Old Light on Shakespeare's Alexandrian Revels

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I'm deeply honored to be in this remarkable city and in this august institution. And one of the things that makes today truly special is the opportunity it provides to talk about one of history's greatest dramas in the setting that did so much to define its unique aura.

As my kind hosts are well aware, this is the first time I've had the pleasure of visiting your beautiful country. I've long cherished its many contributions to global culture, however, and I can't help recalling a delightful address that touched on that topic at the 1982 International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon. On the occasion to which I allude, dramatist and eventual Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka spoke, among other things, about the impact another influential playwright had had on his part of the world. To illustrate his point he cited a 1974 *Cairo Studies* article by M. M. Badawi about "Shakespeare in the Arab World." According to Professor Badawi, the poet's depiction of characters such as Cleopatra and Othello had so profoundly impressed a number of Middle-Eastern admirers that they finally decided he must have been a native of their region. As Soyinka put it, these enthusiasts hypothesized that the playwright's "real name, cleansed of its anglicized corruption, was Shayk al-Subair, . . . as dune-bred an Arabic name as any English poet can hope for."

I like the idea that my favorite dramatist may have been a sheik. And perhaps the dignity this title confers can help us with a dilemma that Stephen Booth identified a few years ago in another Stratford lecture: that, notwithstanding his incomparable prestige, Shakespeare may still be our most underrated writer. I mention this, not because I believe his works have received insufficient reverence, but because I'm persuaded that we'd appreciate them even more deeply if we became conversant with them in an old way: the manner in which a 16th- or 17th-century reader or theatergoer might have experienced these literary and dramatic treasures.

During recent decades we've learned from art curators that paintings by Old Masters such as Michelangelo and Rembrandt become much more vibrant once centuries of grime have been removed from their surfaces – once hues that have been obscured by extraneous matter are permitted to radiate again with something like their pristine luminosity. In music, meanwhile, we've learned that there are aesthetic rewards to be obtained from a return to the instruments and arrangements with which Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque compositions were initially presented. In theater, we've learned from 20th-century experiments in the revival of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays that an unadorned thrust stage, analogous to the performing spaces on which

these works were originally enacted, will do more justice to their dramaturgical intricacy than will a proscenium designed for modes of representation that evolved later in the annals of Western drama. In archaeology, we've learned from excavations in London's Bankside that playhouses such as the Rose and the Globe were configured in patterns that turn out to be rather different from what historians had long inferred from documentary evidence. And now in textual analysis we're learning from a fresh scrutiny of the initial printings of Shakespeare's plays and poems that they too look different, and function differently, when we endeavor to view them through early-modern eyes and resist the urge to "normalize" or rectify features that have struck later interpreters as ill-considered, inconsistent, or unsophisticated.

During the 1990s I produced *THE EVERYMAN SHAKESPEARE*, a 16-volume paperback set of nearly half of the author's plays,[1] and one of the edition's hallmarks was an effort to restore traits a 16th- or 17th-century booklover would have enjoyed in contemporary issues of those titles.[2]

We all know that spelling, punctuation, and grammar were only starting to become standardized by the time that dramas like *Antony and Cleopatra* were being set into type, and thus that some words and phrases could vary a good deal from one stylist, or one situation, to another. Because we've long been aware that "accidentals"[3] such as orthography were subject to scribal and compositorial proclivities, however, as well as to the evolving practices of Renaissance printing shops, we've been hesitant, when confronted with many of the peculiarities in late Tudor and early Stuart publications, to attribute specific features to the authors whose scripts lay behind the various stages of textual transmission.[4] And we've been even more careful in our approach to the accidentals in books whose writers are thought to have been unconcerned about indifferent details, especially when we have no indication that these artists were involved in preparing or proofreading the volumes that derived from holographs or transcripts of their compositions.[5]

But is it possible that we've been overly cautious in our treatment of the spelling and punctuation practices in early-modern printings? With respect to Shakespeare at least, I'm persuaded that the answer is yes, and that many of us have unwittingly rendered ourselves incapable of perceiving, let alone appreciating, characteristics which are more than likely to be authorial and which are often rhetorically or semantically expressive.

At the risk of reading too much into what may sometimes be nothing more than incidental variations, and variations that reflect copyists and compositors rather than the poet whose craft we seek to elucidate, I'm prepared to argue that the original printings of Shakespeare's plays and poems contain orthographic and related patterns that are so conspicuous, so pervasive, and so appropriate to many of the contexts they inform that they are almost certain to be the result of the dramatist's own deliberations. I'm willing to assert, for example, that for Shakespeare spelling was analogous to a trope, a tool that could be put to a broad range of figurative uses, and one he

habitually employed in conjunction with other spins on a language that in his time was still amenable to an almost limitless application of English.

Drawing on the inference that, in a manner that would have endeared him to James Joyce and other adventurous literati from our own epoch, Shakespeare reveled in the flexibility a largely unanchored orthography and grammar afforded,[6] and based on the assumption that much of the poet's verbal playfulness proved impervious to sea-change and weathered a hazardous journey into print, *THE EVERYMAN SHAKESPEARE* adheres to early-modern spelling forms – or adaptations of those forms that conserve their fundamental distinctions from current usage – whenever there is any possibility that what we would now classify as archaisms or anomalies might have some bearing on how given words were intended to be pronounced, or on what they could have meant, in the author's day. When there is strong likelihood that alternate versions of the same phoneme could be significant, moreover, the *EVERYMAN* text replicates the diversity to be found in the pages from which later editions derive.[7]

In many cases this procedure is relevant to the identities of individual dramatis personae. One of the playwright's most frequently quoted lines in *Romeo and Juliet* is "What's in a Name?" For a quarter of a millennium we've been led to believe that the heroine was posing this query to a youth called "Montague." In fact "Montague" (or "Montagew") *was* the spelling Shakespeare would have found in the poem from which he drew the bulk of his material for the play. For reasons that will become apparent to anyone who examines the tragedy in detail, however, the playwright changed his male protagonist's surname to "Mountague," a coinage that alludes suggestively to a combination of *mount*, a noun and a verb with both erotic and spiritual associations, and *ague*, a violent, quiver-inducing fever.[8] Setting aside an editorial practice that began with Lewis Theobald in the first half of the 18th century, *EVERYMAN* resurrects the sound and sense of the appellation that Elizabethan audiences heard Juliet speak.

Readers of *The Merchant of Venice* in the *EVERYMAN* collection may be surprised to see that the character other editions identify as "Lancelot" is actually "Launcelet," a sobriquet which calls attention to the Clown's lusty "little lance." Like Launce in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Costard in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Peter in *Romeo and Juliet*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Launcelet is an upright "member of the common-wealth"; in due course we hear that he's left a pliant wench "with child."[9]

In similar fashion, readers of the *EVERYMAN Hamlet* will note that "Fortinbras" – as the name of the Prince's Norwegian opposite is rendered in the 1623 First Folio and in most modern texts – never appears in the 1604/5 Second Quarto of the drama. There Hamlet's foil is "Fortinbrasse." In the opening scene of Q2 a surname that meant "strong in arms" or "strong-armed" in French is

lengthened and inserted into the dialogue to the accompaniment of puns on *brazen*, in the phrase "brazon Cannon," and on *metal*, in the phrase "vnimprooued mettle, hot and full."

In a parallel manner, readers of the *EVERYMAN Macbeth* will wait in vain for the fabled "Weird Sisters"; instead they meet three "weyward" or "weyard" figures. Shakespeare knew that in his *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* Raphael Holinshed had used the adjective *weird* to describe the "goddesses of destinie" who accost Macbeth and Banquo on the heath; but, no doubt because he wished to quibble on *wayward*, the dramatist altered the epithet for these deceitful hags to *weyward.* Like Samuel Johnson, who thought punning vulgar and lamented the playwright's proclivity to seduction by this "fatal Cleopatra," Lewis Theobald saw no purpose in the 1623 Folio's weyward spelling of an adjective that reflects the guile of Macbeth's misleading charmers. He therefore reinstated the "correct" form from Holinshed, and editors ever since have followed suit.[10]

And speaking of Cleopatra, there are two instances in the play that bears her name where she is spoken of as *Cleopater*. In 2.2.125-26, Octavius Caesar informs his advisor Agrippa that if "Cleopater" were to overhear him proposing a marriage between Antony and Caesar's sister Octavia, she'd reprove him for "rashnesse." Later in the same scene (lines 220-24), Enobarbus recalls that when Rome's most engaging triumvir first encountered his Egyptian temptress, as she flowed down the river "Sidnis" in a barge, the spell she cast was so potent that, were it not for the law that nature abhors a vacuum, every bit of the air in Alexandria would have "gone to gaze on Cleopater too." It may well be that Shakespeare introduced the second of these variations on Cleopatra's name primarily for purposes of euphony. It is by no means unusual to find passages in which alterations of the conventional form of a word result in more pleasing sound patterns. But the context in which Caesar takes liberty with the Queen's name in the earlier passage hints sardonically at a notion expressed repeatedly in the opening scenes: that a "Gypsy" who has transformed "The triple Pillar of the world" into a "Strumpets Foole" (1.1.10-13) now rules him as if she were his domineering "pater." Most of today's editions normalize *Cleopater* to *Cleopatra*. The *EVERYMAN* text retains an anomaly that appears likely to reflect authorial design.

In many instances Renaissance English had a single spelling for what we now regard as two separate words. One example is *humane*, which embraces the definitions modern English would come to supply for both "human" and "humane." In the 1623 Folio printing of *Macbeth* the protagonist's wife expresses concern that her husband may be "too full o'th' Milke of humane kindnesse" to undertake a deed that will crown his ambition. As she phrases it, *humane kindnesse* can denote several things, among them "humankind-ness," "human kindness," and "humane kindness." The Lady's words are thus a reminder that to be true to his or her own "kind," a

human being in Shakespeare's era was expected to be kind in the sense we now limit almost entirely to "humane." To disregard this logic, as the title character and his "Partner of Greatnesse" will discover to their everlasting regret, is to ignore a principle as fundamental to the cosmos as the laws of gravity.[11]

One word in *Antony and Cleopatra* that relates to this concept of what it means to be fully human occurs in 5.1.31-32, where Dolabella responds to a report about the protagonist's death with the observation that "A Rarer spirit neuer / Did steere humanity." What Caesar's lieutenant alludes to is the same magnanimity that Cleopatra later essays to convey in her testimony (5.2.76-78) that Antony's

> face was as the Heau'ns, and therein stucke
> A Sunne and Moone, which kept their course, & lighted
> The little o'th'earth.

Most of today's editions alter this passage so that the final line refers to "the earth" as a "little O." Like many well-intended efforts to correct or improve the 1623 Folio text, our only authoritative source for *Antony and Cleopatra*, this emendation seems to me to obscure a significant aspect of what Shakespeare's speaker is attempting to communicate. It is of course true that Cleopatra is extolling traits in her lover that elicit celestial analogies. But at this point in her narrative she appears to be placing primary stress upon his humane treatment of those who served under him as soldiers and benefited from his insight, warmth, and generosity.

There were many word-forms that operated in Renaissance English as interchangeable doublets. *Trauaile [travail]* could mean "travel," therefore, and *trauell [travel]* could mean "travail." In 1.2.151-54 of *Antony and Cleopatra*, when a remorseful General expresses the wish that he'd never met the woman who now holds him in thrall, Enobarbus says "Oh sir, you had then left vnseene a wonderfull peece of worke, which not to haue beene blest withall would have discredited your Trauaile." Here, in a dialogue that features several "light Answeres" (line 178), Antony's aide plays facetiously on at least two senses of *Trauaile*: "travel" and "hard labor." Unlike most of today's editions, *EVERYMAN* retains the word-form to be found in the Folio text.

Another intriguing example of the equivocal force some phonemes carried in Shakespeare's day is *loose*, which oscillates between "loose" and "lose" when we adapt it to modern English. In *The Comedy of Errors* when Antipholus of Syracuse likens himself to "a drop of water, / That in the Ocean seekes another drop" and then says that he will "loose" himself in his quest for a long-lost twin, his words tell us both that he will release himself into a vast unknown and that he will lose his own identity, if necessary, to be reunited with the sibling he seeks. On the other hand, in

Hamlet when Polonius says he'll "loose" his daughter to the Prince, he little suspects that by so doing he will also lose his daughter through a gesture that recalls the folly of Jephtha.

In 3.4.21-22 of *Antony and Cleopatra* the male protagonist complains about the disrespect with which he is being publicly disparaged in Rome by his new brother-in-law. He then explains to Caesar's sister, to whom the triumvir is now married, that

> if I loose mine Honour,
> I loose my selfe: better I were not yours,
> Then your so branchlesse.

What Antony is asserting here is that if he lets go of what defines him by overlooking assaults on his integrity, he'll be divesting himself of qualities that are integral to his identity as a man of arms.

In some cases the playwright employs word-forms that can be construed multifariously, and frequently as words we wouldn't think of at present as being in any respect akin. *Sowre*, for instance, can mean "sore," "sour," "sorrowful," "sower," or "sure," depending on how it is employed.[15] In other cases he uses word-forms that have modern counterparts, but not ones with the same potential for multiple denotation or connotation. Thus, although *onely* invariably means "only" in the usual 21st-century sense, Shakespeare occasionally gives it an extra, figurative twist that would require a deconstructive nonce adverb such as "one-ly" – often hinting at a virility which is assertively "man-like" – to paraphrase in today's idiom.[16]

In 3.13.3-4 of *Antony and Cleopatra*, after the protagonist's adherence to his tawny Queen has led him to ignominious defeat, Cleopatra asks Enobarbus "Is Antony or we in fault for this?" The General's chief confidant replies, "Anthony onely, that would make his will / Lord of his Reason" (3.13.3-4). Here as elsewhere, the Folio spelling offers a telling reminder of the genital male "will" that frequently stands up in defiance of "Reason." It thus epitomizes the kind of pride and passion that can cloud a hero's judgment and make him vulnerable to self-destructive behavior.

In a few instances Shakespeare employs word-forms that have only seeming equivalents in present usage. For example, *abhominable*, which meant "inhuman," "non-human," or "sub-human" to the poet and his contemporaries (who traced it, however incorrectly, to the Latin *ab*, "away from," and *homine*, "man"), is not the same word as our *abominable* (ill-omened, abhorrent). In his advice to the visiting players in the Second Quarto *Hamlet*, the Prince satirizes incompetent actors who imitate "humanitie so abhominably" as to make the characters they depict implausible as real-life men and women. Modern readers who are unfamiliar with the disparity between Shakespeare's word and our own, and who see *abominably* on the page before them, are ill equipped to register the full import of the Prince's sarcasm. They suffer a similar

debility in *Antony and Cleopatra* when they come across some remarks by Mecenas in 3.7.91-96. Caesar's lieutenant tells Octavia

> Welcome deere Madam,
> Each heart in Rome does loue and pitty you;
> Onely th' adulterous Anthony, most large
> In his abhominations, turns you off,
> And giues his potent Regiment to a Trull
> That noyses it against vs.

Current English treats as single words a number of expressions that were usually represented as two separate words in Shakespeare's era. What we write as *myself*, for example, and use solely as a reflexive or intensifying pronoun, is almost always *my self[e]* in Shakespeare's works; so also with *her self*, *thy self*, *your self*, and *it self* (where, as usual, *it* does duty as a forerunner of today's *its*). Often there is no decipherable difference between Shakespeare's usage and our own. At other times there is, however, as we realize when we come upon "our innocent selfe" in *Macbeth* and ponder how affected such an expression would sound in modern parlance, or as we note when we see how naturally "selfe" is objectified, and associated with "name" and "thee," in the balanced clauses of the Balcony Scene in *Romeo and Juliet.* There the heroine says

> Romeo, doffe thy name,
> And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
> Take all my selfe.

The same effect is achieved in the passage we examined a few moments ago, where Antony tells Octavia that "if I loose mine Honour, / I loose my selfe." Here *Honour* and *selfe* are treated as interchangeable: to surrender or be deprived of one is to be bereft of the other.

Yet another distinction between Renaissance orthography and our own can be exemplified with words such as *today*, *tonight*, and *tomorrow*, which – unlike *yesterday* – were conceived as two-word phrases in Shakespeare's time. In *Macbeth* when the Folio prints "Duncan comes here to Night," the unattached *to* can function either as a preposition (with *Night* as its object, and at this juncture as the King's destination) or as the first part of an infinitive (with *Night* masquerading tropically as a verb). These interpretive possibilities resonate tellingly with the question Lenox asks the title character shortly after the monarch's assassination: "Goes the King hence to day?" And they anticipate the irony a 17th-century playgoer or reader might have detected in one of the most penetrating of all the protagonist's meditations:

> To morrow, and to morrow, and to morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last Syllable of Recorded time:
> And all our yesterdayes, have lighted Fooles
> The way to dusty death.

Here, by virtue of the playwright's deft use of parallelism, the route "To morrow" is shown to be identical with "The way to dusty death," a relationship we miss if we don't know that for Macbeth, and for the audiences who first heard these lines spoken, *to morrow* was not a discrete word but a potentially multivalent word-pairing.[17]

When we forget that the verbal nuances in Shakespeare's scripts were initially conceived as words and phrases for people to listen to in the theater, we sometimes overlook a fact that is central to the artistic coherence of a work like *Macbeth*: that the messages a sequence of sounds transmit through the ear are, if anything, even more significant than the signals a succession of letters, punctuation marks, and white spaces convey through the eye. A fascinating illustration of this truth, and of the potential for ambiguous or polysemous implication in practically any Shakespearean passage, may be discerned in the dethronement scene of *Richard II*. After Henry Bullingbrooke asks the King if he is ready to resign his crown, Richard replies "I, no no I; for I must nothing be." Here the pointing in the 1608 Fourth Quarto, the earliest publication to incorporate this multifaceted line into what modern editions designate as Act IV, Scene i, permits each *I* to indicate either "ay" or "I" (*I* being the normal spelling for "ay" in Shakespeare's day). Understanding *I* as "I" permits corollary wordplay on *no*, which can be heard, at least in its first occurrence, as "know." At the same time the second and third soundings of *I*, if not the first, can also be heard as "eye." In the situation where this speech occurs, that construction echoes a thematically pertinent exhortation from Matthew 18:9 – "if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out."

But these are not all the meanings *I* can have here. It can also represent the Roman numeral for "1," which will soon be diminished, as Richard explains, to "nothing" (0), along with the speaker's title, his worldly possessions, his manhood, and eventually his life. Shakespeare was ever mindful that to become "nothing" was, *inter alia*, to be emasculated, to be reduced to an effeminate "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) with "no thing" or at best "an O-thing." As the Fool in *King Lear* warns another monarch who has abdicated his appointed station, a man in want of an "I" is impotent and sterile, "an O without a figure."[18] In addition to its other dimensions, then, Richard's response is a statement that can be formulated mathematically, and in symbols that adumbrate the binary system behind today's computer technology: "1, 0, 0, 1, for 1 must 0 be."

Modern editions usually print Richard's reply "Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be." Displaying it in this fashion makes good sense of what the title character is saying. As we've seen, however, it doesn't make complete sense of it, and it doesn't call attention to the King's paradoxes in the same way that hearing or viewing three undiscriminated *I* sounds is likely to have done for judicious observers in Shakespeare's own age.

English Renaissance society was more attuned than is ours to the oral and aural manifestations of language, and if we want to comprehend, and reify, the drama a verbally sophisticated culture created we must train ourselves to "hear" the word-forms we see on the pages that supply our most reliable evidence of what Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was like. We must condition our imaginations to acknowledge that for many of what we regard as stable ties between morphemes and meanings – between the letter *I*, say, and the first-person pronoun – there were different linkages (such as the connection between a long-*i* sound and the concepts "ay" and "eye") that could be just as pertinent to what the playwright was communicating at a given moment.[19]

As the word *audience* may help us to remember, people who frequented the Globe usually spoke of "hearing" rather than "seeing" a play. If we're serious about reanimating the works we know to have been composed for that magic circle, we will learn to do likewise. We'll reacquire the capacity to listen with our eyes. We'll do everything we can to renew a skill that atrophied within a few decades of the playwright's exit: the ability to sight-read a Shakespearean score.

Let us now sample a few sites in *Antony and Cleopatra* to determine how some of the principles that have been enumerated in the foregoing comments might be applied to the artistry in a play that has an intimate relationship to this symposium's historic setting.

As Antony prepares to leave Alexandria for Rome in 1.3.102-4, he tells Cleopatra that

> Our separation so abides and flies,
> That thou reciding here, goes yet with mee,
> And I hence fleeting, heere remaine with thee.

In this passage *reciding* is rendered in the Folio with a *c* rather than an *s*. What the playwright appears to have in mind is a word that can mean both *residing* in the usual modern sense ("dwelling" or "abiding," derived from the Latin *sedere*, "to sit") and *remaining* (here in a way that hints at *receding*, "falling back," as in the related word *recidivism*, which derives from the Latin *cadere*). If so, in a way that anticipates the paradoxes that John Donne would later exploit in his conceit about "stiff twin compasses" in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* (written, evidently, in 1612, and published in 1633), Shakespeare draws upon a word-form that serves both to reinforce the antithesis Antony is employing and to echo Enobarbus' witticisms about Cleopatra's proclivity to feigned collapses, not to mention her erotic "celerity in dying" (1.2.141).[20]

Two scenes later, before Antony arrives at an urgent meeting with his fellow triumvirs, Shakespeare provides a exchange in which we hear Octavius Caesar and Lepidus assess the toll a lapsed colleague's "Voluptuousnesse" has taken on his character. Caesar recalls the days when, "though daintily brought vp," Antony was renowned for extraordinary discipline: "Thy pallat then did daine / The roughest Berry, on the rudest Hedge" (1.4.60, 63-64). Here *daine* is rendered in the Folio with a spelling that directs our attention to an echo of *daintily*. But in most of today's editions it is altered to *deign* and defined as a word that means "not disdain." In an effort to preserve the Folio's eye-rhyme, its visual link between *daine* and *daintily*, and underscore the semantic connection between *daine* and *disdain*, the *EVERYMAN* text retains the spelling to be found in the original printing.

In the opening scene of what modern editions designate as Act II, Shakespeare introduces us to the inner counsels of Pompey, a rival whose challenge to the Triumvirate has summoned Antony to Rome for a parley with his partners. Recognizing that participation by the play's title character could doom his prospects for military victory, Pompey expresses hope that Alexandria will continue to distract the warrior he most fears. To that end (in 2.1.20-24) he prays:

> But all the charmes of Loue,
> Salt Cleopatra soften thy wand lip,
> Let Witchcraft ioyne with Beauty, Lust with both,
> Tye vp the Libertine in a field of Feasts,
> Keepe his Braine fuming.

In this passage most of today's editors assume that the Folio's *wand* is to be construed as "wan'd," a word that occurs a short time later (line 41) when Menecrates says "His Brother wan'd vpon him." But at this point Pompey is skeptical that Antony can be extracted from the clutches of his Egyptian paramour, so there is little basis for the assumption that he regards the lustful Queen's lip as waned. What seems more likely, then, is that *wand* functions here as a variant for *wan*, one of whose meanings was "dark-hued." Since *wan* was itself a variant for *wen*, which could mean "bruised" (a sense that is compatible with an earlier passage, 1.5.25, where Cleopatra refers to herself as "with Phoebus amorous pinches blacke"), it would seem best to retain the Folio spelling as it stands.

A few moments later (in 2.1.36-38), once it becomes clear that Antony has in fact returned to Rome, Pompey congratulates himself

> that our stirring
> Can from the lap of Egypts Widdow, plucke
> The neere Lust-wearied Anthony.

In this passage the problem interpreters face is how to construe *neere*. Most assume that it means "ne'er," a contraction for "never." But the word-form in the Folio text can be read with equal plausibility as "near." And it may well be that the playwright deliberately chose a phoneme that could yield either or both meanings. For these reasons, the *EVERYMAN* text adheres to the Folio spelling and permits a given reader to select the option that seems preferable to him or her.

One of the most famous narratives in all of Shakespeare is Enobarbus'account of Antony's first encounter with Cleopatra. As she approached the Alexandrian "Market-place" where the Roman General "did sit alone, / Whisling to th' ayre" (2.2.221-22), we're told that

> The Barge she sat in, like a burnisht Throne
> Burnt on the water: the Poope was beaten Gold,
> Purple the Sailes: and so perfumed that
> The Windes were Loue-sicke.
> With them the Owers were Siluer,
> Which to the tune of Flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beate, to follow faster;
> As amorous of their strokes. For her owne person,
> It beggerd all discription, she did lye
> In her Pauilion, cloth of Gold, of Tissue,
> O're-picturing that Venus, where we see
> The fancie out-work Nature. On each side her,
> Stood pretty Dimpled Boyes, like smiling Cupids,
> With diuers coulour'd Fannes whose winde did seeme,
> To gloue the delicate cheekes which they did coole,
> And what they vndid did. (2.2.197-211)

In this passage the most problematic word occurs in the penultimate line. In the 1623 First Folio it is spelled *gloue*; in the 1632 Second Folio, *u* (which had been the normal way of rendering a medial "v" in the late 16th and early 17th centuries) is changed to *v*. In the early 18th century, Nicholas Rowe, who published multi-volume editions of Shakespeare's works in 1709 and 1719, chose to substitute *glow* for what the last three Folio editions (1632, 1664, 1685) had rendered as *glove*, and virtually every subsequent editor has done likewise.

It might be argued, in Rowe's defense, that the *u* character in the First Folio text could be read as a medial "u" rather than a medial "v"; if so, it would yield a pronunciation that is indistinguishable from *glow*, and it could be considered a variant spelling for that word. But

suppose we assume for the moment that *glove* is the word a typical reader of the 1623 First Folio would have derived from this passage. Is there any reason to think it likely that he or she might have suspected a scribal or compositorial misreading of what the dramatist supplied in the playscript that was the ultimate authority for this line? I doubt it, because what Enobarbus appears to be describing here is an enfolding and caressing action by the fans and their winds that would have the very effect he specifies. The "Dimpled Boyes" would have provided moist warmth at the same time that they sought to cool and dry the Queen's cheeks. In short, it could be asserted that what they "did" they simultaneously "undid."

This passage echoes, but offers an elegant variation on, the play's opening speech. There we hear Philo draw a contrast between Antony's "goodly Eyes," which once "glow'd like plated Mars," and a doting "Captaines heart" that "is become the Bellowes and the Fan / To coole a Gypsies lust" (1.1.1-10). Here too we take pleasure in the kind of antithesis that is one of the hallmarks of Shakespeare's artistry. But what makes the two passages function so memorably as thematic counterparts is the way they address one another without resort to simple repetition.

Let's now proceed to another illustration of Cleopatra's uniqueness. In 2.2.234-38 Enobarbus says

> I saw her once
> Hop forty Paces through the publicke streete;
> And hauing lost her Breath, she spoke, and panted,
> That she did make defect perfection
> And breathlesse powre breath forth.

In most of today's editions the final line of this speech is rendered "And, breathless, power breathe forth." In view of the fact that *breath* occurs as often as *breathe* in positions that call for a verb, this reading is entirely defensible. But since *powre* and its derivatives can be translated into modern English as "pour" in some contexts and as "power" in roughly the same number of other contexts, an equally persuasive case can be made for "And, breathless, pour breath forth." In the *EVERYMAN* text of the play, therefore, this line is left in the same indeterminate condition as in the 1623 First Folio.

Like dozens of Shakespeare's other descriptions of Antony's Egyptian Queen, this ambiguous sentence embodies the paradox, and suggests something of the mystery, of Cleopatra's enduring appeal. Enobarbus goes on to marvel at her ineffable qualities in the famous lines (2.2.240-43) that have been so aptly drawn upon for the title of today's symposium:

> Age cannot wither her, not custome stale
> Her infinite variety: other women cloy

The appetites they feede, but she makes hungry,
Where most she satisfies. For vildest things
Become themselues in her, that the holy Priests
Blesse her, when she is Riggish.

This would be a perfect note on which to conclude. But since no one in Shakespeare's cosmos is perfect, I hope you'll permit me to discuss one last passage as a brief epilogue. In 5.2.63-109, an emissary from Octavius Caesar visits Cleopatra with a mandate to do everything in his power to prevent her from commiting suicide and thereby frustrate a new Emperor's desire to parade her in Rome as the most glamorous trophy in his "Triumph." What Caesar doesn't count upon, however, are the charms of a woman who has lost none of her capacity to seduce. And sure enough, as Dolabella falls under the sway of Cleopatra's poetic apotheosis for the "Soueraigne Creature" she now aspires to join in a transcendent afterlife, he can't help being moved to admire, sympathize with, and assist her. "Heare me, good Madam," he says,

Your losse is as your selfe, great; and you beare it
As answering to the waight, would I might neuer
Ore-take pursu'de successe: But I do feele
By the rebound of yours, a greefe that suites
My very heart at roote.

Subsequent developments will make it clear that what Dolabella implies in this statement is a disposition to subvert his ruler's wishes by giving Cleopatra the confirmation she seeks – namely, that, notwithstanding any promises to the contrary that he and his subordinates proffer, Caesar's definition of "successe," his notion of a mission properly accomplished, is a victory march that will allow him to display the Egyptian Queen in a humiliating ceremony that will demonstrate to all the world that he is now the "vniuersall Landlord" (3.13.70).

As he speaks these lines, Dolabella probably intends for *greefe* to be understood primarily as a synonym for "sorrow." But it's hard to avoid feeling that he also hints at another sense of the word, "grievance," here with the implication that Cleopatra would be correct to regard the calculating deceitfulness of her Roman conqueror as gratuitously cruel, and right to assume that so cold-hearted a ruler intends to bestow no grace either on her or on her loved ones.

In most of today's editions, the word *suites* is changed to *smites*, an emendation that was proposed in the late 18th century by Edward Capell. This substitution is in keeping with the impact that Cleopatra's words have on Dolabella. But it impresses me as yet another editorial ministration that has been applied to a non-problem. What's more, it appears insensitive to a

context that calls for precisely the kind of resonant verb that we find in the 1623 Folio text. Here *suites* means "agrees with" or "strikes a responsive chord in," and it's exquisitely in keeping with *rebound*, a noun that is synonymous with "reverberation" and one that conveys an emotional, intellectual, and ethical harmony which is subtly supported by the near-rhyme of *suites* and *roote*.

Suites can also mean "clothes," of course, and here it implies that Cleopatra's unstated suit (her tacit plea) to Dolabella has been granted before it is made explicit. As a consequence, she now knows that he will do what he can to render it feasible for her to do what suits (befits) a suitor of her majesty. So closely are Dolabella and Cleopatra aligned that it doesn't prove necessary for him to betray his master with any overt action. Because he and Egypt's Queen are now soul-mates, their pulses in full synchronicity, they can communicate by indirection, with words to be deployed only to ratify an understanding they've both arrived at without stating it.

Thanks to the compassion Dolabella displays, Cleopatra and her attendants achieve a triumph of their own. They evade a Roman staging of "Alexandrian Reuels" (5.2.216) that would have demeaned the Queen's "greatnesse" (5.2.218), and her soon-to-be-eternal relationship with Antony, and reduced them to a comic farce. In a death-scene she associates with the "high Roman fashion" (4.15.86), but one she carries out in a style that Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have regarded as quintessentially Egyptian, Cleopatra demonstrates that, from at least one perspective, " 'Tis paltry to be Cesar: / Not being Fortune, hee's but Fortune's Knaue" (5.2.2-3).

This may not be the drama's only vantage on what Alexander Pope was to call "the grandeur that was Rome." But it is a powerful one, and it has endured.

Fittingly, it culminates in a brilliantly ironic denouement when the Emperor and his train arrive to witness the pageantry of an immortal character's final assertion of her matchless charisma. Even the icy-veined Augustus, a monarch who now stands "Peerelesse" (1.1.40) as "Lord of the whole world" (2.7.66), but a man who has just been outwitted and outflanked in ways that will always exceed his ability to comprehend, is moved to applaud the "High Order, in this great Solemnity" (5.2.365).

NOTES

1. *THE EVERYMAN SHAKESPEARE* (1993-98) was published by J. M. Dent – originator of The Everyman Library, and now a subsidiary of the Orion Group in London – and co-published by the Charles E. Tuttle Company of Boston. The first five sections of this address, and the notes that accompany them, are adapted from "Site-Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Scores," an article that appeared in *Shakespearean Illuminations: Essays in Honor of Marvin Rosenberg*, edited by Jay L. Halio and Hugh Richmond (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 183-202.

2. Here I refer primarily to the octavos and quartos that appeared between 1593 and 1622, and to the 1623 memorial collection we now label the First Folio. I recognize that the reading experience the quartos provided was far less formal than the one that would have been afforded by a more elaborate, "literary," and expensive folio.

3. This term is normally applied to those attributes of a text that are regarded as semantically insignificant – that is, qualities with respect to which inessential variations will have no bearing on the sense of a given passage. In his chapter on "The Treatment of Accidentals" in *Principles of Textual Criticism* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1972), James Thorpe discusses spelling, capitalization, italicization, and punctuation, "as opposed to the 'substantives' or verbal readings that directly communicate the essence of the author's meaning" (p. 133). As Thorpe and others are quick to point out, however, many of the items that go into "the formal presentation of a text" are anything but immaterial in their import, because something so seemingly trifling as "the lowly comma is capable of moving mountains of meaning" (p. 131). For one of the most thorough considerations of this much-debated topic, see the essays in *Play-Texts in Old Spelling*, edited by G. B. Shand with Raymond C. Shady (New York: AMS Press, 1984).

4. For Shakespeare, of course, we are limited to half a dozen signatures and a three-page section that is widely, but by no means universally, regarded as his in a single dramatic manuscript. See the analysis of "Hand D" by Scott McMillin in *The Elizabethan Theatre and "The Book of Sir Thomas More"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

5. There is a broad consensus among Shakespeare scholars that the dramatist was meticulous about, and must have taken part in the proof-correcting of, the two narrative poems he issued with florid dedications in 1593 (*Venus and Adonis*) and 1594 (*Lucrece*). There is an equally broad consensus that Shakespeare had little or no interest, and probably no active role, in the publication of even such scrupulously produced dramatic texts as the 1600 first quartos of *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I find it difficult to believe that a poet who spoke so poignantly about the immortality his sonnets would confer had no desire to see that his dramatic scripts were conveyed to

posterity in accurately printed editions. For this reason I suspect that he did take some care for the morrow when opportunity presented itself – to supplant a deficient 1603 quarto of *Hamlet*, for example, with "a true and perfect Coppie" in 1604 – and that after he retired from the theater, had he but "liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings," he would have followed Ben Jonson's precedent and supervised a folio edition of his works.

6. For a valuable discussion of this topic, see Margreta de Grazia's "Homonyms before and after Lexical Standardization" in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch 1990* (Bochum), pp. 143-56. For a broader overview of the 18th-century approach to 16th- and 17th-century English dramatic texts, see de Grazia's *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the Apparatus of 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

7. Like every other post-Folio redaction of Shakespeare's works, the *EVERYMAN* set is based upon a sequence of compromises. By comparison with the kind of text that Stanley Wells advocates in *Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), it looks like an old-spelling edition. By comparison with the 16th- and 17th-century printings upon which it is founded, it looks like a modern-spelling edition. It is perhaps best described as a hybrid, an exercise in partial modernization that retains more features of the original printings than does the *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), but shares with that superb compilation an effort "to preserve a selection of Elizabethan spelling forms that reflect, or may reflect, a distinctive contemporary pronunciation, both those that are invariant in the early printed texts and those that appear beside the spellings familiar today and so suggest possible variant pronunciations of single words." As *Riverside* editor G. Blakemore Evans notes, "Although the forms preserved may in many cases represent scribal or compositorial choices rather than Shakespeare's own preferences, such an approach nevertheless suggests the kind of linguistic climate in which he wrote and avoids the unhistorical and sometimes insensitive levelling that full-scale modernization (never consistent itself) imposes" (p. 39). Ultimately, of course, it is impossible for even the most meticulous editors to recognize every instance in which they are guilty of "insensitive levelling," because *any* textual intervention, no matter how minor, is bound to be distorting.

8. The playwright's principal source was *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) by Arthur Brooke. We can never be positive that it was Shakespeare, rather than a scribe or compositor, who supplied the *Mountague* spelling, but the odds in favor of the playwright would seem to be enhanced by the fact that this is the form the surname takes in all of the early printings, from the 1597 First Quarto through the 1623 First Folio. For anyone who doubts that an alteration of Romeus' family name was part of a conscious plan, it may be worth pointing out that "Capulet" – spelled "Capelet" and "Capilet" in Brooke – like "Capilet" in *Twelfth Night* (where it applies to Sir Andrew Ague-

cheek's mare) and *All's Well That Ends Well* (where it identifies the Diana whom Bertram believes himself to have ridden) means "small horse."

9. See *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.5.28-45. All act, scene, and line citations refer to the EVERYMAN edition. Each passage is quoted, however, as it appears in the quarto or Folio printing that lies behind a given text.

10. The word *weird* is to be found nowhere in Shakespeare's works. There is one *wayward* in *Macbeth*, at 3.5.11 in a Hecat speech that many scholars assign to a playwright other than the author of the rest of the tragedy; further uses of the word or its derivatives appear in thirteen other Shakespearean titles. Only in *Macbeth* do the forms *wayward* and *weyard* occur. We would be required to hypothesize a most unusual scribe or compositor if we were to conclude that one of them, rather than the playwright, was responsible for such a bizarre deviation from Holinshed's *weird*.

11. For another instance of *humane* that is thematically resonant, see *The Tempest*, 5.1.17-20, where Ariel tells Prospero "your charm so strongly works 'em / That if you now beheld them, your affections / Would become tender." Prospero asks "Dost thinke so, Spirit?" And Ariel replies "Mine would, Sir, were I humane." Compare 1.2.265, 284, 345, and 3.3.33 in the same play.

12. Many of the Porter's jests in *Macbeth*, 2.3.24-48, pun upon distinctions that we now allocate to the spellings *lie* and *lye*. Compare the Clown's wordplay in *Othello*, 3.4.1-17.

13. In *Coriolanus*, 1.3.55-57, Valeria asks Volumnia and Virgilia "How do you both? You are manifest house-keepers. What are you sowing heere? A fine spotte, in good faith. How does your little Sonne?" Here the dialogue suggests that either the mother or the wife of the title character is sewing, and probably that both are doing so. But the phrasing of Valeria's question, and the remarks about Martius' child that ensue, would also have reminded Renaissance audiences of Biblical commonplaces about sowing and reaping: see Job 4:8, Proverbs 6:16, Jeremiah 12:13, Hosea 8:7 and 10:12, and Galatians 6:7. Compare *Othello*, 2.4.72, and see *Hamlet*, 2.1.73-80, where Ophelia's reference to "sowing" [sewing] introduces a narrative about some unhappy consequences of the figurative planting her father has done in 1.3.

14. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 2.3.37-45, the Folio word *tide* provides the occasion for several exchanges about a "tied" dog who threatens to make Launce lose the "tide."

15. See *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.177 (where Cassius refers to Casca's "sowre fashion," his sour and sore-headed disposition), *Macbeth*, 2.1.55 (where the protagonist addresses a "sowre and firme-set Earth"), and *Othello*, 4.3.95 (where Aemilia speaks of "Palats both for sweet, and sowre"). Compare *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1.1.318 ("therefore welcome the sower Cup of prosperie"), *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.4.24 ("so sower a face") and 3.2.116 ("if sower woe delights in fellowship"), and *The Tempest*, 4.1.20 ("Sower-ey'd disdaine").

16. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.4.74-76, the bawdy Margaret tells Beatrice "Get you some of this distill'd *carduus benedictus*, and lay it to your heart, it is the onely thing for a qualme." Earlier (in 3.1.92, during the comedy's second eavesdropping scene) Hero has referred to Benedick as "the onely man of Italy." Compare *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.153-54, where Cassius says "Now is it Rome indeed, and Roome enough / When there is in it but one onely man." This passage prepares us for the irony of 3.1.59-74, where a Caesar who prides himself upon his stoic firmness says that "Men are Flesh and Blood, and apprehensive; / Yet in the number, I do know but One / That unassayleable holds on his Ranke." In *Macbeth*, 1.7.72-74, after the hero's Lady has persuaded him to "screw" his "courage to the sticking place," he tells her "Bring forth Men-Children onely: / For thy undaunted Mettle should compose / Nothing but Males."

17. As one might expect, there is touching, and usually unintended, ambiguity in the various references to *night* during the Balcony Scene of *Romeo and Juliet.* See 2.1.127-29, where Juliet tells the youth who has just overheard her nocturnal soliloquy "Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face, / Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheeke, / For that which thou has heard me speak to night." Later in the same scene (line 159) the heroine admits "I haue no ioy of this contract to night"; soon we hear her utter "sweet goodnight," however (line 162), and those words reverberate shortly thereafter in Romeo's "O blessed blessed night" (line 181). Eventually (line 195), in a promise that might be construed as an unconscious attempt to protect herself against, or atone for, all that she and Romeo have pledged "to night," Juliet says "To morrow will I send."

18. See the notes to 1.4.195-207 in the *EVERYMAN King Lear.*

19. In *Othello*, 4.2.60-62, the Folio reads "Turne thy complexion there: / Patience, thou young and Rose-lip'd Cherubin, / I heere look grim as hell." The final line is usually rendered "Ay, here look grim as hell" in modern editions. A similar crux occurs in *The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.290-91, where the 1600 First Quarto reads "I would loose all, I sacrifize them all / heere to this deuill, to deliuer you." Most of today's editions render the first line "I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all, / Here. . . ." Compare *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.237, where the 1600 First Quarto prints "I doe. Perseuer," the Folio prints "I, doe, perseuer," and most modern editions print "Ay, do, persever." For a few of the scores of additional *I/Ay* ambiguities in Shakespeare, see *Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.13.172-73, *Hamlet*, 3.2.79-80, and *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.122-23.

20. Compare 1.3.240 in *Othello*, where Desdemona says that her father's house is not a dwelling in which she would willingly "recide" – both "return to" and "reside in"– now that she has married the Moor.