



## 'Not on his Picture, but his Booke': Shakespeare's First Folio and Practices of Collection

Amy Lidster

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# ‘Not on his Picture, but his Booke’: Shakespeare’s First Folio and Practices of Collection

Amy Lidster

English Faculty, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

## ABSTRACT

Every play collection represents an interpretative act that evaluates the materials it contains. In this quatercentenary year since the publication of Shakespeare’s First Folio, this article positions the volume alongside other play collections from the period to show how they construct, through their strategies of selection and presentation, influential narratives that affect how we engage with the texts they contain. It identifies four practices that clarify a collection’s strategies – categorising, fixing, authorising, and fetishizing – and takes each of these in turn, casting a spotlight on the First Folio’s interest in ‘Histories’, its professed fixity, its valuation of Shakespeare as sole author, and its imperative to fetishize the book. Other collections, including Alexander’s *Monarchic Tragedies* (1604, 1607), Daniel’s *Whole Works* (1623), and Lyly’s *Six Court Comedies* (1632), advertise different strategies: some prioritise cross-genre readings; some construct networks of authorisers (including stationers and dedicatees) who inform reading practices; and some embrace a lack of fixity, denying final authority to the material book. This article demonstrates that Shakespeare’s Folio cannot be taken as a touchstone for plays in collection. The volume has, nevertheless, had an outsized influence on how we understand Shakespeare and his plays, and the work of other early modern writers.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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First Folio; play collection; paratext; authorship; Samuel Daniel; William Alexander

The year 1623 saw the publication of a posthumous volume of diverse works by a prominent Elizabethan and Jacobean writer, a venture that was overseen by his close associates who were keen to preserve and re-present these texts, many of which display an interest in English history, questions of rule and leadership, and romantic love. This collection is Samuel Daniel’s *Whole Works* and, as this opening has aimed to suggest, it offers several parallels with the other collection from 1623 that is the focus of most quatercentenary

**CONTACT** Amy Lidster  [amy.lidster@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:amy.lidster@ell.ox.ac.uk)

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commemorations this year. Both Daniel's *Whole Works* and Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (familiarily known as the First Folio) were collaborative publications undertaken posthumously: when Daniel died in 1619, his brother, John, and long-time publisher Simon Waterson oversaw the preparation of the *Works*, while John Heminges and Henry Condell from the King's Men and a syndicate of stationers – Edward Blount, William and Isaac Jaggard, William Aspley, and John Smethwick – collaborated in the publication of Shakespeare's Folio. The collections explore some similar themes and subject matter – indeed, the writers had likely responded, decades earlier, to each other's work, through Daniel's *Civil Wars* and Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *1 and 2 Henry IV*.<sup>1</sup> The reputations of both writers were also linked to other genres – Shakespeare as a poet in *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *Lucrece* (1594), and his *Sonnets* (1609) and Daniel as a prose historian in his *History of England* (1612, 1618) – which, in neither case, were featured within their 1623 collections.<sup>2</sup> The parallels are nevertheless finite, and Daniel's and Shakespeare's 1623 collections are also very different ventures, displaying diverging priorities that affect how we value and interpret their works. Because the figure of Shakespeare has become so culturally entrenched, there is a temptation to approach the dramatist and 'his Booke' in isolation.<sup>3</sup> This article positions Shakespeare's Folio alongside other play collections from the period to show how collections construct – through their strategies of selection and presentation – influential narratives that affect how we engage with the texts they contain and to highlight the distinctiveness of Shakespeare's Folio.

At the outset, it is vital to establish some parameters for plays in collection, a task that cannot propose definitive criteria, but can offer a clear statement about what is taken, in this instance, to be a *play collection*. In his *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, W. W. Greg admitted that distinguishing between single editions and collections 'caused more trouble than any other point of procedure'; Greg's selection favours sizable collections running to many pages and he excludes two-part plays.<sup>4</sup> Paulina Kewes similarly excludes two-part plays from her list of 'Collected Editions of Plays, 1604–1720', but also omits translations of classical and continental plays, nonce collections, and those 'which are primarily non-dramatic (even if they contain plays)'.<sup>5</sup> Setting parameters for play collections depends on one's critical and methodological priorities and I follow the criteria adopted in Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser's *Database of Early English Playbooks*, where any book that contains more than one text, at least one of which is a play (of commercial or non-commercial origins), counts as a dramatic

<sup>1</sup>See Pitcher, 'Daniel', para.7; Weiss, 'Shakespeare', 235–67.

<sup>2</sup>Throughout this article, parenthetical dates refer to the publication year, rather than composition date.

<sup>3</sup>Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, verso opposite t.p.

<sup>4</sup>Greg, *Bibliography*, IV, xxviii. See also Berger and Massai, *Paratexts*, II, 955–59.

<sup>5</sup>Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation*, 236–46.

collection.<sup>6</sup> I place special emphasis on those texts that left stationers' shops as collections to assess how the act of publishing plays in collection affects our engagement with them. For this reason, I do not consider, as Tara Lyons' important work on collections has done, those texts that were not issued together as a collection, but had looser ties, either through thematic links or within readers' *Sammelbände*.<sup>7</sup> The virtue of this article's inclusive definition is that it prompts comparisons between very different collections that nevertheless display overlapping publishing strategies and offer complementary discourses about genre, authorship, and textual fixity. When commercial plays, such as Shakespeare's, were printed, they became part of a new medium where they were bound and read alongside a range of texts, including non-commercial plays and non-dramatic works.<sup>8</sup> This article's parameters enable an analysis of the ways in which early modern drama was presented in collection, and what, in turn, that reveals about Shakespeare's Folio as a publication venture in 1623.

Every play collection represents an interpretative act that evaluates the materials it contains through its strategies of selection and presentation. The First Folio, for example, prioritises Shakespeare as a dramatist for the commercial stages, one who worked alone and evenly divided his writing across three dramatic genres: Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. It places greatest value on the 'True Originall Copies' as they left Shakespeare's hand and in which he never blotted a line (A1r, A3r), and it fixes the Folio collection as his definitive book, encouraging interpretative links between the plays contained within each seemingly discreet dramatic kind. In contrast, Daniel's *Whole Works* promotes cross-genre reading, as narrative poems (*The Civil Wars*), plays (*Philotas* and *Cleopatra*), masques (*The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*), and sonnet sequences (*Delia*) – to list just some of its contents – mingle within a collection that is much less invested in monumentalising the volume or the fixity of its contents, instead embracing readerly exchanges across its texts, both conceptually and materially. Casting a wider net and looking beyond Shakespeare and Daniel, I identify four practices that help to clarify a collection's strategies – categorising, fixing, authorising, and fetishizing – and take each of these in turn, examining how they are reflected within Shakespeare's Folio and other play collections. The use of the present continuous tense to describe these practices highlights the active participation involved in shaping collections in the early modern period, but also suggests ongoing participation during a book's history of use – up to our own present and beyond. I demonstrate that Shakespeare's Folio cannot be taken as a touchstone for plays in collection, but offers, instead, an individual and localised collection narrative that has had an outsized

<sup>6</sup>Farmer and Lesser, 'Types of Records', *DEEP*. See my discussion of play collections in Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 180–87, which examines these parameters in more detail.

<sup>7</sup>Lyons, 'English Printed Drama', ch.1 and 'Serials', 185–220.

<sup>8</sup>Knight, *Bound to Read*, 1–18.

influence on how we approach the dramatist and his plays, as well as the work of other early modern writers.




## Categorising

Collections select and categorise texts, practices that reveal their priorities, suggest interpretations of the texts themselves, and exert a profound influence on later acts of reading. Shakespeare's 1623 Folio privileges plays from the commercial stages and categories of dramatic genre, dividing its thirty-six plays into comedies, histories, and tragedies through its title and 'Catalogue' (Figure 1). The Folio's paratextual presentation implies that its three dramatic identities are recognisable and clear-cut, although precisely what these 'kinds' entail – in terms of subject matter, structure, style, or resolution – becomes elusive when pushed, an issue that the omission of *Troilus and Cressida* from the 'Catalogue' seems, tantalizingly, to intimate, but which was, in practice, owing to a delay over rights.<sup>9</sup> In particular, the Catalogue makes a special effort to define its 'Histories': this section favours English monarchical history after the Conquest, excluding the Scottish history of *Macbeth* and classical histories such as *Julius Caesar*. The 'Histories' are arranged chronologically according to the monarchs they feature, rather than by performance date; and they form a continuous history that concludes with the reign of Henry VIII. This ordered sequence could be seen to prompt a teleological reading of history that leads to the succession of the Tudors and the beginnings of the English Reformation, despite *Henry VIII's* systematic questioning of historical truth and representation. By standardising play titles, the Catalogue seems to construct uniformly focused, homogenous, and serial histories: *The First Part of the Contention Between the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (1594) and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (1595) become *The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth* and *The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth* (A8r), respectively. This retitling establishes their position within a three-part play that seems to announce a tight focus on the reign of a single English monarch, Henry VI, but which deflects attention away from the plays' diverse subjects, including French history, citizen uprisings, and competing monarchical claims.<sup>10</sup> While critical summaries of the Folio's organisation regularly mention the strategies outlined above, what is less often discussed is how unusual and unprecedented some of them are and how they differ from practices seen in other collections. Not only is Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* the first collection in folio format to consist exclusively of plays from the commercial stages, it is also a rare example of a collection that

<sup>9</sup>Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print*, 63–65.

<sup>10</sup>Hattaway, 'Shakespearean History Play', 3–24; Hooks, 'Making Histories', 341–74; Kewes, 'Elizabethan History Play', 170–93; Lyons, 'Serials', 185–220; Smith, 'Shakespeare Serialized', 134–49.



		
<h1>A C A T A L O G V E</h1> <p>of the feuerall Comedies, Histories, and Tra- gedies contained in this Volume.</p>		
COMEDIES.		
 He Tempest.	Folio 1.	
 The two Gentlemen of Verona.	20	
The Merry Wiues of Windsor.	38	
Measure for Measure.	61	
The Comedy of Errours.	85	
Much adoo about Nothing.	101	
Loues Labour lost.	122	
Midsummer Nights Dreame.	145	
The Merchant of Venice.	163	
As you Like it.	185	
The Taming of the Shrew.	208	
All is well, that Ends well.	230	
Twelfth Night, or what you will.	255	
The Winters Tale.	304	
TRAGEDIES.		
<del>From his and his</del> The Tragedy of Coriolanus.	Fol. 1.	
Titus Andronicus.	31	
Romeo and Juliet.	53	
Timon of Athens.	80	
The Life and death of Julius Cesar.	109	
The Tragedy of Macbeth.	131	
The Tragedy of Hamlet.	152	
King Lear.	283	
Othello, the Moore of Venice.	310	
Anthony and Cleopater.	346	
Cymbeline King of Britaine.	369	
HISTORIES.		
The Life and Death of King John.	Fol. 1.	
The Life & death of Richard the second.	23	

**Figure 1.** Catalogue from Shakespeare's First Folio (1623; STC 22273). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Shelf mark PFORZ 905 PFZ.

constructs ‘history’ as a dramatic genre.<sup>11</sup> No other collection – before or after Shakespeare’s Folio – advertises this category so prominently or with specific application to English monarchical history. One effect of this centralised section of ‘Histories’ is to associate Shakespeare, above other early modern commercial dramatists, with a nationalising task. While evidence of lost plays reveals a widespread interest in English histories, Shakespeare is solidified as *the* dramatist of England’s monarchical past through the Folio.<sup>12</sup>

The genre categories and presentation strategies from Shakespeare’s Folio do not seem to have influenced other plays in collection. Published by stationers Humphrey Moseley and Humphrey Robinson, Beaumont and Fletcher’s 1647 folio – *Comedies and Tragedies* – privileges the two classical dramatic genres within its title, but stops short of using these categories to order and divide the plays. The contents page simply lists all plays indiscriminately under the broad heading ‘Comedies and Tragedies’ (g2v), acting as an umbrella title that does not offer any further suggestion about how its previously unprinted plays participate in these categories. Also published by Moseley, William Cartwright’s octavo collection, *Comedies, Tragicomedies, with other Poems* (1651), uses its title categories loosely and to indicate breadth, rather than discreet identities. A posthumous project prepared by its royalist publisher, the collection does offer, through its title and description of Cartwright as a loyal ‘Servant to His late Majesty’ Charles I, an emphasis on courtly subject matter that does not foreground tragic experience but creates a reassuring royal community through the plays and extensive commendatory materials, by royalists including John Berkenhead and Henry Vaughan.<sup>13</sup> Nonce collections of previously printed and bibliographically independent texts often use dramatic kinds in vague or comprehensive ways: Thomas Nabbes’ collection of previously printed plays and non-dramatic texts is prefixed with a single leaf describing them as *Plays, Masks, Epigrams, Elegies, and Epithalamiums* (1639), which, through its general nouns, highlights the collection’s diverse forms. The plays contain individual markers of genre on their title pages: for example, *Hannibal and Scipio*, a commercial play performed by Queen Henrietta Maria’s Men, is ‘An Historicall Tragedy’. This label brings together two categories from Shakespeare’s Folio in application to a play about the classical past, where ‘history’ becomes an adjectival modifier rather than a stand-alone category, and draws attention to the fact that dramatic genres make statements about plays and collections, rather than testify to discreet divisions.

Edward Blount, a key member of Shakespeare’s Folio syndicate, seems to have been attentive to the interpretative significance of dramatic categories

<sup>11</sup>Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 1–5, 180–87, 241–53.

<sup>12</sup>Consider the lost plays ‘Longshanks’ (1595, Admiral’s Men); ‘Henry I’ (1597, Admiral’s Men); and Chettle, Dekker, and Drayton’s ‘Famous Wars of Henry I and the Prince of Wales’ (1598, Admiral’s Men). See entries within the *Lost Plays Database*. Misha Teramura shows that there was also a sustained interest in plays about early British history at a similar time, which have similarly been lost; see ‘Brute Parts’, 127–47.

<sup>13</sup>Berek, ‘Defoliating Playbooks’, 395–416; Ezell, *Oxford English Literary History*, 42–53.

within collections. It is unclear who was responsible for the division of plays within Shakespeare's Folio, but, as I have argued elsewhere, it is likely that the publishing syndicate, rather than the King's Men, took a leading role.<sup>14</sup> Blount's interest in categorising texts can be seen in other publications. Although he rarely invested in plays from the commercial stages, Blount published, in 1632, a duodecimo collection of John Lyly's Elizabethan plays performed by the Children of the Chapel and the Children of Paul's under the title *Six Court Comedies*.<sup>15</sup> These plays – *Endymion*, *Campaspe*, *Sappho and Phao*, *Gallathea*, *Midas*, and *Mother Bombie* – had been printed during Lyly's lifetime, but had not been neatly assigned to this single and singularising dramatic category. As Andy Kesson shows, Lyly's own statements about genre 'consist of a denial to be writing within generic confines': the prologue to *Endymion* claims that '[w]ee present neither Comedie, nor Tragedie' (A6v), while, in *Midas*, it embraces the generic messiness of theatre and the limitations of dramatic labels: plays offer a 'Gallimaufrey' or 'mingle-mangle' of different features, which can 'be excused, because the whole World is become an Hodge-podge' (T1v).<sup>16</sup> Lyly's interest in hybrid forms stands in opposition to the prescriptive aims of some of his contemporaries. In his two-part play collection *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), George Whetstone criticises the presentation of comedies on stage in England, which are based on 'impossibilities', tend to neglect the classical unities of time, place, and action, and – 'that which is worst' – are characterised by indiscretion, where clowns are companions with kings (A2v). These principles determined Whetstone's preparation of *The Right Excellent and Famous History of Promos and Cassandra* as a two-part play and quarto collection: 'I devided the whole history into two Comedies: for that, Decorum used, it would not be conveyde in one' (A2r). Whetstone's ideas about dramatic kinds – which, as in this example, do not take 'History' to signify a dramatic genre about the past that is distinctive from 'comedy', but rather to mean, simply, a 'story' – are informed by classical authorities, including Menander, Plautus, and Terence, and prompt different ways of reading than Lyly's 'Gallimaufrey' that reflects the messiness of experience beyond the play world. However, when Blount came to publish Lyly's plays in his Caroline collection, he re-presented them as 'Court Comedies' that had been 'Often Presented and Acted before Queene Elizabeth' (A2r), retrospectively supplying an interpretative framework for the plays that announces their generic sameness and affinity with courtly entertainment.<sup>17</sup>

Blount also published William Alexander's *Monarchic Tragedies* (1604, 1607) as quarto play collections that prioritise 'tragedy' as their organisational principle and favour classical subjects and the use of drama as serious exempla

<sup>14</sup>Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 205–14.

<sup>15</sup>For Blount's literary interests, see Massai, 'Edward Blount', 117–26.

<sup>16</sup>Kesson, 'Was Comedy a Genre', 217.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



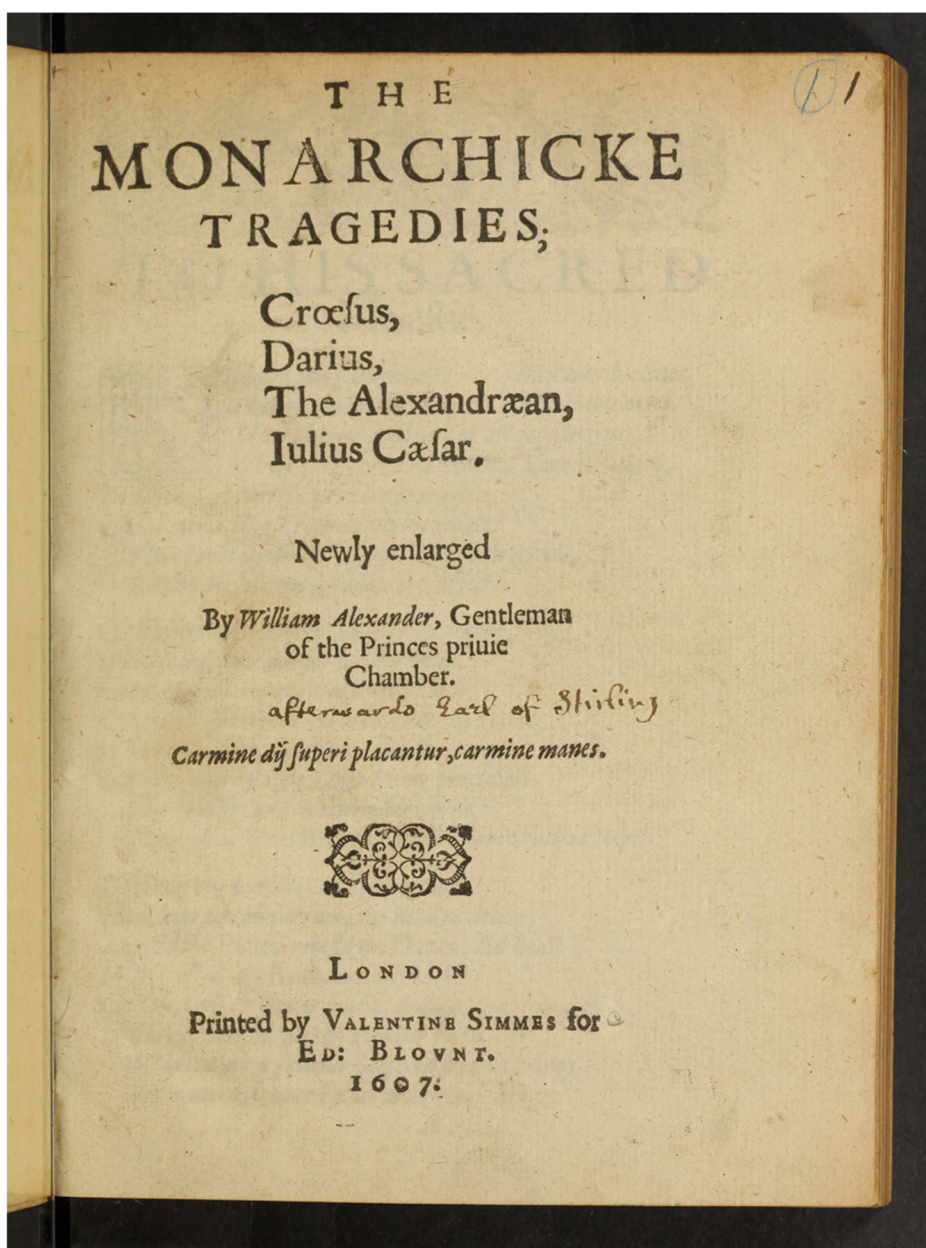
for rulers. He entered ‘the Monarchicke Tragedies’ in the Stationers’ Register on 30 April 1604, issuing *Croesus* and *Darius* together in 1604 (STC 343) and then, in 1607, adding *The Alexandraean Tragedy* and *Julius Caesar* to unsold copies of the earlier plays to form a four-play collection under the same title, *The Monarchic Tragedies* (STC 344), now described as ‘Newly enlarged’ (Figure 2). Prior to these editions, the only play collection to centralise ‘tragedy’ as its organisational category had been Seneca’s *Ten Tragedies* (STC 22221), published in quarto format by Thomas Marsh in 1581. While Shakespeare’s Folio ‘Tragedies’ are not unified on the basis of subject, nation, or structure – witness the teenage lovers Romeo and Juliet; the rich, misanthropic Timon of Athens; and the legendary British monarch Cymbeline, who is reunited with his children at the play’s conciliatory conclusion – Alexander’s didactic closet plays are connected through their tightly focused, parallel structures. As Robert Ayton’s commendatory verse puts it, each play’s ‘Monarchick theame’ (A1r; 1604) takes the abuse of power and empire-building as the core focus. They dramatise the decline of empires from the classical world – including those of Croesus, King of Lydia (595–c.47 BCE), Darius III, King of Persia (380–30 BCE), Alexander the Great, King of Macedon (356–23 BCE), and Roman Emperor Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE).<sup>18</sup> Underlined through their dedication to James VI and I, the plays offer, as Kirsten Sandrock proposes, transnational royal ‘advice tracts’ for the king on aspects of foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Alexander, a Scottish writer and politician, came to enjoy James’s royal favour: he was knighted in 1608 or 1609 and, after Prince Henry’s death in 1612, he was appointed gentleman usher to Prince Charles.<sup>20</sup> His plays fashion drama as a form of princely counsel and their collective title – *The Monarchic Tragedies* – emphasizes their shared position as unified classical warnings about corrupt leadership that can be repurposed for Jacobean ‘Britain’, written by, as Ayton describes him, ‘the Monarch-tragick of this Ile’ (A1r).

Plays – whether commercial or non-commercial – dominate the collections considered thus far, but plays often appeared alongside non-dramatic material. In these collections, practices of selection and categorisation regularly promote thematic links across a range of texts. Printer-publisher John Day’s nonce collection of *All Such Treatises as Have Been Lately Published by Thomas Norton* [1570] contains the Inns of Court play *Gorboduc* – retitled *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex* – alongside prose treatises about recent events dominating Elizabeth’s reign, particularly the Northern Rebellion of 1569–1570. A freshly prepared contents list outlines the main subjects of these texts – one pamphlet, for example, offers ‘A warning against the dangerous practices of the Papistes, and specially the parteners of the late Rebellion’ (Figure 3) – and positions Norton and Thomas Sackville’s *Gorboduc* as a politic drama in tragic form

<sup>18</sup>Sandrock, ‘Ancient Empires’, 346.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 346–64.

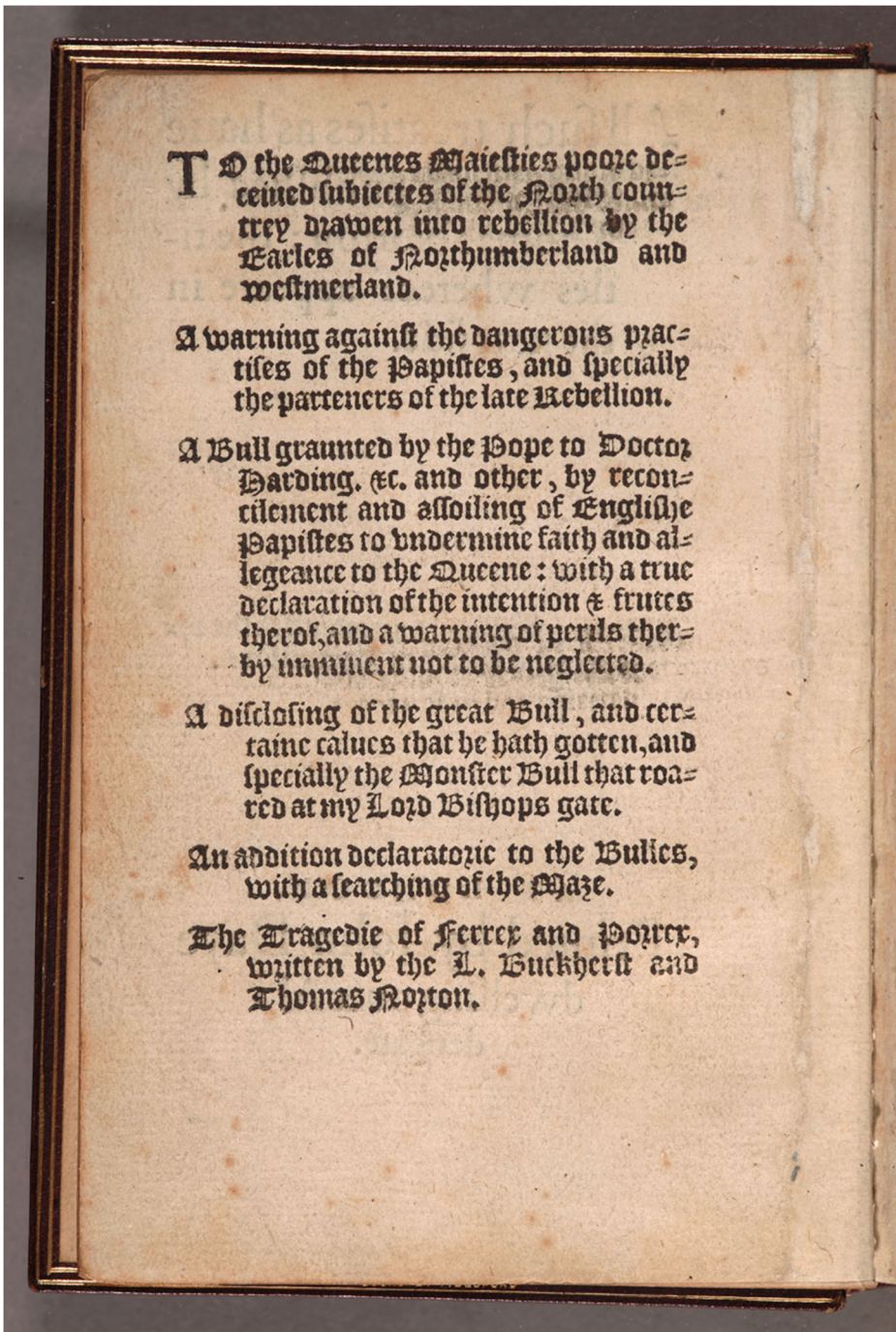
<sup>20</sup>Reid, ‘Alexander’, para.13.



**Figure 2.** Title page from William Alexander's *Monarchic Tragedies* (1607; STC 344). Boston Public Library, Barton Collection. Shelf mark G.4073.11 no.1.

that participates in these topical discourses about civil war and division, which are also the focus of its legendary British history. Similarly, Fulke Greville's posthumous collection, *Certain Learned and Elegant Works* (1633), brings together, through its organisation, title, and contents page showing 'The Names of the Severall Bookes', several of his writings, and minimises their formal and subject distinctions. The collection encourages readers to make





**Figure 3.** Contents page from Thomas Norton's *All Such Treatises* ([1570]; STC 18677). The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Shelf mark RB 59846.

connections between, for example, the closet tragedy *Mustapha* that dramatises Ottoman rule and verse treatises about human learning, war, and fame that question the pursuit of worldly gain – the raising of ‘mortall trophies upon

mortall passion' (l2r-v) – and, in the case of the *Treatise of Wars*, offers the Turkish empire as its negative exemplum. The collection directs its critical reflection outwards, insulating Britain from pointed reproof – which is also an effect of its selection strategies. As John Gouws discusses, Greville's works that reflect on the fallibility of monarchy and episcopacy at home – *A Treatise of Monarchy* and *A Treatise of Religion* – do not appear within its pages, the latter likely removed on the orders of William Laud, then bishop of London.<sup>21</sup>

What this section aims to illustrate, in other words, is that categorising plays in collection is an interpretative act that prompts different ways of valuing them. Shakespeare's Folio encourages us to focus on its tripartite division, a reading imperative that has proved influential – witness the critical companions and edited collections that analyse Shakespeare's plays according to these divisions. Casting a wider net, however, reveals the malleability of these labels and different ways of categorising plays, including the importance of reading plays alongside non-dramatic materials.

## Fixing

Collections differ in their 'fixity', by which I mean the presentation of their constituent texts in a specific order, reinforced through features such as continuous signatures, pagination, and the absence of individual title pages. Shakespeare's First Folio aims firmly to fix its plays within a textual monument to the dramatist's memory. While the collection testifies to textual and material provisionality – through, for example, the evidence of stop-press corrections across extant copies and the syndicate's uncertainty about the acquisition of rights to texts that affected the printing order, spacing, and last-minute addition of *Troilus and Cressida* (which is missing in some extant copies) – the broad strategies of the Folio's design seem to intimate that the plays belong together and in the order presented by the Catalogue.<sup>22</sup> The pagination and register are continuous within each of its three sections, which reinforce identification on the basis of these dramatic kinds. The Catalogue standardises the titles of plays, paying special attention to the Histories to position them within a sequence of English monarchs. Unlike most other collections, the plays do not have individual title pages: each play is introduced by a large head title, with its first scenes printed beneath. The Folio's bibliographic design makes it seem as if the plays are not separable from the collection: they cannot be easily extracted, rearranged, or made to stand independently. They are printed according to their 'True Originall Copies' (A1r), an assertion advertised within the Folio's title page, address to readers (A3r), and list of actors (A7r) that constructs an artificial narrative of their textual uniformity that does not

<sup>21</sup>Gouws, 'Greville', para.15.

<sup>22</sup>Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare*, 108–9.

reflect the multiple sources of copy for the collection, but adds to the volume's constructed 'fixity'.<sup>23</sup> Although the plays span decades of Shakespeare's working life and involved multiple theatrical companies, including the Chamberlain's Men/King's Men and Pembroke's Men, the plays' theatrical circumstances are homogenised within the Folio: individual performance dates and company identities are lacking, and the King's Men seem to be the only players linked to their performance.<sup>24</sup> Rather than Shakespeare's collection offering a touchstone for plays in collection, its practices are distinctive and contribute to the subsequent veneration of the book and its author.

Other collections foreground their malleability and encourage the involvement of readers and other agents in binding, arranging, and constructing the book. As critics including Jeffrey Todd Knight have explored at length, most printed texts (including collections) were sold unbound, meaning that book owners would decide how to order and arrange their texts. This process of participation did not take place just once, but throughout the life of the material texts, which could be rebound with others as part of a reader's *Sammelbände* collections.<sup>25</sup> Shakespeare's Folio was also sold unbound – although, as Emma Smith shows, the evidence of its first recorded buyer, Edward Dering, suggests the purchase of two bound copies, while other complete extant copies do not see the texts rearranged in different orders.<sup>26</sup> The copy held at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute, Scotland, separately binds its Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies in three volumes, but even this example reinforces the collection's ordering of plays and dramatic categories. In other cases, however, bibliographically identifiable collections constructed in the printing house were broken apart and reordered by book users. Many surviving copies of Daniel's collected editions are arranged differently, sometimes omitting texts that were part of the collection and other times departing from the order suggested by its register or pagination. A copy of *The Whole Works* held at the Bodleian Library lacks *A Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius*, *A Panegyric Congratulatory*, *Musophilus*, *Delia*, *The Complaint of Rosamond*, and other poems (signatures A-N, second sequence) and binds the collection's general title page and dedication in front of *Philotas*, whereas they usually precede *The Civil Wars*.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Daniel's collections, all of which were published by Simon Waterson, encourage this kind of participation: most constituent texts have individual title pages, which act as markers of division that facilitate reordering, and several of Daniel's collections reuse unsold copies from an earlier edition. *The Whole Works* (1623), for example, recycles copies of *The Civil Wars* (1609). Together, the diversity of Daniel's output

<sup>23</sup>See Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text*, 79–98.

<sup>24</sup>Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, 71.

<sup>25</sup>Knight, *Bound to Read*, 57–84.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio*, 2–5.

<sup>27</sup>Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Buxton 116.



and its malleability in collection encourage readers to make material and thematic connections across different texts – between, for example, an epic poem about the Wars of the Roses (*Civil Wars*) and classical plays and poems about the responsibilities of rule (such as *A Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius* and the closet drama *Cleopatra*). His collections were also shaped by the application, position, and revision of dedicatory material. A dedication to Elizabeth I, designed for *The Civil Wars* and first printed in the six-book version of 1601, seems to stand in, synecdochally, as a dedication for the entire folio *Works* (1601), owing to its position at the beginning of the collection. It establishes the volume's interest in royal favour to 'glorifie thy Raigne' (A2r) and in problems of government and civil war, an emphasis that seems to extend to the other texts within the collection, such as *Cleopatra*, which contains its own dedication to Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. The dedication to Elizabeth acting as a statement for the full collection and the address to Sidney Herbert, which claims that the Countess instructed Daniel to 'sing of State, and tragicke notes to frame' (E6r), emphasize the tragedy's Elizabethan contemporaneity and connection to the succession crisis, especially within a collection published in 1601 when the crisis was intensifying (*Cleopatra* was first published in 1594 with *Delia* and *Rosamond*). Within other collections and copies, however, these dedications are sometimes missing, replaced, or reordered, shifting their interpretative significance.<sup>28</sup>

The earliest example of a Shakespearean collection also embraces a lack of fixity. The circumstances surrounding the publication, in 1619, of a proto-collection of Shakespearean playbooks by William and Isaac Jaggard and Thomas Pavier – which I have elsewhere described as the Jaggard-Pavier Collection – are unclear, but they suggest that an original plan to construct a bibliographically unified collection with continuous signatures was abandoned.<sup>29</sup> Extant copies of nine 'Shakespearean' playbooks – *The Whole Contention* (containing *The First Part of the Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*), *Pericles*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – contain traces of this aborted project, as well as evidence that the playbooks were still sold and bound together, but in different orders and with other texts, notably, Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*.<sup>30</sup> By virtue of its construction, this collection seems to privilege readerly participation in ordering and making connections between the plays: a front manuscript flyleaf for a now-disbanded copy at the Folger indicates that *Henry V* and *The Whole Contention* were ordered sequentially, which suggests an interest

<sup>28</sup> A copy at the Bodleian Library, for example, replaces the dedication to Elizabeth (A2r-v) with a dedication to the Library (a, a2); see Arch. G d.47 (1).

<sup>29</sup> Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 180–205. See Lesser's sustained study of this publication venture in *Ghosts, Holes, Rips, and Scrapes*.

<sup>30</sup> Knight, 'Invisible Ink', 53–62; Lesser, *Ghosts, Holes, Rips, and Scrapes*, chs. 1, 2; Lesser and Stallybrass, 'Shakespeare', 126–30. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *Sir John Oldcastle* contain false attributions to Shakespeare.

in monarchical chronology.<sup>31</sup> The fact that several of the playbooks contain false dates (ranging from 1600 to 1608) and false publication details seems further to advance their material and bibliographical separability from each other and fix the agency on readers to decide how to bind, use, and value these plays.

Even a collection such as Jonson's *Works* (1616) that announces its cohesion and fixity – through, for example, its author's investment in the project, its continuous pagination and signatures, and its lavish use of a single column in folio format for nine plays and select other writings (which, as Steven Galbraith proposes, marks it out as a 'folio of luxury', rather than a 'folio of necessity') – also contains design features that individualise the texts within the volume and give them a quality of separateness.<sup>32</sup> Jonson himself, as Douglas Brooks discusses, invested unevenly in the works within his collection: textual evidence suggests that he was involved in the preparation of the plays, but not the correction of his non-dramatic and non-commercial works, such as the masques, poems, and epigrams, so the textual state of the collection is in tension with its advertised uniformity.<sup>33</sup> Each of the nine plays contains its own title page displaying details of first performance and playing company, and ends with a final page that reiterates much of this information, including a list of actors and an acknowledgement of the play's allowance by the Master of the Revels, which functions as an authorising statement that reinforces the play's approval. These features also emphasize the individuality of each text and the divisions between them, as two different statements of particulars about performance, composition, and authorisation often appear on the same verso/recto spread, marking the end of one text and the beginning of another.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, Shakespeare's Folio elides these different contexts, making it seem as if one company – the King's Men – fostered and performed all plays in the collection. The unique contexts of their production, involving different companies, dates, and theatrical stages, are not represented within a volume that prizes uniformity through its design. These strategies have interpretative consequences: readers are encouraged to expect homogeneity in the plays, their performance contexts, and their ordered, sequential relationship to each other. The vibrant, diverse, and generically hybrid readings that other play collections actively seem to promote are much less in evidence within Shakespeare's Folio, which can distort our understanding of the ways in which early modern readers habitually engaged with and used their books.

## Authorising

Collections tend to be intensely invested in questions of authority – of who controls, approves, and creates the texts they contain. In contrast to single-

<sup>31</sup>Folger Shakespeare Library STC 26101 (copy 2).

<sup>32</sup>Galbraith, 'English Literary Folios', 63.

<sup>33</sup>Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House*, 106–12.

<sup>34</sup>See, for example, the division between *Poetaster* and *Sejanus* on Gg3v to Gg4r.

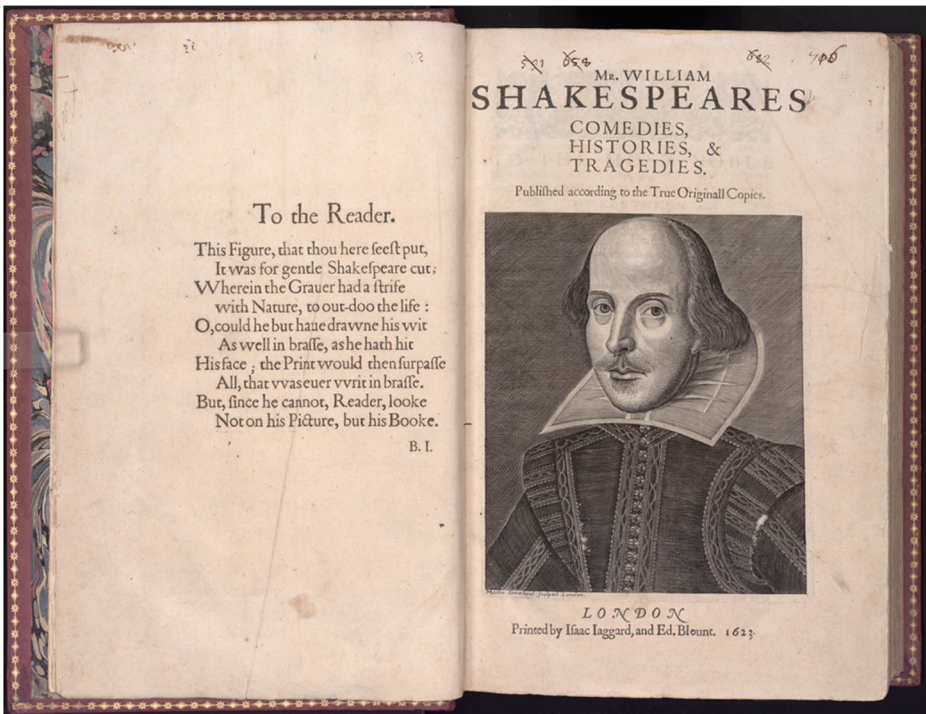
text playbooks, most play collections from the period contain attributions to specific authors and the principle of their authorship is a key identifier.<sup>35</sup> An interest in authority, however, applies not only to the writers of texts, but also to agents such as stationers, patrons, readers, and censors who authorise a collection's contents in other ways, drawing attention to, as Jeffrey Masten discusses, the etymological overlap between an author as a writer and as an authoriser of a text.<sup>36</sup> Particularly for a collection of plays from the commercial stages, an environment that was inherently collaborative, Shakespeare's Folio is distinctive in its packaging of the dramatist as the sole author and authoriser of the plays. Its title page engraving and possessive title – *M[aste]r William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (Figure 4) – present Shakespeare as the single creator of the plays contained in the volume, while its dedication and commendatory verses describe him as the sole 'father' to 'his issue', now 'his Orphanes' (A2v, A4v). Shakespeare is also presented as his own guarantor of their quality: readers are warned that if 'you doe not like him, surely *you* are in some manifest danger, not to understand him' (A3r; emphasis mine). In their address 'To the great Variety of Readers', Heminges and Condell further privilege Shakespeare's authority by ascribing most value to the playscripts as they left the dramatist's hand, where the contributions and corruptions of others cannot be found: the plays 'are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them' (A3r). The fact that the Folio syndicate used as copy some of the earlier editions of Shakespeare's plays that had already appeared in print – the 'stolne, and surreptitious copies' (A3r) that they castigate – suggests these claims are a marketing strategy designed to promote the new collection. The Folio constructs a model of solitary authorship that is inaccurate, eliding the contributions of co-writers and revisers, such as Peele in *Titus Andronicus*, Fletcher for *Henry VIII*, and Middleton for *Macbeth*, to give just a few examples of the dramatists believed to have contributed to the Folio plays.<sup>37</sup> By locating Shakespeare, in absentia, as the main authority for his plays – as an agent of both creation and control – the Folio offers a packaging of dramatic authorship that has proved exceptionally influential.

The contributions of agents such as stationers and dedicatees are, however, advertised prominently in other collections, drawing attention to the shared construction of meaning that is ultimately an integral part of all collections and acts of reading. In his two-part play collection of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), printer-publisher Richard Jones claims he has improved the plays for 'Gentlemen Readers' by removing some 'fond and frivolous' comic scenes that were 'far unmeet for the matter' (A2r), acting as authoriser of the

<sup>35</sup>Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 113–19, 127–28.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 64–66. See also my discussion in Lidster, 'Preliminaries and Paratexts'.

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, the attribution of authorship in *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (2016–17).



**Figure 4.** Title page from Shakespeare's First Folio (1623; STC 22273). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Shelf mark PFORZ 905 PFZ.

'corrected' plays, which he has published without Marlowe's involvement.<sup>38</sup> The dramatist is nowhere named within Jones's edition – and, indeed, two-part play collections witness fewer attributions of authorship than other collections, which testifies to their closer affinity to single-text playbooks, where anonymity was often the norm. In *Promos and Cassandra*, Jones also describes the interpretative work he has undertaken, as publisher, to prepare the collection for readers, while offering an evaluation of Whetstone's complex style: 'in many places he is driven, both to praise, and blame, with one breath, which in reading wil seeme hard and in action, appeare plaine' (A3v). As Jones's contributions reveal, stationers could edit the texts in which they invested and author prominent paratexts that position a collection for readers and authorise interpretations of it.

While Jonson's oft-cited commendatory verse in the 1623 Folio describes Shakespeare as 'not of an age, but for all time' (A4v), other authorising strategies present collections as, alternatively, archaic or novel publications. In his edition of Lyly's *Six Court Comedies*, Blount contributes two key paratexts – a dedication to Richard Lumley and an address to readers – that position the

<sup>38</sup>Melnikoff, 'Jones's Pen', 184–209.

collection as a product of ‘Elizaes Court’, by ‘the onely Rare Poet of that Time’ (A2r, A3r), and encourage readers to identify a distance or separation between the plays and the culture, tastes, and concerns of the Caroline period, drawing attention to a nostalgia for Elizabeth’s reign that can be witnessed across a range of texts at this time.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the universalising imperative of Shakespeare’s Folio, Blount presents Lyly’s collection as definitively located in its historical moment. Similarly, publisher Henry Seile’s folio collection of Greville’s *Certain Learned and Elegant Works* (1633) advertises its contents, which include the two tragedies of *Alaham* and *Mustapha*, as products of a past time, ‘[w]ritten in his Youth and familiar Exercise with Sir Philip Sidney’ (t.p.). It capitalises on Sidney’s lasting appeal as an Elizabethan figurehead for patronage, authorship, and nobility, who could, through the invocation of his name, authorise texts anew. Linking its Elizabethan nostalgia with its Caroline publication, *Mustapha* contains, on its final page (Z4v), a printed licence from Henry Herbert allowing the play for publication and therefore acting as a further endorsement for the play that reactivates its Caroline context. And in the same year, William Sheares published Marston’s *Works* (1633) as an archaizing project that offers to readers the ‘Juvenilia, and youthfull Recreations’ of its dramatist, who is ‘now in his Autumne, and declining age’ (A3v–A4r), an octavo collection that seems to have met with some resistance from Marston, who was not involved in its preparation and had retired from playwrighting long ago. Another issue of the collection removes all references to Marston as author, as well as the dedication to Lady Elizabeth Cary, authored by Sheares.<sup>40</sup>

In other cases, Caroline print agents advertise the novelty of their investments. Most of Moseley’s collections prioritise plays that had not yet been printed – a principle of selection that informs Beaumont and Fletcher’s Folio. Similarly, James Shirley’s *Six New Plays* (1653), published by Moseley and Robinson, claims that the plays have ‘Never [been] printed before’ (t.p.) – an advertising refrain that appears on each individual title page. Underscoring the currency of plays as products to be snapped up within the print marketplace, advertisements for other publications intrude at several points within Shirley’s collection. After *The Cardinal*, a catalogue gives details of other ‘Poems’ (meaning plays) by Shirley that are available and already in print (F4r–v); and at the beginning of *The Court Secret*, just beneath the character list (A4v), Moseley includes an advertisement for his newly printed plays by other dramatists, including Beaumont and Fletcher (*The Wild Goose Chase*); Jonson, Fletcher, and Middleton (*The Widow*); and Middleton and Rowley (*The Changeling*). Through these (in some cases inaccurate) models of collaborative authorship, this advertisement draws attention to another way in

<sup>39</sup>Farmer and Lesser, ‘Canons’, 17–41.

<sup>40</sup>Robinson, ‘Thomas Heywood’, 371–72.



which play collections pluralise agency, which differs from the monolithic model of Shakespeare's 1623 Folio with its universalising framework that resists the localising strategies of novelty or archaism.<sup>41</sup>

Within other collections, the authorising significance of dedicatees assumes a central position – and, indeed, the primacy of Shakespeare's authority over the Folio is qualified, not only by the textual patchwork of the collection itself, but by the range of voices that can be heard within its paratexts.<sup>42</sup> Heminges and Condell's dedication to William and Philip Herbert intimates a familiarity between Shakespeare and these noble brothers – although, as I and other critics have explored elsewhere, it could testify to a new closeness between the King's Men and the Herbert brothers after Shakespeare's death.<sup>43</sup> The dedication is nevertheless elusive and offers few direct comments about the Herberts that inform the reading experience, while in other collections, the dedicatory space offers greater specificity. Each of Jonson's plays within his *Works* (1616), for example, is linked to a named dedicatee on the contents page – patronage is the collection's core structural principle – and a detailed textual dedication appears before each work. While dedications were recognisable features within non-dramatic texts and non-commercial plays – the first non-commercial play in English to feature a textual patron was Jasper Heywood's translation of Seneca's *Troas* in 1559, dedicated to Elizabeth I – playbooks from the commercial stages did not start to incorporate dedications to aristocratic readers until Daniel's *Philotas*, which contains an address to Prince Henry, James I's son and heir apparent, and is worth analysing at length.<sup>44</sup> The play was performed in 1604 by the Children of the Queen's Revels and was published by Blount and Simon Waterson within *Certain Small Poems* (1605).<sup>45</sup> Daniel's misfortunes with this play – he was brought before the Privy Council to address its seditious potential and presumed allegorical connection to the Earl of Essex's downfall – inform the melancholy tone of this rather pessimistic dedication.<sup>46</sup> Daniel claims that he has 'out livd the date | Of former grace, acceptance, and delight' (A5v) and wishes that his play about Philotas – one of Alexander the Great's generals who was tried and executed for attempted assassination – had 'never come to light':

So had I not bene tax'd for wishing well  
Nor now mistaken by the censoring stage  
Nor, in my fame and reputation fell.  
Which I esteeme more then what all the age

<sup>41</sup>The *Wild Goose Chase* and *The Widow* are thought to be singly authored by Fletcher and Middleton, respectively.

<sup>42</sup>For early modern drama as a 'patchwork' of documents, see Stern, *Documents of Performance*.

<sup>43</sup>Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 214–25; Laoutaris, 'Prefatorial', 57–63.

<sup>44</sup>The preliminaries in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) exist in three states, two of which contain one of two special dedications: to William Camden, or to Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford.

<sup>45</sup>Although *Philotas* is bibliographically independent from the collection, Greg argues that 'there is no evidence that the play was issued separately' (*Bibliography*, 1:349). Blount's name as publisher is linked only to *Philotas*, rather than the full collection.

<sup>46</sup>Cadman, 'Daniel's *Philotas*', 365–84.

Or th'earth can give. But yeares hath don this wrong,  
 To make me write too much, and live too long.  
 (A5v)

Daniel's address to Prince Henry is marked by its interest in futurity, including the possible recovery of his and the play's reputation. The prince is asked to authorise this tragedy 'not as you are | But as you may be' (A4r), imagining Henry as an older reader – and, indeed, a future king, a succession that did not take place because of the prince's untimely death in 1612 at the age of eighteen. To counteract Daniel's misfortunes and the 'censuring stage' (A5v), the dedication aims to create a felicitous interpretative context in which this tragedy of ambition and the dangers of prosperity can be valued as a humanist history that readers can use to reflect on how the 'ancient representments of times past; | Tell us that men have, doo, and always runne | The selfe same line of action' (A4v). This unprecedented dedication in a commercial play to a royal textual patron aims to use Henry as a future authoriser of this tragedy, particularly because Daniel's own fortunes and position as 'authorizer' are compromised.

Two years later, Daniel reasserts his authority over the printed book in the 1607 edition of *Certain Small Works*. *Philotas* is listed as the second text on the general contents page (¶2v), but is actually the first full text within this octavo collection that features continuous signatures for its main texts (excluding preliminaries). The preliminaries for *Philotas* contain a revised dedication to Prince Henry that removes all the material about Daniel's misfortunes and re-presents the play as a confident humanist history for the instruction of the prince and for readers. The dedication complements the collection's new general address 'To the Reader', which describes the textual provisionality of his work, owing to the writer's ongoing investment in editing, revising, and correcting. This address opens with an imperative, instructing readers to 'Behold [how] once more with serious labor' Daniel has 'refurnisht out this little frame', and offers a definitive statement of ownership and authority over his writing:

What I have done, it is mine owne I may  
 Do whatsoever there withall I will  
 I may pull downe, raise, and reedifie  
 It is the building of my life the see  
 Of Nature, all th'inheritance that I  
 Shal leave to those which must come after me.  
 (¶3r)

In contrast to the 1605 collection that advertises several authorisers – including Prince Henry for *Philotas* – this collection, with its new address to readers, positions Daniel as main authoriser and owner of his work. It is the first articulation of this strength to be associated, by extension, with a play

from the commercial stages. A similar construction of authority in the author is announced in Jonson's *Works* (which Jonson oversaw and which recalls strategies of presentation in his single-text playbooks) and in Shakespeare's Folio, which, conversely, was established by other agents in the writer's absence.<sup>47</sup> However, as this section has demonstrated, collections from the period involve a wide range of authorisers and authorising strategies that take on key roles in shaping their texts for readers.

## Fetishizing

Shakespeare's First Folio asks to be venerated as a book. In his commendatory verse, Leonard Digges claims that Shakespeare's plays, 'ev'ry Line, each Verse', shall ensure the dramatist 'live[s] eternally' (A6r), a commonplace trope used to suggest that the Folio will outlive another material form – the dramatist's Stratford monument of 'Brasse and Marble' (A6r). The commendatory verses and the collection's design prize the Folio as the definitive *book* or *document* of Shakespeare's works that is dependent on its materiality in this instance (despite the 'imperfections' of its diverse copies).<sup>48</sup> The cultural capital that Shakespeare has subsequently accrued has furthered the Folio's imperative to fetishize the material book as the dramatist's definitive monument. For example, its latest (and highest) auction sale price was a record \$9.98 million in October 2020, when the copy owned by Mills College in Oakland, California, sold at Christie's in New York.<sup>49</sup> The Folio's interest in venerating itself and Shakespeare, coupled with the dramatist's cultural and political legacy, have worked to solidify this book as a hegemonic cultural object. The concept of object fetish is relevant for the Folio, acting as a signifier of 'hermeneutic surplus or the unquantifiable': it suggests that an object carries a sense of power and awe that surpasses its material form.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as Brian Cummings proposes, the 'First Folio is a fetish of book history all on its own'.<sup>51</sup> The term 'fetish' is, however, a relational one, and to call something a fetish, as critics including Bruno Latour have argued, is to engage in fetishisation and, often, to take on a superior position as an 'anti-fetishist' who sees others as naïve or cynical in their valuation of certain objects or objects as commodities – both of which are relevant for the Folio.<sup>52</sup> But as J. Lorand Matory and Rafael Vizcaino propose, an alternative position – and one that offers the possibility of a decolonial 'anti-fetishist' movement that reappraises the term's roots in anthropological othering – is to recognise the conscious, deliberate element in our valuation of an object: there is a '*mutual* dependence between human agency

<sup>47</sup>Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House*, 106–12; Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson*.

<sup>48</sup>Lesser, *Renaissance Drama*, 9–25.

<sup>49</sup>Smith, 'Follow the Money' and *Shakespeare's First Folio*.

<sup>50</sup>Cummings, 'Shakespeare's First Folio', 54.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 64; Robinson, 'Book Fetishes', 129–50.

<sup>52</sup>Latour, *Factish Gods*, 2–11.

and the things that become gods through *their* worship'.<sup>53</sup> The Folio's presentational strategies developed by human agents encourage readers to venerate 'his Booke', while users across subsequent centuries have often consciously recognised and embraced the power of this material object for a range of purposes. Nevertheless, because of the Folio's dominant position within book history and the fact that '[s]o much is known about the First Folio', it becomes difficult, as Cummings proposes, 'to make any reasonable comparison with any other book'.<sup>54</sup> By paying attention to the strategies of other collections, we can, at least from the perspective of the Folio in its own time, understand its position within the early modern book trade.

Through strategies of selection and presentation, collections intimate how they should be valued, and many are much less invested than Shakespeare's Folio in venerating the book itself, in some cases drawing attention to their transience and questioning the fixity of print. As already discussed, Daniel's address 'To the Reader' in *Certain Small Works* (1607) claims that the writer never has a 'saboath of the minde' and through revision 'may pull downe, raise, and reedifie' (¶3r) their works, destabilising the idea that there can ever be a definitive edition. The materiality of collections and their history of use can also reinforce a 'reading' of their position as provisional, unfinished, and open to change. Introduced at the start of this article, Daniel's 1623 posthumous collection, *The Whole Works*, offers a pertinent example of this flexibility that un-fetishizes the book. One principle that underlines many of Daniel's collections is that of re-use. The 1623 volume contains a new title page; freshly printed texts of Daniel's poetry, masques, and plays; and a dedication written by Daniel's brother, John, who oversaw the collection, to Charles, Prince of Wales, that offers the volume as a token of the brothers' devotion to the future king. But it also incorporates unsold copies of the 1609 *Civil Wars*, including the woodcut of Daniel that appeared within that edition as a verso frontispiece for the collection. Indeed, the choice of quarto format for the 1623 volume was likely determined by the 1609 *Civil Wars*, which was also printed in quarto and therefore necessitated the same format if unsold copies were to be neatly incorporated within the posthumous collection. *The Whole Works* represents a partly recycled collection that announces its multiple temporalities. Its history of use suggests that readers embraced this malleability: many extant copies contain only parts of the collection, the individual title pages for most of the substantial poems and plays facilitating the removal and reordering of texts, a process that also continued within the book trade.<sup>55</sup> In 1635, bookseller John Waterson (son of Simon Waterson, Daniel's

<sup>53</sup>Matory, *The Fetish Revisited*, 280; Vizcaino, 'Liberation Philosophy', 61, 69.

<sup>54</sup>Cummings, 'Shakespeare's First Folio', 64.

<sup>55</sup>For example, one copy at the Bodleian Library (Buxton 116) lacks all texts from signatures A to N (second sequence), while many other copies are fragments containing one text only (Buxton 120 contains only *The Civil Wars*). Another copy (4° P 50 Art. (2)) is bound with Daniel Powel's *The Love of Wales to their Sovereign Prince* (1616; STC 20159).

long-time publisher who had since died) published a collection called *Dramatic Poems*, which was a reissue of unsold copies of Daniel's dramatic texts from the 1623 *Works*. Waterson offered a play collection to Caroline readers that contained a freshly prepared (and dated) general title page alongside recycled copies, including their old title pages (all dated 1623), of *Philotas*, *Hymen's Triumph* (with the poem 'Ulysses and the Siren'), *The Queen's Arcadia*, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, and *Cleopatra*. Unlike Shakespeare's Folio, Daniel's 1623 *Whole Works* (and most of his collections) do not venerate the *book* itself as a definitive monument and instead prioritise change, revision, and a recognition that texts – materially and creatively – cannot be fixed and fetishized.

While plays in collection may resist a high valuation of themselves as a material artifact, they nevertheless offer some statement – explicitly or implicitly – about how they are to be prized, and, for many early play collections in English, this evaluation often evokes a nation-building endeavour associated with the propagation of vernacular writing. Shakespeare's First Folio privileges English monarchical history through its centralised and sequenced 'Histories', while the dramatist's subsequent cultural legacy been used to further nationalist and imperialist aims. Following the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), for example, Shakespeare and his works were 'praised more and more insistently in terms of world exploration and conquest'.<sup>56</sup> Although other writers and play collections have not acquired the same cultural and political capital, many demonstrate a similar interest in positioning their texts as part of a nationalising, vernacular project that serves political aims. This interest extends beyond play collections: as Kevin Pask has shown, the vernacular and attributed works of authors such as Sidney and Spenser that started to narrativize their poetic lives could become part of a nationalising project, and, especially in later centuries, act as a form of cultural capital.<sup>57</sup> Within the early modern period, Protestant publisher John Day issued Norton's *All Such Treatises* – which is a collection of non-dramatic texts and one play, all attributed to a single author – as part of a politically invested project linked to Elizabeth I that condemned rebellion and Catholicism in the aftermath of the Northern Rebellion. Lyly's *Six Court Comedies* positions its dramatic plays within the context of an English literary project that has wider significance: Blount's address 'To The Reader' memorialises Lyly as a 'Rare and Excellent Poet' from Elizabeth's court, suggesting that '[o]ur Nation are in his debt, for a new English which hee taught' (A5r-A6r), referring specifically to his distinctive euphuistic style, which is set against the current French influence over the Caroline court.

To give a sustained example, Alexander's *Monarchic Tragedies* (1604 and 1607) are presented as pointed political collections. Both editions begin with

<sup>56</sup>Dobson, *Making of the National Poet*, 227. See also Lidster, *Wartime Shakespeare*, ch.1.

<sup>57</sup>Pask, *Emergence of the English Author*, 1–8.



Alexander's dedication 'To His Sacred Majestie' James I and VI that elevates the king above the temptations of tyrannical government contained within the collections' classical histories. Alexander praises James's 'perfections' and 'good conscience' that prevent him from building a 'Monarchie with blood' (1604, A3r-v). While Alexander suggests that 'the torrent of [James's] power | May drowne whole nations in a scarlet flood' and conquer them, he celebrates the king's benevolence and restrained ambition that distinguishes him from, as Alexander puts it, the 'tirant Ottoman' and others who seek worldly gains (A3v-A4r). A dislike of monarchical tyranny and rapacious conquest recalls the interests of Alexander's moralising plays, but the dedication seems to accommodate opposing ethical views: Alexander implies that James could 'challenge all the world as thine owne right' (A4r), denying this justification to other nations, ostensibly because of the monarch's liberal government. Two additional verses about James in the 1607 collection further this aggrandising narrative, and, in some extant copies, they appear at the end, constructing a collection that starts and concludes with a royal figurehead.<sup>58</sup> In 'Some verses written to his Majestie by the Authour at the time of his Majesties first entrie into England', the king is described as 'generous James' who, despite his martial strength, does not tyrannise the world (L1r-v). Alexander nevertheless activates this aspiration: he describes James as 'the terroure of strangers' and concludes that Britain may, in fact, 'be the soveraigne of the world some day' (L1v). The collection prompts the transnational movement of classical histories to a Jacobean present in order to reflect on the dangers of absolutism, but also repurposes them as part of a *translatio imperii* that positions James beyond the targets and warnings of the plays and presents British colonialism as benevolent. Indeed, Alexander himself was later involved in colonial projects and attempted to found a North American colony of New Scotland between Newfoundland and New England, a project that ultimately failed, not least because of his inattentiveness to the existing inhabitants and organisation of the region.<sup>59</sup>

Set alongside Alexander's or Norton's collections, Shakespeare's Folio is less explicit in its nation-building and colonialist interests, as it is shaped by strategies that aim to memorialise and monumentalise Shakespeare, who was not a politician or courtier. The Folio's dedication to William and Philip Herbert could activate, as critics have explored, the militant Protestant reputations of the brothers, and mobilise the collection in the service of a Jacobean Protestant agenda invested in an interventionist foreign policy following the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618.<sup>60</sup> These associations are not, however, explicitly invoked within the dedication. But the Folio's presentational strategies nevertheless propose a

<sup>58</sup>The Huntington Library, call number RB 60611.

<sup>59</sup>Reid, 'Alexander', para.13–20.

<sup>60</sup>Laoutaris, 'Prefatorial', 48–67; Lidster, *Publishing the History Play*, 216–25; Taylor, 'Making Meaning', 55–72.

project of broader dimensions. The Folio emerges as an aggrandising national and vernacular project through its imperative to prize the book as a venerated object that prioritises English monarchical history and praises Shakespeare as a national poet ‘To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe’ (A4v).

## Conclusions

Shakespeare’s plays are themselves interested in the power of books and their symbolic functions. In *The Tempest*, to ‘disempower Prospero it is necessary [for Caliban] to take away his book’; but, as Cummings discusses, ‘to disempower the book it is necessary to burn it’ (see 3.2.87–95).<sup>61</sup> When concentrating on, as I have done, the importance of the First Folio as a material book and its conditions of production in order to show how its strategies of presentation shape our reading experience, my aim is not a ‘disavowal of the object’ and an unmasking of the fetish that implies its replacement with ‘that which is beyond the fetish’.<sup>62</sup> Rather, I aim to draw attention to the deliberate processes of human agency in the book trade – categorising, fixing, authorising, and fetishizing – that have made this play collection, and which we continue to take part in today. These processes are not in tension with the elevated status of Shakespeare’s Folio, but are a part of it. And if I have a desire to decentre the Folio, it would be in order to position this play collection within its own time and clarify its relationship to other early modern collections. In the service of this aim, I have evaluated what is distinctive about Shakespeare’s collection – the Folio’s interest in ‘Histories’, its professed fixity, its valuation of Shakespeare as sole author and authoriser, and its imperative to prize the material book. Other collections advertise different strategies, embracing, for example, cross-genre exchanges (Greville), a lack of material fixity (Norton), or the primacy of the author as a perpetual rewriter, denying final authority to the material book (Daniel). In this quatercentenary year since the publication of Shakespeare’s Folio – and Daniel’s *Whole Works* – this article has aimed to reflect on the values we assign to these collections and how our critical priorities, approaches, and interpretations are shaped by the strategies of selection and presentation underpinning each collection. We need to understand a collection’s own strategies to understand the works it presents to us.

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<sup>61</sup>Cummings, ‘Shakespeare’s First Folio’, 58.

<sup>62</sup>Stallybrass, ‘Marx’s Coat’, 312; Vizcaino, ‘Liberation Philosophy’, 65.

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