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'as small a compass as possible':
Theatricality, Textual History, & Edward Capell's Editorial Aesthetic

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In 1758, a slim, neatly printed edition of William Shakespeare's *Antony & Cleopatra* came to press. (See Image 1.) Like most eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare to date, the publication of this standalone playbook was underwritten by the Tonson family publishing house. But in almost every other respect, it signaled a radical departure from editorial conventions around English drama and from book design protocols more generally. Broadly speaking, the small volume displayed a keen and completist effort to mediate the play's otherwise unprintable non-verbal stage business using the affordances of moveable type. It leveraged typography to make the theatricality legible to readers. At the same time, the volume implicitly proffered an editorial ideology that linked a "clean" and "uncluttered" page to a vision of what B.K. Adams has elsewhere called a "fair" Shakespeare, that is, a Shakespeare unfouled

by the sullying interference not only of careless print-house personnel but also of recent editors motivated by current aesthetic taste instead of a deference to the earliest textual witnesses.[1]

In what follows, I contextualize the 1758 edition of *Antony & Cleopatra*—a textual instantiation of a contemporary theatrical reworking of Shakespeare's sweeping play about trans-continental, inter-racial, and non-procreative love—in the career of Edward Capell, a lawyer by education who worked as the deputy inspector of plays for the London stage and, after experimenting editorially, produced a completely unorthodox, though in many ways inspired, multi-volume edition of Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*. Capell's story—his identity as an editor—is one that unfolds in the intermediary space between theater and typography.[2] Over more than two decades, he sought to establish the entire textual history of Shakespeare's plays by collecting copies of as many early quartos as he could find. This enabled him to study textual variance across early editions of a given play with a degree of precision and coverage that had never before been possible. With this sustained effort came an aura of authenticity—both around the sense of proximity of the texts that Capell produced to the editions closest in time to Shakespeare and around their propinquity to the idea of the play in performance.

The bulk of my narrative about Capell coming into his own as an editor will focus on a small book that he helped produce between the 1758 *Antony & Cleopatra* and the 1768

[1] B. K. Adams, "Fair / foul,' in *Shakespeare / Text*, ed. Claire M. L. Bourne, Arden Shakespeare Intersections (Bloomsbury Publishing, forthcoming 2021).

[2] Some material in this paper (especially towards the end about the system of glyphs he devised) has been modified from the coda of my book *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Shakespeare edition called *Prolusions* (1760), a copy of which is held at the John Hay Library and will be the subject/object of my remarks at the upcoming symposium. I will use the opportunity of this paper to tell the story of the relationship between Capell's design protocols and his fear that Shakespeare's cultural status was being compromised by bad editorial book design in the mid-eighteenth century. My working argument is that Capell's commitment to typographic "beauty" and his aversion to the entanglement of "text" and "commentary" encode and thus insist on a vision of Shakespeare as both fixed in the past and temporally transcendent. Capell's editorial and typographic practices produce the effect of capturing authorial intention via the codex form, as well as through (quite literally) punctilious formations and impressions of inked type on paper that mediated theatricality for readers.[3]

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It is something of a critical commonplace that book collecting and editing go hand-in-hand. Edmond Malone's edition of Shakespeare's *Works* (1790) and Horace Howard Furness's New Variorum Shakespeare (begun in 1871) were built on the foundations of their impressive book collections.[4] But by the time Malone started collecting books to support his influential editorial

[3] I use "theatricality" in Henry S. Turner's sense of the word, that is, the "mimetic and symbolic techniques" associated with theatrical performance: "the objects, bodies, conventions, signs, and collective habits of apprehending performance" ("Generalization," in *Early Modern Theatricality*, edited by Turner [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 3).

[4] On Malone as collector, see James M. Osborn, "Edmond Malone: Scholar-Collector," *The Library* 19.1 (1964): 11-37. On the importance of book collecting to eighteenth-century Shakespeare editing (and for an example of how this has become conventional wisdom), see Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean Scholar: A Literary Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 72. On Furness's collecting, see Daniel Traister, "The Furness Memorial Library," in *The Penn Library Collections at 250* (Philadelphia: UPenn Library, 2000); and

endeavors, there was already a strong record of what had existed; what still existed; and what was either lost or yet-to-be-found.[5] Between the late 1740s and 1779, Edward Capell bought or sought access to every edition of Shakespeare that he knew existed. It was the first completist attempt to collect early printed books by and related to Shakespeare, and the books gathered by these labors—most of them, anyway—survive in the collection of "Shakespeariana" Capell built, catalogued, and ultimately bequeathed to the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge.[6] As James M. Osborn put it: "Edward Capell began to collect Elizabethan plays [...] before Malone had learned to read."[7]

Integral to Capell's act of collecting these books were various other acts of assembling and organizing information *about* the books as well as information found *in* those books; and implicated in those acts of assembly and organization were a series of ingenious decisions involving the capacity of page and book design to digest—and to help readers access—an otherwise unwieldy amount of data about the textual histories of Shakespeare's plays. It required the kind of single-mindedness that so many of Capell's contemporaries recognized as one of his chief attributes. Capell leveraged this tenacity to do something that no editor of Shakespeare had done before: collate the early editions. Collation

Alan Galey, *The Shakespearean Archive: Experiments in New Media from the Renaissance to Postmodernity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 95-6.

[5] On the influence of Malone's edition on the editorial tradition, see Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[6] See W. W. Greg, *Capell's Shakespeariana: Catalogue of the Books Presented by Edward Capell to the Library of Trinity College in Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

[7] Osborn, "Edmond Malone," 11.

was one of Capell's (and his edition's) *bona fides*.

Capell was not the first Shakespeare editor to seek out and inventory early editions of Shakespeare's plays. In early May 1722, the publisher Jacob Tonson placed an advertisement in *The Evening Post* that appealed to the public for "any Editions of the Tempest, Mackbeth, Julius Cæsar, Timon of Athens, King John, and Henry the 8th; printed before the Year 1620"—basically, any quartos of these plays published prior to the 1623 First Folio. Alexander Pope wanted to consult them for his forthcoming "Edition of Shakespeare." (See Image 2.) Since none of these plays was, as far as we know, ever published in quarto, the advertisement exposes one of the greatest difficulties in establishing Shakespeare's textual corpus: determining what exactly was published to begin with.

While Pope actually used Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition as his copy-text and preferred the folio texts to quartos because of Heminge and Condell's claim that the quartos were "stolen and surreptitious," he still consulted early editions if they were available to "authorise[…]" many of his edition's "various readings" and "corrected passages."[8] Some of the quartos' better temporal proximity to Shakespeare led Pope to describe the quartos as "now hold[ing] the place of Originals" (i.e., Shakespeare's lost manuscripts). Although Pope's selection of textual variants was motivated by personal taste and informed by aesthetic predilections of early eighteenth-century literary culture, he still appended to the last volume of *The Works* a "Table of the Several Editions of Shakespeare's Plays, made use of and compared in this Impression" in an

[8] Alexander Pope, introduction to *The Works of Shakespear*, vol. 1 (London: Jacob Tonson, 1725), sig. c1r.

effort to illustrate that he had done some homework that Rowe, his predecessor, had not. (See Image 3.) Pope's list was the first list of Shakespeare *editions* to appear in print.

Play *titles* had been enumerated earlier by the bookseller Francis Kirkman in two catalogues (1661 and 1671).[9] These documents helped Kirkman communicate that he had access to lots of printed plays as well as create a sense of a canon to which he could add his own stock, both new and old. In *A New Catalogue of English Plays* (1687), Gerard Langbaine distanced himself from such "*crafty Booksellers, whose custom it is … frequently to vent* old *Plays with* new *Titles*."[10] Claiming to have collected and read 980 plays, Langbaine said he compiled the catalogue primarily to assist those who also wanted to "*design a Collection*" of playbooks for themselves. To this end, Langbaine included information about the format of "*the best edition*" with each play title. For the list of Shakespeare titles, all except *The Birth of Merlin* were labeled "Fol." It is clear from Langbaine's later *Account of the English Stage* (1691) that he had access to more than only folio editions of the plays, but his *Catalogue* provides none of that data.

The very fact that Langbaine describes having compared the folio texts to other editions before deeming the folio texts "*the best*" would have piqued the curiosity of eighteenth-century editors interested in authorizing their editorial work with editions more proximate to Shakespeare than the folio. Indeed, both Langbaine's *Catalogue* and *Account* would persist as

[9] The catalogues were published with *Tom Tyler and His Wife* (1661); and *Nicomede* (1671).

[10] Gerard Langbaine, *A New Catalogue of English Plays* (London: Nicholas Cox, 1687), sig. A4r. Despite this marketing pitch, it seems that Langbaine might have known Kirkman and that his catalogue and own book collection was deeply indebted to a first-hand knowledge of Kirkman's inventory (Adam G. Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016], 163).

reference works for editor-collectors in the eighteenth century.[11] Pope lists 29 Shakespeare editions in his "Table"—about 50 percent of the pre-1623 editions now known to be extant.[12] He suspected that there were more Shakespeare editions out there, as the advertisement for pre-folio quartos suggests, and wrote that he "wish[ed]" that "a greater number of them (if a greater number were every published) may yet be found, by a search more successful than mine." Indeed, the list of early editions printed with Lewis Theobald's 1733 edition of *The Works* records a few more finds, including (among others) editions of 2 *Henry the Fourth* (STC 26100), *Much Ado About Nothing* (STC 22304), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (STC 22302) all published in 1600, as well as several post-1623 quartos which Theobald labeled as "Editions of middle Authority."[13]

Like Pope, Theobald claimed to have consulted the quartos on his list while preparing his edition, but a mistake made by the compositor when setting the description of this process suggests an intimate and productive interplay between the project of building a textual corpus for Shakespeare and editorial procedure. The title of Theobald's list reads: " A / TABLE / OF / The several EDITIONS / OF / SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, / Collected by the EDITOR"

[11] For example, a "*new Catalogue of the several Editions of* Shakespeare'*s Writings*," printed with Francis Peck's *New memoirs of the life and poetical works of Mr. John Milton* (1740) cites Langbaine throughout (sigs. 1Ii4r-1Kk4v).

[12] According to the *Database of Early English Playbooks* (*DEEP*, http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/), there are 57 quarto and octavo editions of Shakespeare plays published before the folio. This number does not include the apocrypha but does include plays now accepted as collaborations. Pope seems to have had access to the quarto collection published by William Jaggard in 1619, but he does not include *Pericles* (or the other apocrypha) in his table.

[13] Pope does not seem to have been interested in "comparing" quartos published after the folio, so even if he had them in his possession or consulted them for his edition, he did not make a public record of it.

(emphasis mine). A single erratum at the end of the list notifies readers that, "instead of *Collected* by the EDITOR," they should "read, *Collated* by *&c.*"[14] (See Image 4.) This slippage between *collection* and *collation* captures the shift around this time from a mode of editing that adopted the most recent edition as a functional copy text (one that privileged contemporary taste) to a mode that used early editions to reconstruct an ideal version of the text in the time of its creation (one that privileged historical specificity and accuracy).[15] At this point, "to collate" (still a nascent way of describing textual comparison) was a much more fungible term than "to collect," hence the need for the *erratum*. The elasticity of the term "collate" is evident once more in a description of how William Warburton handled the early quartos in his 1747 edition of *The Works* that he generated using material from Pope's edition. The quartos listed in Warburton's table were "made use of, and collated for this Edition," but with a caveat: "whether separate or together."[16] The mode of collation implied here relied not on the physical collection of early editions but rather, it seems, on dispersed access to those editions, whether or not they could be compared in the same place and time.

Early eighteenth-century editorial practice, despite professions to the contrary, was imbued with an unfulfilled desire to "compare" the early quartos. As George Steevens wrote in 1766:

> THE past editors, eminently qualified as they were by genius and learning for this undertaking, wanted industry; to cover which they published catalogues, transcribed at random of a greater number of old copies than ever they can be supposed to have had in their possession; when, at the same time, they never examined the few which we know they

[14] Lewis Theobald, ed., *The Works of Shakespeare*, vol. 7 (London: Jacob Tonson, 1733), sigs. Hh8r and Ii4r.

[15] See Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69-70.

[16] William Warburton, ed., *The Works of Shakespeare*, vol. 1 (London: J. and P. Knapton et al, 1747), sig. d3v.

had, with any great degree of accuracy.[17]

For Steevens, the published lists quartos that Pope, Theobald, and Warburton claimed to have "compared," "collected," and "collated" were red herrings. They produced an *illusion* of systematic editorial labor. (Some lists very obviously conflated editions that the compiler had actually seen or acquired with editions that were only known—or thought—to exist.) But methodically identifying and weighing the relative authority of textual variants was not an explicit feature of their editorial method. Instead, they "cover[ed]" their tracks, leaving few easy ways of reverse engineering how they arrived at their readings or accessing rejected readings.[18] They assumed that readers wanted editorial labor to be invisible—after all, what mattered was Shakespeare's "Genuine Text," not the complicated textual history behind it. While Pope, Theobald, and Warburton "lacked" the "industry" required for an "accurate" examination and comparison of the early quartos, Edward Capell had it in spades.

Capell was indefatigable in his mission to produce an edition of Shakespeare from scratch, describing the process (which included interacting with recent editions produced by "the moderns") to be as frustrating as "find[ing] his way through the wilderness."[19] He likened his editorial project to the labor of an architect, who (before building anything in his "wilderness")

[17] George Steevens, introduction to *Twenty Of The Plays Being the Whole Number Printed in Quarto During His Life-Time, Or Before the Restoration, Collated where There Were Different Copies, and Publish'd from the Originals* (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1766), 1: 6.

[18] Pope did print whole passages that he rejected as non-authorial in footnotes on the bottom of the page, but none of these editions adhere to any kind of textual protocol for offering readers a view of textual variance.

[19] Edward Capell, introduction to *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (London: J and R Tonson, 1768), 20

had to lay a solid foundation:

> …The superstructure cannot be a sound one, which is built upon so bad a foundation as that work of Mr. ROWE's; which all [subsequent editors], as we see, in succession, have yet made their cornerstone….[20]

Capell styled himself as the "champion" of Shakespeare's dramatic corpus after reading Thomas Hanmer's 1744 edition "with no little astonishment" at the "license" Hanmer had taken with the text. Capell saw it as his duty "to save from further ruin an edifice of this dignity." The edifice was "Shakespeare," but also the Shakespearean text, and it was crumbling. Capell had the materials not just to repair it but also to build it "from the ground up."[21] He saw himself as a civilizing influence who could harness an inhospitable landscape by replacing crumbling infrastructure and restore it to "that fair country the Poet's real habitation."[22]

The precondition of taming this "wilderness"—for turning foul to fair—was for Capell to "possess[…] himself of the other modern editions, the folio's, and as many quarto's as could presently be procur'd."[23] Previous editors had paid lip service to "collating," that is, they seem to have consulted early quartos on an ad hoc, diachronic basis to fix "obscurities and absurdities" or "patch[…] up the Folio text with only a selection of quarto readings."[24] (This is how twentieth-century bibliographer Alice Walker described pre-Capell editing.) For Capell, collecting all the early editions known to have been published was essential to establishing a

[20] Capell, introduction, 19.

[21] The phrase is from Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print*, 86.

[22] Capell, introduction, 20.

[23] Capell, introduction, 19.

[24] Alice Walker, "Edward Capell and his Edition of *Shakespeare*," Proceedings of the British Academy (1961): 135-36

fair, authoritative Shakespearean text. Collation had to be a comprehensive, synchronic act in which the texts being collated could be compared side-by-side. And such labor could only be enabled by collection. "Thus furnish'd, he fell immediately to collation," Capell writes of himself. Collation, he maintained, was "the first step in the works of this nature; and without it, nothing is done to purpose."[25]

In the introduction to his Shakespeare edition, Capell credits a combination of "fortune and industry" for allowing him to collect all but six of the known early quartos, including twelve that previous editors "had no knowledge of."[26] His successful assembly of what would become, in his moment, the largest ever collection of Shakespeare editions depended heavily on mining previous lists (copies of which Capell also acquired for his collection), followed by published appeals to the public and well-connected book collectors. Capell also had to organize the information *about* the books he collected in order to realize his vision of an edition based on textual authority over taste. Then, he had to codify the information *from* these same books to illustrate his editorial process and grant readers access to the textual variance he had taken such pains to discover.

Capell's wrangling of the codex form to record and manage information is clearly on display in his set of six notebooks now at the Folger Shakespeare Library (S.b.7-12). (See Image 5.) In these hefty volumes, Capell inscribed bibliographic descriptions of items he generally classified as "Shakespeariana": Shakespeare and other play quartos as well as non-dramatic

[25] Capell, introduction, 20.

[26] Capell, introduction, 20.

printed books containing passages that could illuminate Shakespeare's language or had some connection with early modern theatrical culture. The notebooks also contain extracts that he transcribed out of many of the books he collected. These transcriptions appear on page openings that alternate with page openings where he has logged the books' bibliographic details. Often, the extracts appear pages or even volumes after the bibliographic entry of the book from which they were taken. And the entries themselves are arranged neither alphabetically, nor chronologically, nor according to any other discernable principle of organization.[27]

Used as a repository for information about the books Capell both consulted and collected over a period of fourteen years (1752 to 1766), the notebooks testify to the arduousness and unpredictability of Capell's collecting. His collecting was shaped by his own evolving knowledge of which editions existed; the availability elsewhere of editions he advertised as "*desideratum*"; his tenacity to seek out elusive editions (through advertisements, the monitoring of auctions, and personal appeals to competing collectors); and (of course) a healthy dose of luck. (See Image 6.) Bibliographic descriptions of Shakespeare editions known to exist by 1750 constellate early in the notebooks, suggesting that Capell initially drew on the tables published in the Pope, Theobald, Warburton, and Hanmer editions. The organization of the bibliographic entries is otherwise erratic, as Capell attempts to expand his collection with previously unknown or unattainable quartos. The notebooks are therefore as much aspirational as they are a record of

[27] In fact, the Folger's catalogue record for these volumes underscores the ostensible disorder of the notebooks: "The whole contents are entirely without any apparent attempt at orderly arrangement." See http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=224645.

his editorial process. In the end, though, Capell managed to acquire a copy each of 82 Shakespeare editions (compared to Pope's 29). (See Image 7.)

Capell clearly understood that the scale and volatility of his collecting venture would require an "information management" system if any of his notes were to be easily retrievable. And as it turns out, the notebooks are actually extraordinarily organized. Capell prepared the blank notebooks for his note-taking by dividing each page into two columns. He numbered the columns continuously across the two-page spread, throughout each individual notebook, and from notebook to notebook. Then, down the middle of each page, he inscribed four labels (a, b, c, and d), which turned the page into a 2x4 grid. The grid system allowed Capell flexibility and made the notebooks function like a relational database. Every piece of information Capell recorded (whether a bibliographic description or an extract from one of the listed books) could be found by the number of the column plus the letter of the row where it was recorded. Just as importantly, the system provided Capell with an efficient means of coordinating extracts with the records of the books out of which he had transcribed them. The design of the notebooks allowed for easy cross-referencing—for calling particular editions to hand.

The attention that Capell paid to the design of the notebooks is wholly consistent with the unusual care he took with the typography and overall design of the books that transmitted his play editions. Perhaps surprisingly, the 1758 *Antony & Cleopatra* was one of the first books to be printed on wove paper, which was produced by a new technique of papermaking that eliminated the textured chain lines characteristic of the laid paper on which Shakespeare's plays had hitherto been printed. Wove paper was produced on a mould where brass wires were

tightly intertwined rather than criss-crossed in parallel lines and at right angles. The result was a paper with a smooth rather than ribbed surface. It was also much brighter—and uniformly whiter—than laid paper, which retained an uneven beige color. Its whiteness must have been appealing to Capell, who sought to create a "fair" habitation for Shakespeare's texts and whose editorial aesthetic therefore valued (as we'll see) streamlined design and blank space over the trend of crowding more and more "inches" of commentary—and marginal stage directions—onto the page. Wove paper was developed by John Whatman in collaboration with the type-designer and printer John Baskerville. Its even surface made it a more suitable substrate for Baskerville's finely cut yet bold typeface. The resulting aesthetic—which was on display for the first time in Baskerville's 1757 edition of Virgil—was crisp and restrained.

A year later, Capell enlisted Dryden Leach, well-known for his work on fine-press books, including type-specimen for the Caslon type foundry, to print *Antony and Cleopatra*. The edition was printed using a Caslon typeface whose delicate serifs required the smooth surface of Whatman's new, pristine-looking paper. On the heels of *Antony and Cleopatra* and a decade into preparing his Shakespeare edition, Capell produced an editorial prototype called *Prolusions* (which means *experiment* or *rehearsal*) (1760) using a trio of anonymous early modern poetic texts as staging grounds for techniques of textual presentation he had begun trialing in *Antony and Cleopatra.* (See Image 8.) *Prolusions* was a small, meticulously designed collection, which featured edited texts of three ballads; a gathering of "*didactic poems*" by Sir John Davis [Davies]; and *Edward the Third*, "*a Play, thought to be writ by* SHAKESPEARE." The title page characterized the texts "compil'd" in this codex as "*Specimens of the Integrity*

that should be found in the editions of Worthy authors." In other words, Capell could experiment on these little-known texts without any threat to the reputation of "worthy" authors. But the effort was obviously figured as a wind-up to editing the worthiest of all: Shakespeare.

Capell's work on *Edward the Third* was the most pertinent of the editorial preludes to his larger, ongoing project of refining Shakespeare editing. By 1760, Capell had acquired both early quartos of this play. His primary objective in doing so was to establish which of the quartos to use as "the ground-work" for the new edition. In a list of the two editions printed on its own page at the end of the text, he situated an asterisk (*) next to the edition he had chosen as his base-text. (See Image 9.) Under the heading "*Editions, consulted*," Capell transcribed the text of each title page, noted the book's format (4°), and recorded the last signature (i.e., "K. 2b." and "I. 4.") to note length. He also labeled the entries "a" and "b" in a blackletter font. These labels were essential to the design of his collation notes, the first ever to appear in the edition of an early modern play, because they served as coordinates that signaled the source of each textual variant.

In a departure from the truly "eclectic" editing of the past, Capell deferred to his chosen copy-text in all instances except (1) where the text was "plainly corrupt" and could only be "amended by conjecture"; and (2) where another edition offered "a reading most apparently better."[28] Obviously, what it means for a reading to be "corrupt" or "better" is always a matter of

[28] Capell, preface to *Prolusions; or, select Pieces of antient Poetry* (London: J and R Tonson, 1760), ii.

editorial taste. The big difference between the role of taste in Capell's edition and previous editions, though, is that Capell printed a set of "Various Readings" at the end of the playtext that offered key—and explicit—alternatives.[29] In Capell's eyes, this gave readers the option to restore *their* preferred reading if they did not agree with one of his decisions:

> If, in this or that place, what is added, or alter'd, shall to the man of judgment be not satisfactory, let him discard the addition, or restore the old reading; the one is at hand, the other easily effected: or, if this will not do, let him exert his happier talent in the invention of something better. ...[30]

Capell encoded his changes in a number of ways. In a single line of footnotes underneath the playtext, he noted conjectural emendations in the playtext itself by offering the "reading" on which the conjecture was based. (See Image 10.) If the conjecture had no basis in an early edition, he made his intervention even more conspicuous by printing it in blackletter. (See Image 11.) In cases where Capell had chosen between two viable readings from different early editions, he furnished "the rejected reading" in the list of "Various Readings" at the end of the text and labeled all "rejected readings" with the letter corresponding to the edition from which it derived ("a" or "b"). (See Image 12.) Capell devised an indexical system (very similar to the one in his notebooks) that allowed readers to toggle back and forth between the playtext and the "Various Readings." In fact, he was the first editor to use line numbers as reference points, and he started pagination anew for each text in the collection.[31] He then used combinations of

[29] On the last page of his edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* (a play first published in the 1623 First Folio and thus without earlier quartos to collate), Capell offered only a list of "*Conjectural Readings*" (100).

[30] Capell, preface, ii-iii.

[31] Alan Galey and Rebecca Niles, "Moving Parts: Digital Modeling and the Infrastructures of Shakespeare Editing," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 68.1 (2017): 45-7.

page and line numbers to help direct readers from the alternative readings listed at the end of the playtext to the relevant moments in the text. This kind of indexical reading is second nature to us, but it was wholly new to Capell's readers. Where previous editors had used the space of the page (via footnotes) to manage the play-reading experience, Capell used the whole book.

This here is how Capell distinguished himself from previous editors. It is not just that he was more "systematic" in collating the early texts.[32] It is also that the physical book, not just "Shakespeare" in the abstract, was instrumental in the construction of his editorial "edifice." He worked *with* and *within* the architecture of the codex to encode and contain the plays' already long and complex textual histories in a way that preserved his commitment to an uncluttered editorial page. Specifically, his design protocols reflected his aversion to the "paginary intermixture of text and comment" that characterized previous and near-contemporary editions of Shakespeare's plays. Implicit in this formulation is Capell's active resistance to the idea (and past reality) of Shakespeare's text sharing the same space as the words of subsequent editors and commentators. This was another way in which his editorial practice attempted to cordon off the Shakespearean text from the contamination of evolving taste. Like the paper it would be printed on, the Shakespearean "edifice" he promised was both white and secure.

Capell's codex-based system worked beautifully for *Edward the Third* in *Prolusions* because the playtext and "Various Readings" collected from the early quartos were contained in the same book. However, Capell's edition of Shakespeare's plays, published six years later by

[32] Walker, "Edward Capell," 131-32.

the Tonsons and printed on the same wove paper by Leach, strained his system. He ended up publishing the "Various Readings" and "Notes" on his edition of Shakespeare's plays in three separate, physically much larger volumes more than a decade after the edition itself came to press. The efficient indexical system that worked so well in Capell's prototype—*Edward the Third*—failed when the information designed to support the study of the text was distributed over time and across multiple volumes. Capell made the decision to publish in this way, it seems, because he did not want to delay the publication of the edition until he was finished assembling the supporting material. Time was just not on his side.

Neither were readers, who just couldn't quite grip his novel brand of dramatic typography. Capell's attempt to restore a "fair" Shakespearean text was also motivated by the *theatrical* dimensions of the plays. He was determined to strip the text of editorial stage directions by devising a novel system of punctuation (glyphs, really) to note changes in tone and other non-verbal business.[33] He explained that each of these "new marks"—five in total—had a "determinate force." He had marks for irony (⸗), change in address (‾), asides (“ ”), a thing "shown or pointed to" (†), and a thing "deliver'd" (‡).[34] (See Image 13.) He first ventured to use these symbols without explanation in the 1758 Garrick edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is not clear whether the marks captured the choreographed physicality of Garrick's production, or whether Capell even consulted Garrick about their presence or placement. The book was

[33] On mostly ad hoc sixteenth- and seventeenth-century typographic experiments in this vein, see Bourne, *Typographies of Performance*.

[34] I will discuss these glyphs in more detail at the symposium.

available for purchase several months before Garrick's production premiered in January 1759, and presumably served to advertise the performance.[35] The glyphs—and their placement—could very well have been the issue of Capell's brain alone. After all, his appointment to the position of deputy inspector of plays earlier in his career meant that he would have had a strong sense of contemporary performance practices that almost certainly informed his approach to punctuating this text for the stage and for readers.[36]

No matter how beautiful the edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* was (and it *was* beautiful), the absence of instructions for how to read the glyphs proved to be problematic. William Warburton, already no fan of Capell's, complained: "The play is extremely prettily printed: and without doubt the mysterious marks [...] mean something; but I think it would be an impertinent curiosity in the public to ask what?"[37] Mid-eighteenth-century readers would have been conditioned to read some of the symbols in Capell's schema, especially † and ‡, as reference marks positioned in the text block to point out illuminating marginalia or footnotes. But the way Capell used them was more—probably too—ingenious: instead of referring to supplementary text somewhere else on the page or in the book, these marks referred instead to

[35] Garrick's production was apparently a flop. See George Winchester Stone, Jr., "Garrick's Presentation of Antony and Cleopatra," *Review of English Studies* 13.49 (1937): 34.

[36] Capell's attention to staging practices is evident in his handling of scene divisions in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Knowing full well that the company could not handle the logistics of all scene changes implied in the text, Capell reordered some scenes to minimize changes and therefore simplify those logistics. The burden that the play's quick shifts in locale would have put on a theater that used moveable scenes is one reason why it had not been staged in more than a century. His interventions are evident in the copy of *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Jacob Tonson et al., 1734) now classified as PROMPT Ant. 3 at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

[37] Quoted in *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, with the Most Celebrated Persons of his Time*, ed. James Boaden (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831–2), 1: 92.

the conceptual, interstitial space between book and theater, where the actions and interactions they evoked could be realized in readers' imaginations.

Capell's explanation in *Prolusions* of what each "mark" signified was surely a response to this confusion. He implored readers to embrace this new dramatic typography as an improvement on the older editorial habit of adding more and more editorial stage directions:

> It is hop'd, that when these new-invented marks are a little consider'd, they will be found by the candid and discerning to be no improper substitutes to those marginal directions that have hitherto obtain'd; which are both a blemish to the page they stand in, and inadequate to the end proposed.[38]

Using "marginal directions" to note every time a speaker changed addressee or slipped into an ironic tone or gestured towards a person or object would have crowded the page and risked muddying the reader's sense of *when* these changes occurred. The glyphs were more precise proxies.

The nature of *Prolusions* as a set of "specimens" meant that Capell could have messed up because *Edward the Third* was not *really* Shakespeare. But he deemed his experiment a success and extended the same typographical systems—for theatrical business *and* textual history—to his Shakespeare edition. It was an attempt—in encyclopedic fashion—to distill decades of his own editorial labor—book collecting, cataloguing, collating, reading, and annotating—into a tiny, portable package, that is, a codex:

> Thus, reader, you have before you in orderly manner, and as small a compass as possible, every single material that editions can furnish for whatever close examination

[38] Capell, preface to *Prolusions*, vi.

you please of the text.[39]

Despite falling short on his promise to provide readers with (quite literally) handy access (that is, handheld in a single book) to the textual histories of Shakespeare's plays, Capell's multi-volume edition of the plays (*sans* notes & readings) actually could stand alone without the commentary. Capell's material unyoking of "text" from "comment" resulted in a dramatic typography that was exceptionally efficient and, thanks to the use of the glyphs, enabled a more theatrical mode of reading Shakespeare, one that might be sustained without the immediate access to editorial notes and commentary thanks to a typographic-theatrical code.

Unfortunately, the edition's greatest strength was also its greatest weakness. Capell was so confident that readers could intuit how to use the system of typographic "novelties" that he did not describe the function of each glyph anywhere in the Shakespeare edition. Instead, he provided a footnote pointing readers back to *Prolusions*:

> If the use of these new pointings, and also of certain marks that [the reader] will meet with in this edition, do not occur immediately to the reader, (as we think it will) he may find it explain'd to him at large in the preface to a little octavo volume, intitl'd "*Prolusions; or, select Pieces of ancient Poetry*."

The clause enclosed by parenthesis—"(as we think it will)"—ironically exposes Capell's miscalculation. Capell understood what typography could do for printed drama, but he was impatient: he believed that successful typographic change (both on the level of the glyph and as it concerned the disposition of type to encode the plays' complex textual pasts) could happen overnight. But as the twentieth-century typographer Stanley Morison observed, typographic

[39] Edward Capell, "To The Reader," in *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, [1775]).

design "moves at the pace of the most conservative reader," and Capell had too much faith in readers' willingness to learn how to read new typographic arrangements.[40] Capell's typography demanded too much and explained too little. He wanted Shakespeare's plays to appear pure and untouched. He wanted typography to be intuitive, even invisible. But in innovating too quickly, he made it conspicuous.

On the strength of *Prolusions* and with an unbridled faith in the affordances of moveable type, he pursued his vision for elegant books that recorded between their covers not only what could otherwise only be distilled from the books in his robust collection of Shakespeariana but also the theatrical dynamics of Shakespearean drama. Capell's edition failed, but not because of poor design. It failed because the ingenuity of its design—motivated by a stridency to save Shakespeare from the ravages of time and editorial whimsy (read: blight)—outpaced readers' competencies and expectations. Although he worked within the printed codex to create a self-sufficient instantiation of the play (*vis-à-vis* both performance *and* textual history), Capell's multi-pronged reimagining of how old plays could (or, should) be presented in print was, in the end, a chief source of his edition's failure.