectures. Richard F. Jones observed almost a century ago that ‘there are almost as many “corrections from various readings” in Theobald’s remarks on *Hamlet* as there are conjectures’ (p. 91). To readers paying attention to Theobald’s marginal glosses, the proportion of emendations from earlier texts might have appeared even higher. As Theobald explained in his introduction, the marginal notes were intended to help readers differentiate between various kinds of correction (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. viii). Glosses such as ‘Emendation, *from Various Reading*’ highlighting corrections made with the support of earlier editions appear thirty-five times in the ‘Examination’ of *Hamlet*. Conversely, ‘*Conjectural* Emendation’ and ‘*Conjecture*’ appear twenty-eight times. Theobald did not make a binary distinction between conjectures and emendations from earlier texts: he sometimes opted to gloss his conjectures with the more neutral ‘Emendation’, a note that appears ten times in relation to conjectures and once in connection with a variant reading. Nevertheless, his glosses paint a picture of a critic who, despite his vaunted allegiance to Benteleian conjecturing, offered more solutions to textual problems drawn from existing witnesses than from his own mind.

The disjunction between Theobald’s theory and practice of textual criticism in *Shakespeare Restored* has a parallel in Bentley’s edition of Horace. In his preface, Bentley declared that as virtually all acceptable manuscript readings had already been incorporated into printed texts, the majority of his emendations would be *ex ingenio*, or from conjecture: ‘I will produce more emendations from conjecture than from the help of Manuscripts, and, unless I am totally wrong, the greater part of them more

certain'.¹⁴ Yet, as Harold R. Jolliffe showed, more than two-thirds of Bentley's emendations were in fact *ex libris*, or from manuscripts.¹⁵ In practice, the promise to emend more often from conjecture mattered less to Bentley than the appearance of intervening constantly to correct the text. Bentley based his edition on the vulgate or standard text of Horace, drawing attention to the frequency of his emendations by noting the readings he had displaced at the foot of the page with the label 'VULG.', for *vulgatae lectiones* or common readings.¹⁶ In *Shakespeare Restored*, by contrast, Theobald presented corrections on a newly published text edited by a literary celebrity. Emendations from earlier editions not only served to swell the pages of *Shakespeare Restored* and reinforce the impression of Theobald's scholarly diligence; crucially, they also served to distinguish Theobald's brand of textual criticism from Pope's by displaying his commitment to comparison of the extant texts.

Having criticised his stance on conjecture in the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald accused Pope of neglecting the task of collation in the 'Examination' of *Hamlet*. While arguing for the superiority of variant readings over those accepted by Pope, or advocating the insertion of lines left out by Pope, Theobald questioned whether the poet had performed the 'dull duty of an Editor' as carefully as he pretended. The sixth and last volume of Pope's edition included a bibliography listing the 'Several Editions of *Shakespear*'s Plays, made use of and compared in this Impression'.¹⁷ Theobald peppered his commentary on the first act of *Hamlet* with insinuations that Pope had been less than thorough in collecting and comparing copies of the play: 'The second Edition in *Folio*, printed in 1632, [...]

¹⁴ Haugen, *Richard Bentley*, p. 134. The translation is Haugen's; the original can be found in *Q. Horatius Flaccus*, ed. by Richard Bentley (Cambridge, 1711), sig. c1^v.

¹⁵ Harold R. Jolliffe, 'Bentley Versus Horace', *Philological Quarterly*, 16 (1937), 278–286 (pp. 282, 286 n. 13).

¹⁶ Haugen, *Richard Bentley*, p. 137.

¹⁷ Pope (1725), VI, sig. 401^r.

which is one of those that Mr. *POPE* professes to have collated'; 'I have a *Quarto* Edition, which, I suppose, Mr. *POPE* never saw'.¹⁸ Before he had reached the end of the second act, Theobald declared his suspicion that Pope had not made use of the editions in his bibliography at all. Imitating Bentley's signature method of digression and emendation, Theobald turned from *Hamlet* to *Henry VI Part 2* to rectify an apparent inaccuracy in Suffolk's recollection of the deaths of distinguished men. The confusion, Theobald demonstrated, was the result of the omission of a line found in the Folios. The line had been left out in Rowe's third edition of 1714, and, as Theobald correctly deduced, Pope had simply followed his copy text:

The Case is, a Material Line is left out, in this Passage, by Mr. *POPE*'s Impression; which very Line is left out of another Edition, in *Duodecimo*, likewise publish'd by Mr. *Tonson* about ten Years ago; so that it seems most probable, that the Press was set to Work and corrected by this *Duodecimo* Edition; without any *Collation* with the old Editions mentioned in Mr. *POPE*'s Table of Editions[.]¹⁹

Theobald's extraordinary accusation that Tonson had falsely advertised a reprint of Rowe's edition as a new text edited by Pope is at odds with his pledge to expose the 'Errors, as well Committed, as Unamended, by Mr. Pope in his Late Edition'

¹⁸ Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored*, pp. 3, 29. The '*Quarto* Edition' to which Theobald referred is the Fifth Quarto (1637) of *Hamlet*.

¹⁹ Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored*, p. 78. The line in question ('Stab'd *Julius Caesar*. Savage Islanders') appeared in Rowe's first edition: *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), III, 1508. This edition, ESTC No. T138296, is the first of two dated 1709; see Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 311. Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Rowe (1709). The line was omitted from Rowe's third edition: *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 8 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1714), IV, 316. Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Rowe (1714). On Pope's use of Rowe's third edition as the basis for his text, see Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, p. 56.

(*Shakespeare Restored*, title page). Yet this charge is also the culmination of an important strand of Theobald's critique in *Shakespeare Restored*. He may have characterised himself as a pioneer of conjecture in the field of English literature, but in practice he placed equal emphasis on the potential of earlier editions to yield credibly authorial readings where Pope's text appeared corrupt. Pope, he argued, had failed to make adequate use of the seventeenth-century editions of Shakespeare's plays. In the years following the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*, much of Theobald's work was dedicated to gathering the evidence of textual variation he believed Pope had been lacking.

II.

Following the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald had to wait over five years to secure the right to produce his own edition of Shakespeare's plays. During this time, he entered into correspondence with William Warburton, a clergyman with scholarly ambitions who shared his enthusiasm for the work of emending and explaining Shakespeare. Seary has vindicated Theobald of the charge, levelled over a century ago by David Nichol Smith, that the correspondence shows Theobald to have been dependent on Warburton's superior judgement to vet his conjectures.²⁰ Yet the importance of the letters goes beyond the insight they provide into Theobald's discussion of conjectural emendations with Warburton. In his letters, Theobald made lists of corrections that included not only conjectures but also variant readings and omitted lines that he considered worthy of restoration. Moreover, when he prepared the text for his edition, he drew on the comments and emendations he had made in his

²⁰ Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, Chapter 7; D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1903), pp. xxx, xlvi–xlvii.

letters to Warburton. Theobald's correspondence forms a vital link between his work as a commentator on Shakespeare's text and his work as an editor.

Substantial though it was, Theobald emphasised that *Shakespeare Restored* was merely a 'Specimen of the Many Errors' in need of correction in Pope's text (*Shakespeare Restored*, title page). He already had a larger work in mind: he revealed that a favourable reception for *Shakespeare Restored* would provide him with 'Encouragement in prosecuting a Design, that savours more of *publick Spirit* than *private Interest*' (*Shakespeare Restored*, p. 193). However, it was two years before Theobald formally announced his intention to publish a more substantial work of Shakespearean textual criticism. On 22 June 1728, one month after the publication of the first version of *The Dunciad*, Theobald advertised his new venture in *Mist's Weekly Journal*.²¹ The front page carried a letter from Theobald accusing Pope of malice and mud slinging, followed by 'Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, Notes and Remarks, critical and explanatory, on all the Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies of *Shakespeare*'. The proposals promised a complete commentary on the textual problems of Shakespeare employing the methods of *Shakespeare Restored*: Pope's text was to be '*amended* in above a thousand Places', 'the *Pointing* throughout rectified', and 'the *obsolete* and *difficult* Words, as also the *obscure* Places, briefly *explained*'. For a guinea, subscribers were assured that they would receive the commentary in three volumes before the end of the year.²²

In the event, Theobald's plans were thwarted by the appearance in November of a new and revised edition of Pope's Shakespeare, shrunk to a modest duodecimo

²¹ The three-book *Dunciad* was published on 18 May 1728; see *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, III: *The Dunciad* (1728) & *The Dunciad Variorum* (1729), ed. by Valerie Rumbold (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2007), p. 4.

²² Lewis Theobald, 'Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, Notes and Remarks', *Mist's Weekly Journal*, 22 June 1728, unpag.

and incorporating 106 corrections from *Shakespeare Restored*.²³ In a letter printed in the *Daily Journal* on 26 November, Theobald explained that before he could publish his ‘Notes and Remarks’ he needed to collate the duodecimo edition with the quarto edition of 1725 and revise his commentary to take account of any changes:

I hope my *Subscribers* will be so indulgent to consider, that Mr. *Pope*’s Edition in *Twelves* having been but so lately publish’d, must necessarily postpone the Publication of my Remarks for some little time, since I am obliged with Care to read over and *collate* all the 8 *Volumes*. All my Remarks upon our Author are drawn out, and transcrib’d, (except such additional ones, as I shall be obliged to make from this late Edition) and all Gentlemen that desire the Satisfaction of being convinced herein, shall, upon doing me the Honour of calling at my House, be at Liberty to see the *Manuscript*.²⁴

The delay proved indefinite. By March 1729, Theobald seems to have put his plans to publish the commentary on hold, and he was ready to embark on a new, collaborative phase of work. Warburton, an acquaintance of several years, had been pressing him to enter into a regular correspondence about Shakespearean textual problems, and on 18 March Theobald vowed to fulfil his side of the bargain: ‘I will, from this moment,

²³ Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, pp. 88, 97. According to Murphy, two editions of Pope’s revised text were issued in 1728: ‘one in eight volumes under Tonson’s imprint and one in ten volumes, with an imprint beginning with “J. and J. Knapton”’. See Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print*, pp. 314–15. In fact, the ‘edition’ issued under the imprint of ‘J. and J. Knapton’ and others appears to have been in large part a reissue of the Tonson edition. Six of the first eight volumes in the Knapton issue (1–3, 6–8) have volume title pages with Tonson’s imprint (‘Printed for J. Tonson in the *Strand*’). In addition, a comparison of the seventh volumes in both issues indicates that they were printed from the same setting of type. The volumes compared belong to the British Library copy of the Tonson issue, shelfmark 11761.b, and the British Library copy of the Knapton issue reproduced in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/>> [accessed 24 September 2017].

²⁴ Lewis Theobald, ‘To the Author of the *Daily Journal*’, *Daily Journal*, 26 November 1728, unpagged.

begin to draw out a list of Doubts and Depravations; which you will give me leave to communicate *de die in diem*'.²⁵ Theobald's initial enthusiasm came to nothing; however, when Warburton renewed his encouragement in the autumn, the timing was more propitious. For four months, from November 1729 to March 1730, Theobald and Warburton exchanged 'a letter every two or three days', sending and reviewing batches of emendations and comments on obscure or suspect passages.²⁶ They worked systematically through the plays in Pope's duodecimo edition, reaching the end of the final play, *Othello*, in April 1730.

For Theobald, the correspondence was an opportunity to discuss unpublished work with a fellow scholar. It is impossible to know how many of the emendations in his letters Theobald drew from his 'Notes and Remarks', but it seems likely that he consulted the manuscript as he compiled lists of corrections for Warburton. Though the commentary was based on Pope's 1725 text, it would have been easy to apply its corrections to the 1728 text and abbreviate the remarks to save space in the letters. Yet Theobald did not rely solely on the emendations he had made on Pope's 1725 text. At the time of his correspondence with Warburton, it seems that he was amassing a new fund of corrections and notes on Pope's revised text. When part of Theobald's library was sold at auction in October 1744, a month after his death, the lot that fetched the highest recorded price was a copy of Pope's duodecimo edition with copious annotation: 'Pope's Shakespear's Plays, in 8 vols. with many thousand Remarks, some curious, some shrewd, in Manuscript, wrote in every Page, by Mr. Theobald'.²⁷ In all probability, this was the copy of Pope's 1728 edition that Theobald

²⁵ Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, 18 March 1729, in *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 204–9 (pp. 204–5).

²⁶ Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, p. 107.

²⁷ *A Catalogue of the Library of Lewis Theobald, Esq. Deceas'd* (London: Charles Corbett, 1744), p. 10. Theobald's copy of 'Pope's Shakespear's Plays' was lot 405; according to a manuscript list of sale prices in the Bodleian Library copy of the catalogue, lot 405 sold for

used as he worked through the plays with Warburton. He made critical ‘Remarks’ in its margins, some of which may have provided material for his letters. In addition, as we will see, Theobald seems to have corrected the text in his copy of Pope’s second edition with variant readings drawn from his collations, creating an important source of corrections for his future editorial work.

Theobald’s letters reveal how his work had progressed since the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*, and nowhere had there been more significant developments than in his access to and use of early editions. When he wrote *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald had a relatively modest collection of seventeenth-century editions: in the course of the work he made reference to the Second Folio, the Fourth Folio, and four seventeenth-century quartos, including the Third Quarto (1655) of *King Lear*.²⁸ Even with such limited resources, Theobald seems not to have checked every seventeenth-century text in his possession when he found a suspect reading in Pope’s edition. In the appendix to *Shakespeare Restored*, he proposed to emend Cordelia’s speech at *King Lear* I. 1. 249–51 to restore a reading found in ‘my *Quarto* Edition, publish’d in 1655’.²⁹ The Third Quarto’s ‘respects of fortune’, he argued, conveys Cordelia’s recognition of Burgundy’s mercenary motives more clearly than Pope’s ‘respect and fortunes’, a reading derived from the Folios. For his next emendation Theobald turned to a passage fewer than forty lines later. Cordelia’s calm indictment of her sisters’ ‘plighted cunning’ at I. 1. 282 elicited two conjectures: Theobald made a case for ‘pleached’ based on its appearance elsewhere in Shakespeare’s oeuvre, but he settled

£2 13s. 0d. The Bodleian copy is reproduced in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/>> [accessed 24 September 2017].

²⁸ The other three quartos are the First Quarto (1600) of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Third Quarto (1611) of *Titus Andronicus*, and the Fifth Quarto (1637) of *Hamlet*.

²⁹ Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored*, p. 171. References to parts of *King Lear* by act, scene, and line number are based on the Arden edition: William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997). Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Foakes (1997).

on ‘plaited’, speculating that the manuscript reading ‘plaighted’ had been mistakenly printed as ‘plighted’. Despite having followed the Quarto fewer than forty lines earlier, Theobald seems to have been unaware of the Third Quarto variant ‘pleeted’ (Q1 ‘pleated’), which might have answered his desire for a word that ‘signifies *wrapt in Folds*’ or provided firmer support for his conjecture.³⁰

In the years after the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald expanded his collection of seventeenth-century editions. He borrowed a copy of the First Folio and acquired more quartos, including the Second Quarto (1619) of *King Lear*, a Pavier reprint that he believed to have been printed in 1608, as its imprint misleadingly stated.³¹ In his letters to Warburton in 1729 and 1730 Theobald made reference to the First Folio texts of all but one play (*The Tempest*) and to Quarto texts of twelve of the eighteen plays printed before 1623. The letters provide a partial record of the corrections Theobald had made to the plays in Pope’s 1728 edition with the help of the early Quarto and Folio texts. He did not compile comprehensive lists of variant readings he proposed to adopt, instead focusing his attention on the problems of selected passages. In a letter of 27 November 1729, as he turned to *The Comedy of Errors*, he told Warburton: ‘There are many things I set right in this Play

³⁰ William Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear, and His Three Daughters* (London: printed by Jane Bell, 1655), sig. B1^v (‘pleeted’). W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 4 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939–59), I, 265(e). William Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters* (London: Nathaniel Butter, 1608), sig. B4^v (‘pleated’). Greg, *Bibliography*, I, 265(a). Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Q1.

³¹ For details of Theobald’s borrowed copy of the First Folio, see Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, pp. 232–34. Theobald’s quotations from what he called the ‘first’ or ‘old’ quarto of *King Lear* in his letters to Warburton reveal that the book he had was a copy of the Second Quarto. On two occasions, he gave a Second Quarto reading that deviates from the reading of the First Quarto. *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 379 (‘My foot usurps my head’); William Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear, and His Three Daughters* ([London]: Nathaniel Butter, 1608 [i.e. Thomas Pavier, 1619]), sig. H2^r. Greg, *Bibliography*, I, 265(b). Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Q2. *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 385 (‘And told the piteous tale’); Q2, sig. L2^v.

by collation with the old folio, many of which I need not trouble you with.’³² It appears that Theobald had collated the First Folio text of *The Comedy of Errors* with the text in Pope’s second edition, marking the Folio readings he approved of in his copy of the 1728 edition and communicating a selection of them to Warburton. Elsewhere in the correspondence, there is clearer evidence of the thoroughness of Theobald’s collation. In his letters on *King Lear*, Theobald poured scorn on Pope’s approach to integrating material from the Quartos into the Folio text: ‘what dictatorial authority has our Editor to produce only some [lines], and stifle others?’³³ To support his claim that much of this material deserved to be reprinted, Theobald transcribed and corrected 104 of the 131 Quarto lines that did not appear in the 1728 edition.³⁴ He also proposed to restore nine readings from ‘the old quarto’ elsewhere in the text. He had evidently collated the Second Quarto text of *King Lear* with Pope’s text, gaining a detailed picture of variation in the Quarto tradition.

These examples show that by the time Theobald began writing regularly to Warburton collation had become an integral part of his textual critical practice, and he had been able to compare more Quarto and Folio texts than had been available to him in 1726. Yet in his letters his rationale for emending Pope’s text was the same as it had been in *Shakespeare Restored*. He proposed emendations on semantic or stylistic grounds, arguing that the variant readings he chose conveyed Shakespeare’s meaning or illustrated his habits of style more clearly than the existing readings. There is no evidence that he considered the relative authority of the editions when choosing between variant readings. In his letters on *King Lear*, he occasionally justified the

³² Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, 27 November 1729, in *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 288–94 (p. 292).

³³ Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, 1 January 1730, in *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 375–80 (p. 376).

³⁴ This calculation is based on the line numbers in Foakes (1997).

decision to reproduce a passage from the Quarto by asserting that it had been cut from the Folio text by actors.³⁵ But while he may have regarded the Quarto text as a version closer to Shakespeare's original, Theobald was not prepared to accept readings on the authority of the Quarto alone. When faced with a choice between a Folio reading, 'qualities', and a Quarto variant, 'equalities', in the first scene of *King Lear*, Theobald struggled to decide between them: 'Either may do; and I am at a loss which to prefer.'³⁶ Both readings were acceptable on semantic and stylistic grounds, and the relative authority of the Quarto and Folio editions does not seem to have tipped the balance in favour of either reading. Furthermore, though he mocked Pope for cherry-picking passages from the Quarto, Theobald was not willing to reproduce all the lines Pope had omitted simply because they appeared in the Quarto text. In the final scene of *King Lear*, Pope had silently discarded two lines found in all the preceding editions.³⁷ Theobald discovered the missing lines in the Second Quarto, but when he shared them with Warburton he confessed that he did not understand them:

P. 452. The quarto adds, after

Kent. Is this the promised end,

Edg. Or image of that horror?

Alb. Fall, and cease.

But what to make of it, I do not know.³⁸

³⁵ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 371, 385.

³⁶ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 368. The Folio reading 'qualities' was the reading of Pope's second edition: *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 2nd edn, 8 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1728), III, 353. Further references to this edition use the abbreviation Pope (1728).

³⁷ Rowe (1714), VII, 89 ('*Edg.* Or image of that horror. | *Alb.* Fall and cease. '); Pope (1728), III, 452 (omitted).

³⁸ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 386.

For Theobald, the testimony of the Quarto alone was not enough to warrant the restoration of Edgar's and Albany's lines; as ever, the key criteria for emendation were not bibliographical but interpretative. In this case, even after sharing the problem with Warburton Theobald seems to have been unable to make sense of the missing lines: when he came to prepare his edition, he followed Pope in leaving them out.³⁹ In *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald had declared that the first duty of an editor was to produce an intelligible text by emending passages that appeared 'deficient in Sense'. His handling of Edgar's and Albany's lines reveals that he was prepared to go further to ensure that the Shakespeare he presented to his readers was comprehensible.

III.

In a letter of 6 November 1729, as he prepared to embrace 'our method of going through with the Plays', Theobald revealed to Warburton that he was beginning to think of turning his commentary into an edition: 'I know you will not be displeased, if I should tell you in your ear, perhaps I may venture to join the *Text* to my *Remarks*.'⁴⁰ Two years later, after lengthy negotiations, Theobald finally signed a contract for the edition with the younger Jacob Tonson, whose firm had claimed an exclusive right to publish Shakespeare's plays since 1709.⁴¹ Under the terms of the contract, dated 26 October 1731, Theobald agreed to deliver the text and notes 'compleat for y^e press' within two months, and Tonson wasted no time in supplying him with copy.⁴² In November, Theobald reported to Warburton that he had begun work on the edition,

³⁹ Theobald (1733), V, 215.

⁴⁰ Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, 6 November 1729, in *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 253–57 (p. 254).

⁴¹ On Tonson's acquisition of the copyrights for Shakespeare's plays, see Don-John Dugas, *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print, 1660–1740* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), pp. 133–40.

⁴² Seary, *Lewis Theobald*, p. 216. The original agreement between Theobald and Tonson is Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. D. 729. A transcription is provided by Seary in *Lewis Theobald*, Appendix B.

using ‘a Shakespeare interleav’d’ sent by his publisher as the basis for his text and notes.⁴³ This was a specially prepared copy of Pope’s second edition, with blank leaves of matching size inserted between the printed leaves of the duodecimo volumes. Theobald marked up the printed text with his corrections and additions and wrote his footnotes on the facing blank leaves.

By the winter of 1731, Theobald had accumulated a mass of corrections and comments, both published and unpublished, on Pope’s texts of Shakespeare. When he marked up the copy for his edition, he reviewed these corrections and notes and transferred those he approved of to his text. In November, after revealing that he had received the copy for his edition from Tonson, he told Warburton: ‘I am now extracting such notes & Emendations, as upon the Maturest Deliberation, I am certain will stand the Test’. Theobald’s main sources of ‘notes & Emendations’ were almost certainly his correspondence with Warburton, both halves of which he now possessed;⁴⁴ his unpublished commentary on Pope’s 1725 text, which undoubtedly contained more extended remarks than those he communicated to Warburton; and his annotated copy of Pope’s 1728 edition. He also reviewed the material in *Shakespeare Restored*, occasionally reproducing extracts from it verbatim in his edition. In *King Lear*, for example, Theobald made six of the eight emendations from *Shakespeare Restored* that Pope had not already appropriated, and he wrote footnotes on two of them incorporating material from his earlier published work.⁴⁵

⁴³ Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, November 1731 (day unknown), in Jones, *Lewis Theobald*, pp. 279–283 (p. 280).

⁴⁴ Warburton returned Theobald’s letters, at the latter’s request, in the spring of 1730. See Lewis Theobald, letter to William Warburton, May 1730 (day unknown), in *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 603–7 (p. 607), and Jones, *Lewis Theobald*, p. 258.

⁴⁵ Theobald (1733), V, p. 130 n. 12, p. 178 n. 37. Note 12 reproduces comments from *Shakespeare Restored*, p. 141; note 37 reproduces a paraphrase from *Shakespeare Restored*, p. 172.

The surviving part of Theobald's 'Shakespeare interleav'd' bears out his assertion that the corrections and notes he transferred to his copy were confirmed by 'the Maturest Deliberation'. In the portions of his copy held at Winchester College and the British Library, there are almost no discernible traces of second thoughts or last-minute revisions. Yet there is one place in which Theobald seems to have changed his mind. When he came to correct a passage in Act I of *King Lear*, he made a series of emendations that he had proposed to Warburton in a letter two years before. Subsequently, he altered two of the readings he had introduced and inserted another reading he had overlooked. While it was unusual for Theobald to change his mind about emendations once he had transferred them to his copy, the revisions he made in this case are consistent with broader patterns in his editorial work: a tendency to discard earlier conjectures, and an increased reliance on the early editions to correct the text.

In a letter of 30 December 1729, as part of his first batch of corrections on *King Lear*, Theobald drew Warburton's attention to a passage that both Pope and Rowe had altered. In Pope's text, the King of France responds incredulously to Lear's rejection of Cordelia:

sure th' offence

Must be of such unnatural degree,

As monstrous is; or your fore-voucht affection

Could not fall into taint[.]⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Pope (1728), III, 360.

In his letter, Theobald transcribed and emended these lines, restoring three readings found in ‘the old copies’.⁴⁷ First, he inserted ‘her offence’, a reading found in all the Quartos and Folios, in place of ‘th’ offence’, a reading Pope had introduced to suppress a metrically awkward syllable. Second, he substituted another reading with unanimous support, ‘That monsters it’, for Rowe’s emendation ‘As monstrous is’. Finally, he rejected Rowe’s ‘Could not fall’ in favour of ‘Fall’, a reading found in the Folios.⁴⁸ Thus, Theobald opted to reverse all three of his predecessors’ alterations, yet he was not content with all the readings of ‘the old copies’. In place of the conjunction ‘or’ he proposed to read ‘ere’, a conjectural emendation that seems designed to make grammatical sense of the Folios’ ‘Fall into taint’.

Theobald’s marked-up copy for *King Lear*, preserved at Winchester College, reveals how he corrected this passage in his copy text (Figure 1). At first he made the changes he had proposed in his letter to Warburton, with one telling difference. He allowed Rowe’s conjunctive ‘As’ to stand, bolting on the reading ‘monsters it’ and the conjecture ‘e’re’ by means of a marginal note (‘ers it, e’re’). Though he may have been reviewing his letter at this point, he is more likely to have been working from his annotated copy of Pope’s second edition, where he had presumably corrected the text without displacing Rowe’s conjunction. It is possible that he simply overlooked the conjunction while collating; alternatively, he may have chosen to keep Rowe’s grammatical change while reversing his lexical emendation.

⁴⁷ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 369–70.

⁴⁸ The Folios agree in their version of the lines, with only accidental variation. The First Folio has ‘sure her offence | Must be of such vnnaturall degree, | That monsters it: Or your fore-voucht affection | Fall into taint’. William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London: William Jaggard and others, 1623), sig. 2q3^r. Greg, *Bibliography*, I, 265(c). Further references to this edition use the abbreviation F1. The Quartos agree in a different version. The First Quarto reads ‘Sure her offence must be of such vnnaturall degree, | That monsters it, or you for voucht affections | Falne into taint’. Q1, sig. B4^r. Rowe, basing his edition on the Fourth Folio text, introduced two new readings (in italics): ‘sure her Offence | Must be of such unnaturall Degree, | *As Monstrous is*; or your fore-voucht affection | *Could not fall into Taint*’. Rowe (1709), V, 2475.

Some time later, Theobald reviewed his work and changed his mind about a number of readings. Of the readings he finally settled on, the most significant is ‘Falne’, found only in the Quartos. This reading, which appears as ‘Fal’n’ in Theobald’s edition, is written in the outer margin of his copy to be inserted in place of the crossed-out reading ‘Could not fall’.⁴⁹ It appears that Theobald crossed out ‘fall’ independently of ‘Could not’; having first rejected ‘Could not’, leaving the Folio reading ‘fall’, he later returned to cross out ‘fall’ when he decided to adopt the Quarto variant ‘Falne’. Above ‘Falne’ in the outer margin, Theobald crossed out another earlier reading (‘ers it, e’re’) and replaced it with ‘That monsters it, for’ in the upper margin. The word ‘for’ appears to have been corrected to ‘or’, the reading of Theobald’s published text. While this may have been a simple mistake, it seems more likely that Theobald allowed himself another conjecture. In the end, he accepted ‘or’, the reading of the seventeenth-century editions, no doubt because he recognised its compatibility with ‘Falne’. It appears, then, that Theobald was sufficiently unhappy with the combination of his conjecture and the Folio reading (‘e’re your fore-voucht affection | Fall into taint’) to resort to checking the Quarto in search of other variants. In the process, he seems to have rediscovered the pronoun ‘That’, a reading he had overlooked while transferring emendations from his usual sources. Theobald may not have immediately relinquished conjecture as a means of making sense of the King of France’s lines, but eventually he found a way to clarify the syntax of the passage by conflating the Quarto and Folio versions.

⁴⁹ The altered spelling of ‘Falne’ and the appearance of a semi-colon, rather than a comma, after ‘That monsters it’ are the only differences between the corrected text of Theobald’s printer’s copy and the text given in his edition. Theobald (1733), V, 111–12: ‘sure, her offence | Must be of such unnatural degree, | That monsters it; or your fore-voucht affection | Fal’n into taint’.

Theobald's dissatisfaction with his conjectural solution to the problem of the King of France's disjointed syntax was not unusual. As he corrected his copy text for *King Lear*, he discarded one in three of the conjectures he had proposed in his letters to Warburton. This is not to say that in his editorial practice Theobald was more conservative in his approach to conjectural emendation than he had been in his earlier work. On the contrary, for every conjecture on *King Lear* that he discarded, he inserted three more. In total, he inserted twenty-eight conjectures that he had neither advocated in *Shakespeare Restored* nor proposed in his letters to Warburton, in addition to the twenty-seven he transferred from those sources.⁵⁰ This contradicts the notion that Theobald's 'willingness to conjecture grew strikingly less between *Shakespeare Restored* and the edition of 1733'.⁵¹ Theobald is unlikely to have made twenty-eight new conjectures in the interval between his correspondence with Warburton and the preparation of his edition; he had probably noted some in his annotated copy of Pope's second edition long before he began work on his text. Nevertheless, his insertion of twenty-eight conjectures not recorded in his letters is significant. Even though he had lost confidence in some of his earlier conjectures by the time he came to prepare his edition, Theobald made renewed efforts to find and insert conjectural readings that he thought would 'stand the Test'.

While reviewing his working materials to extract conjectures, Theobald also extracted a much larger number of variant readings. Besides fifty-five conjectures, he inserted 144 Quarto and Folio readings into his copy text for *King Lear*.⁵² He had

⁵⁰ The total of twenty-eight conjectures excludes seven previously unattested readings that appeared in Theobald's published text but were not marked in his copy.

⁵¹ Walsh, *Literary Editing*, p. 137.

⁵² The total of 144 excludes two readings in Theobald's published text that are not marked in his copy. It also excludes individual lines and longer passages inserted from the Quarto. Each of the 144 emendations is supported by one or more pre-1650 Quarto and Folio texts; Theobald introduced no readings found only in post-1650 Quarto and Folio editions. Following his exchange of letters on *King Lear* with Warburton, Theobald seems to have

noted just twenty-five of these in his letters to Warburton, and it is likely that he transferred most of them from his annotated copy of Pope's duodecimo edition to the interleaved copy he was preparing for the press. Nonetheless, a comparison of the variant readings Theobald accepted in his letters with those he inserted into his copy text reveals an overlooked aspect of his handling of Quarto and Folio variants. On occasion, Theobald changed his mind about variant readings, just as he had second thoughts about conjectures. In his letters on *King Lear* he accepted five readings found in Quarto and Folio texts that he did not transfer to his copy text two years later. Three of these cases show Theobald grappling with variation between the Quarto and Folio traditions: when he wrote to Warburton he chose to follow one of the two versions, but he changed his mind when he corrected his copy text.⁵³ The fourth case concerns a Quarto line—Albany's description of Lear at IV. 2. 43 as a man 'Whose reverence the head-lugg'd bear would lick'—that Theobald finally chose not to insert, perhaps unsure of how to explain or emend the compound adjective.⁵⁴

The last case is more surprising. Having proposed to restore a reading from the Quarto, Theobald ultimately opted to retain a reading invented by Pope. In a letter of 1 January 1730, as he worked his way through Act IV of *King Lear*, Theobald quoted a short passage from a 'fine Scene' derived from the Quartos, in which Kent and a Gentleman discuss Cordelia's reaction to news of Lear's suffering.⁵⁵ In his version of the passage, Theobald reinserted two half-lines that Pope had omitted when

obtained a copy of the First Quarto (1608). He did not recognise it as a separate edition, but he appears to have collated it with the Second Quarto and found a First Quarto variant he preferred: 'Told the most piteous Tale' at V. 3. 213. Theobald (1733), V, 213; Q1, sig. L2^v ('Told the most pitious tale'); Q2, sig. L2^v ('And told the pitteous tale').

⁵³ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 370 (Folio reading 'Fall into taint'); Theobald (1733), V, 112 (Quarto reading 'Fal'n into taint'). *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 370 (Quarto reading 'of age'); Theobald (1733), V, 116 (Folio reading 'of ages'). *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 384 (Folio reading 'any name'); Theobald (1733), V, 211 (Quarto reading 'any thing').

⁵⁴ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 379.

⁵⁵ *Illustrations of the Literary History*, II, 380.

he integrated the scene into his text ('Her smiles and tears | Were like a better way'). In addition, he made an emendation, restoring the Quarto reading 'happy smilets' in place of Pope's 'happiest smiles'.⁵⁶ Later, when he marked up his copy, he incorporated an emended version of the missing half-lines, adopting a conjecture of Warburton's; however, he neglected his own emendation, allowing Pope's 'happiest smiles' to remain in his text.⁵⁷ It is unlikely that this was an oversight: in total, he proposed six changes to the scene in his letter to Warburton, and in his copy text he made every one except the correction of Pope's 'happiest smiles'. It seems that in the end Theobald chose to preserve Pope's reading, with its emphatic superlative, in preference to the Quarto's more unusual and metrically awkward diminutive. This example sheds light on perhaps the most challenging aspect of Theobald's editorial practice: his reproduction of many readings introduced by an editor whom he claimed had 'seldom [...] corrected the Text but to its Injury'.⁵⁸ The final section of this essay argues that Theobald's appropriation of Pope's 'happiest smiles' was not an anomaly: despite his criticism of Pope Theobald was content to accept many of Pope's readings where the variants offered no improvement in the sense.

IV.

Despite his professed 'abhorrence of all Innovation', Pope silently made thousands of revisions and omissions in his text of Shakespeare that had no precedent in the Quartos or Folios, most of them serving to regularise Shakespeare's metre or correct his grammar.⁵⁹ Theobald allowed the majority of these changes to remain in his text.

⁵⁶ Pope (1728), III, 425 ('happiest smiles'); Q2, sig. H3^v ('happy smilets').

⁵⁷ Theobald (1733), V, 186.

⁵⁸ Theobald (1733), I, xxxv.

⁵⁹ On Pope's emendatory habits, see Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, pp. 57–62, and Lounsbury, *First Editors*, pp. 525–28.

When he edited *King Lear*, he preserved 144 of the two hundred substantive emendations Pope had made without any support from the Quartos or Folios.⁶⁰ In most cases, Theobald is unlikely to have known for sure whether a reading in his copy text that he had not found in the early editions had originated with Pope. He did not include the Fourth Folio in the table of editions he had collated, nor did he consistently check Rowe's editions to identify the sources of readings in his copy text that deviated from those in the early editions.⁶¹ However, he was prepared to assume that such readings were Popean sophistications, even when they had actually been introduced by Rowe: in two of his notes on *King Lear*, he declared that Pope had erred in emending the text, when in fact he had simply followed Rowe.⁶² While his grasp of the origins of individual readings was not always secure, there can be little doubt Theobald was keenly aware that Pope had been a far more interventionist editor than he pretended.

Even with this knowledge of Pope's emendatory habits, Theobald does not seem to have had any consistent strategy for dealing with readings that could have originated from his predecessor. He reversed some grammatical revisions while preserving others. For example, he restored the double comparatives 'more corrupter' and 'more headier' in place of Pope's 'far corrupter' and 'more heady'; elsewhere, he allowed Pope's 'more worthy' and 'the poorest' to stand in place of 'more worthier' and 'most poorest'.⁶³ Theobald silently rejected some of Pope's revisions and

⁶⁰ The total of two hundred is based on a line-by-line collation of Pope's 1725 text with his copy text in Rowe's 1714 edition.

⁶¹ Theobald's edition features 'A Table of the Several Editions of Shakespeare's Plays, Collected by the Editor', with an erratum correcting 'Collected' to 'Collated'. Theobald (1733), VII, sigs. 2H8^r–2I4^r.

⁶² Theobald (1733), V, p. 149 n. 20 ('tender-hearted'); Rowe (1714), VII, 44. Theobald (1733), V, p. 193 n. 49 ('cow-keeper'); Rowe (1714), VII, 72.

⁶³ Theobald (1733), V, 141 ('more corrupter ends'); Pope (1728), III, 387 ('far corrupter ends'). Theobald (1733), V, 147 ('more headier will'); Pope (1728), III, 394 ('more heady will'). Theobald's 'more corrupter' and 'more headier' have the unanimous support of the

omissions regularising the metre, even in cases where the sense of the text was not affected. For instance, he reinstated ‘little’ in place of Pope’s ‘small’ at *King Lear* II. 2. 477 and restored the adverbial ‘Now’ to Kent’s self-address at I. 4. 4 (‘Now, banish’d *Kent* [...]’).⁶⁴ Yet elsewhere he accepted more radical changes. In the first scene of *King Lear*, Pope had cut short Gonerill’s rhetorical extravagance to achieve a seamless metrical transition between speeches. In Pope’s copy text Gonerill opens her declaration of love for Lear with a trochaic twelve-syllable line: ‘Sir, I love you more than word can weild the matter’.⁶⁵ Pope reduced this hypermetrical line to ‘I love you Sir’, creating a short line to form a complete pentameter unit with Lear’s preceding command, ‘Our eldest born, speak first’.⁶⁶ Later in Act I, Pope encountered Lear’s invocation to the goddess of nature, opening with a tetrameter line: ‘Hear Nature, hear, dear Goddess, hear!’.⁶⁷ Once again unwilling to admit a deviation from regular pentameter, Pope added a fifth metrical foot and gave the distraught king a moment of self-dramatisation: ‘Hear Nature, hear, dear goddess hear a Father!’.⁶⁸ Neither of these changes has any support from the Quartos or Folios, yet Theobald reproduced both of them in his edition.⁶⁹

Recent debates about the extent of Theobald’s innovation in textual criticism have largely ignored the presence of Popean readings in his text. Seary has argued

Quartos and Folios. Theobald (1733), V, 111 (‘more worthy way’); Pope (1728), III, 359 (‘more worthy way’). The Quartos and Folios read ‘more worthier’. Theobald (1733), V, 143 (‘the poorest shape’); Pope (1728), III, 390 (‘the poorest shape’). The Quartos and Folios read ‘most poorest’.

⁶⁴ Theobald (1733), V, 154 (‘little’); Pope (1728), III, 399 (‘small’). Theobald (1733), V, 121 (‘Now, banish’d *Kent*’); Pope (1728), III, 368 (‘Banish’d *Kent*’). Theobald’s readings have the unanimous support of the Quartos and Folios.

⁶⁵ Rowe (1714), VII, 8. Rowe’s version of the line derives from the Folios: F1, sig. 2q2^r (‘Sir, I loue you more then word can weild y^e matter’).

⁶⁶ Pope (1725), III, 3.

⁶⁷ Rowe (1714), VII, 27. Rowe’s version of Lear’s line follows the Folios: F1, sig. 2q5^r (‘Heare Nature, heare deere Goddess, heare’).

⁶⁸ Pope (1725), III, 26.

⁶⁹ Theobald (1733), V, 107, 129.

that Theobald was the first editor of Shakespeare to determine the relative authority of the Quarto and Folio editions and apply bibliographical principles consistently in his editorial practice. However, Seary's account makes no attempt to explain why an editor with a 'habit of collating the texts that he acquired' and a firm grasp of the textual authority of the early Quartos and the First Folio preserved many readings without any sanction from the early editions (pp. 135, 137). More convincingly, Simon Jarvis has demonstrated that, like Pope, Theobald made use of the Quartos and Folios opportunistically, adopting the readings he preferred and outlining their textual histories strategically in his footnotes (pp. 97–102). Yet Jarvis also stopped short of considering whether Theobald knowingly accepted many of Pope's revisions of Shakespeare's language and style. Earlier in the twentieth century, the presence of Popean readings in Theobald's text received more attention; however, scholars disagreed about the methods and motives behind Theobald's preservation of these readings. In the earliest substantial study of his Shakespearean scholarship, Thomas R. Lounsbury argued that Theobald accepted many of Pope's readings because he regarded aesthetic improvement as a legitimate basis for editorial intervention and respected Pope's 'superior skill' in this area (pp. 523–25). Lounsbury's important assessment of Theobald's practice was contested two decades later by scholars unwilling to accept that Theobald consciously appropriated readings introduced by his arch-enemy. David Nichol Smith and Ronald B. McKerrow argued that Theobald did not restore many of the variant readings available in Quarto and Folio texts because he failed to collate the early editions consistently. Citing a single example from *Henry V*, Nichol Smith declared that 'there is much of Pope in [Theobald's] text, much more than he can have suspected, and than a careful collator could have allowed'.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Nichol Smith, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 39–41.

One of the most striking aspects of Theobald's self-presentation in his edition is his emphasis on the work he had done as a collator. In the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored*, he had implied that an editor could rely on nothing more or less than his own ingenuity to correct the text, harnessing 'every Power and Faculty of the Mind [...] to give Light and restore Sense' to corrupt passages. However, in the preface to his edition, Theobald set out the six 'Rules' that had directed his editorial practice, and the first rule was to collate:

As there are very few Pages in *Shakespeare*, upon which some Suspensions of Depravity do not reasonably arise; I have thought it my Duty, in the first place, by a diligent and laborious Collation to take in the Assistances of all the older Copies.⁷¹

No record of this collation has survived, either in the form of a copy of Pope's *Shakespear* annotated with variant readings or a manuscript list of variants. However, the evidence of Theobald's letters and the sale catalogue of his library indicates that before he began work on his edition he had collated the First Folio and Quarto texts of numerous plays and recorded at least the variants he considered worth restoring in a copy of Pope's second edition. If this is the case, Theobald was later able to transfer corrections from his annotated copy of Pope's duodecimo edition to the interleaved copy he used as the basis for his text. With a two-month deadline to submit this 'Shakespeare interleav'd' to his publisher, it is hard to imagine how Theobald could have introduced as many Quarto and Folio readings as he did unless he had made a record of variants from the early editions in one place. When he came to edit *King Lear*, he was able to draw on the emendations he had made in his letters to

⁷¹ Theobald (1733), I, p. xlii.

Warburton, which included thirty-one Quarto and Folio readings as well as over a hundred omitted Quarto lines; the fact that he inserted a further 119 variant readings from both Quarto and Folio texts indicates that he was able to rely on a far more comprehensive record of variants than he had made in the correspondence.

Theobald's collation is unlikely to have been as comprehensive as a modern Shakespearean editor's. We have seen that he did not disturb an interpolated conjunction when he first corrected the King of France's lines in *King Lear*; whether or not this was the result of an oversight in his collation, it is not unreasonable to assume that he was less systematic in recording grammatical than lexical variation. However, gaps in Theobald's collation are not sufficient to explain the persistence of Popean readings in his text. McKerrow assumed that Theobald would have rejected Pope's 'inferior readings' if he had collated thoroughly enough to discover the 'better ones' available in Quarto and Folio texts (p. 111). On the contrary, this essay has shown that Theobald sometimes chose to preserve Pope's revisions and omissions in preference to the readings of the early editions. He discovered Pope's omission of the utterances of Edgar and Albany in Lear's dying moments, and he chose not to reinstate them; as he told Warburton, he did not know 'what to make of' them. More remarkably, he proposed to restore the Quarto reading 'happy smilets' to the Gentleman's description of Cordelia, before opting to retain Pope's 'happiest smiles' when he corrected the passage in his copy text. In light of these examples, the probability is that when Theobald allowed a reading invented by Pope to remain in his text, he did so not out of ignorance of the alternative but because he did not see a reason to restore a Quarto or Folio variant.

Why might Theobald have passed over so many opportunities to reinstate readings from the early editions? His practice is consistent with the rationale of

editing he first set out in *Shakespeare Restored*. For Theobald, the key criteria for a successful edition were a comprehensible text and a commentary clarifying the meaning of obscure passages. In *Shakespeare Restored*, he had argued that an editor's primary task was 'to give Light and restore Sense' to passages that seemed 'absurd, unintelligible, and intricate'. In the preface to his edition, he identified two branches of textual criticism as 'the proper Objects of the Editor's Labour', both of them concerned with clarifying the meaning of the text: 'the Emendation of corrupt Passages' and 'the Explanation of obscure and difficult ones'.⁷² On this basis, Theobald had little incentive to displace Popean readings unless he found variants he considered superior on semantic grounds. To restore a Quarto or Folio reading where Pope's reading conveyed the meaning just as well would not only make no improvement to the sense of the text; it would also go unnoticed by readers unless Theobald explained the emendation in a footnote or recorded it in an apparatus of readings displaced from his copy text. Both of these undertakings would have been time-consuming diversions from his primary aims of emending and explicating obscure passages.

While his priority seems to have been to restore variant readings that would clarify the meaning of the text, Theobald occasionally made silent emendations to reinstate Quarto and Folio readings where the sense of the text was not affected by Pope's grammatical and metrical revisions. These changes shine a light on the evolution of Theobald's attitudes towards stylistic improvement. Lounsbury argued that while Theobald occasionally objected to Pope's habit of metrical refinement, he silently approved of the license Pope had taken in emending the text according to his own linguistic and aesthetic standards. However, there is evidence that as Theobald's

⁷² Theobald (1733), I, pp. xl–xli.

work on Shakespeare progressed he became less willing to countenance aesthetic improvement of the text. In *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald advocated the correction of Shakespeare's text according to contemporary linguistic standards. He proposed a series of emendations of what he perceived as grammatical errors: nominative pronouns that had taken the place of the correct accusative forms (*Shakespeare Restored*, pp. 39–41). Acknowledging that the repetition of this error made it possible that the nominative was Shakespeare's peculiar usage, Theobald nevertheless argued that Shakespeare ought to be subject to eighteenth-century grammatical rules: 'if *Grammar* and the *Idiom* of the Tongue be directly against it, we have sufficient Warrant to make him *now*, at least, speak true *English*'. In addition, he noted approvingly that Pope had already corrected a faulty nominative pronoun ('for who') in *Macbeth*.⁷³ In his second edition, Pope responded by making the first of the corrections Theobald had proposed, the substitution of 'us fools' for 'we fools' in Hamlet's address to the Ghost.⁷⁴ Theobald accepted this change in his text;⁷⁵ however, he did not correct the three other instances of the same error that he had identified in *Shakespeare Restored*. By the time he prepared his edition, then, Theobald was beginning to distance himself from the practice of stylistic improvement. As his main concern was to emend the text where he found a variant that made better sense, he had no well-defined plan to remove Pope's aesthetic and linguistic revisions. Yet on occasion he took the opportunity to restore a variant from the early editions, preferring to reinstate an older and more plausibly Shakespearean reading in place of a modern interpolation.

⁷³ Pope (1725), V, 581 ('for whom'); Rowe (1714), VI, 286 ('for who').

⁷⁴ Pope (1728), VIII, 226.

⁷⁵ Theobald (1733), VII, 249.

V.

In the introduction to *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald presented himself as a conjectural critic pursuing ‘some little Share of Reputation’ by employing methods that classical scholars had long practised to some acclaim (p. v). Seven years later, in the preface to his edition, Theobald reinvented himself as what Brian Vickers has called an ‘all-round editor’, combining an understanding of the importance of ‘the older Copies’ with a readiness to make conjectural emendations based on judgements about Shakespeare’s style and knowledge of his sources.⁷⁶ This change in Theobald’s presentation of his work can be understood partly as a response to the controversy over a recent and radical display of conjectural editing. In his preface, as Jarvis has pointed out, Theobald ‘took pains inoffensively to distance’ his work on Shakespeare from Bentley’s treatment of Milton in an edition that had attracted ‘widespread ridicule’.⁷⁷ Bentley’s *Paradise Lost* (1732) took to extreme lengths the principle Theobald had articulated in *Shakespeare Restored* that an editor must be a ‘*Critic* upon his *Author*’. Claiming that Milton’s text had been thoroughly corrupted by its first publisher, Samuel Simmons, and its first anonymous ‘Editor’, Bentley declared that he had recovered lost authorial readings ‘not from a Manuscript, (for none exists) but by Sagacity, and happy Conjecture’.⁷⁸ Conscious that his edition of Shakespeare might be perceived as a successor to Bentley’s Milton—the work of an editor applying classical methods to a vernacular text for the first time—Theobald insisted that ‘the late Edition of *Milton* by the Learned Dr. *Bentley* is, in the main, a Performance of another Species’.⁷⁹ He emphasised the attention he had given to the

⁷⁶ *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Brian Vickers, 6 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974–81; repr. 1995–96), II, 1.

⁷⁷ Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, pp. 90–91.

⁷⁸ *Milton’s Paradise Lost*, ed. by Richard Bentley (London: Jacob Tonson and others, 1732), sig. a2^v.

⁷⁹ Theobald (1733), I, p. xxxix.

history and sources of Shakespeare's texts, distancing his work from Bentley's much-derided showcase of conjecture.

Yet the foundations of Theobald's editorial self-presentation had been laid long before the publication of Bentley's *Paradise Lost*. In his 'Examination' of *Hamlet* in *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald demonstrated that he was prepared to rely just as much on earlier editions to correct the text as he was on conjecture. It was only after the publication of *Shakespeare Restored*, however, that he was able to examine the earliest available texts, including the First Folio, and determine the full extent of their variant readings. Though doubts have been cast on his diligence as a collator, the evidence of his correspondence with Warburton and his editorial practice indicates that by 1730 he had collated many of the early texts available to him with what became his copy text, making a record of variant readings that he later used when preparing the text for his edition. In *Shakespeare Restored*, around half of Theobald's proposed corrections for *Hamlet* were drawn from earlier texts; in the edition, a much higher proportion of his emendatory work was dedicated to restoring readings from Quarto and Folio texts. In practice, as well as in theory, Theobald became more dependent on the early editions and less dependent on conjecture as his work on Shakespeare progressed.

As Theobald's methodology evolved, so did his textual critical principles. One important consequence of his research into the history of Shakespeare's text and the literature of Shakespeare's time in the years after 1726 was that Theobald was no longer prepared to impose eighteenth-century standards of linguistic correctness on an author whom he had come to understand more intimately in relation to his historical context. Yet the core purpose of Theobald's textual criticism did not change. In *Shakespeare Restored*, he made it his mission to 'restore Sense' to the text where the

meaning was obscure or inadequate. Years later, when he prepared his edition, he maintained his focus on adjusting the sense of the text: in the case of *King Lear*, around two-thirds of the readings he introduced—both attested and conjectural—substantively changed the lexis or grammar of the text. But what is most revealing are the changes Theobald did not make. The evidence of his work on *King Lear*, from the emendations he proposed to Warburton to the corrections he made to his copy text, shows that he chose to retain many of the readings he inherited from Pope where he had the option of restoring Quarto and Folio variants. Theobald's debt to Pope went unremarked in the eighteenth century, and since the early twentieth century it has received little attention from scholars. Yet it is vital to an understanding of Theobald's editorial practice and the broader evolution of his work on Shakespeare. With his critique of Pope's edition, Theobald built a reputation on his capacity to correct the errors of Pope's text. With his own edition, he entered new territory. While he continued to present himself as an enemy of Pope's careless and arbitrary editing, he enlisted Pope's smoother version of Shakespeare as the foundation for his own efforts to produce a more intelligible text.