

CARDENIO AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SHAKESPEARE CANON

In 1728, in the preface to the second printing of *Double Falsehood*, Lewis Theobald for the first time published his intention to produce a complete edition of Shakespeare. ‘I ... think it not amiss here’, he announced, ‘to promise that ... if I live, the public shall receive from my hand [Shakespeare’s] *whole Works* corrected, with my best Care and Ability’.¹ When this edition finally appeared, however, one of its more noticeable omissions was *Double Falsehood* itself. Other plays that Theobald believed that Shakespeare had written, at least in part, were also excluded. There was no space for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, despite it being a ‘favourite play’ of Theobald’s, and one that he repeatedly stated had been co-authored by Shakespeare. Neither did Theobald’s edition include *Pericles* and the ‘apocryphal’ plays that appeared in the 1664 second issue of the Third Folio, works that Theobald likewise considered part of a wider Shakespeare canon.² Indeed, despite Theobald’s promise to set forth the ‘whole’ works of Shakespeare, and despite his belief that these extended well beyond the traditional 36-play canon, the 1733 *Works* was identical, in terms of *extent*, to the 1623 First Folio.

Why did Theobald never produce the expanded Shakespeare that the object of his 1728 declaration, ‘[Shakespeare’s] *whole Works* corrected’, hinted at? What, in particular, accounts for the absence from the 1733 *Works* of *Double Falsehood* or its ur-text, the now-lost *Cardenio*? Why, in other words, did the canon that Theobald edited in 1733 differ so markedly from his own private sense of what Shakespeare had written? This tendency towards editorial discretion on Theobald’s part was apparent even in his 1728 edition of *Double Falsehood*. Rather than confidently advancing a case for Shakespeare’s involvement in the play, Theobald’s ‘Dedication’ and ‘Preface of the Editor’ were instead cautious and defensive. He outlines the provenance of the various manuscripts whose texts he derived the play from, and enlists The King, in the form of the play’s royal license, reproduced in full; Sir George Dodington, the work’s dedicatee; and the unnamed ‘Great Judges’ to vouch

¹ Lewis Theobald, *Double Falsehood or the Distressed Lovers*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Brean Hammond, ed., (London: Methuen, 2010), 170n.

² See *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Lewis Theobald, 7 vols. (London: J. Tonson, 1733), I, vii and VI, 100n.

for his trustworthiness. In accordance with contemporary ‘epistemological decorum’, in other words, Theobald couched his argument in terms of external authority—manuscript, cultural, aristocratic—rather than relying on his own, subjective sense of Shakespeare’s stylistic presence in the text.³

When he did eventually turn to the question of authorship, Theobald similarly avoided making any sustained argument on his own part for the play’s Shakespearean origins. In the revised version of the editor’s preface, appended to the second issue of the play, he mentions a ‘Dissertation’ he once wanted to write, which would have included a detailed argument outlining a case for Shakespeare’s authorship of the original manuscript. This piece, which Theobald says would have been based on internal evidence—the ‘remarkable Peculiarities in the *Language*, and the Nature of the *Thoughts*’ in the play—he now declares reserved ‘for a better Occasion’ than the play’s Preface (Hammond, ed., 170n). Other than a letter in *Mist’s Weekly Journal* defending lines attacked by Pope in *Peri Bathos*, however, Theobald never published anything like this ‘dissertation’.⁴ Theobald took a similarly oblique approach to demonstrating Shakespeare’s authorship of the apocryphal plays added to the Third Folio. Of these seven plays, he wrote in the Preface to the 1733 *Works*, ‘I can, beyond all Controversy, prove some Touches in every one of them to have come from [Shakespeare’s] Pen’ (I, vii). Again, Theobald ultimately never produced such proof. It would be nearly fifty years before other scholars—Edmond Malone and George Steevens, in the 1780 *Supplement* to the 1778 Johnson-Steevens *Shakespeare*—would return to the question of the authorship of these plays.

Despite Theobald’s efforts, eighteenth-century readers of *Double Falsehood* were not necessarily convinced of the play’s literary worth. Pope and his allies were soon insinuating that Theobald had forged—or, at least, deliberately misattributed—the play and, as Ivan Lupić describes in his contribution to this collection, the late-eighteenth-century Shakespearean editor Edmond Malone likewise believed that Theobald had interpolated an existing manuscript with his own Shakespearean

³ On the use of genteel observers in establishing trustworthiness in early modern discourse, see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 226–27.

⁴ For a discussion, see John Freehafer, ‘*Cardenio*, by Shakespeare and Fletcher’, *PMLA*, 84 (1969), 501–13 (p. 511), and Brean Hammond, ‘The Performance History of a Pseudo-Shakespearean Play: Theobald’s *Double Falshood*’, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7 (1984), 49–60 (p. 53).

pastiche, though he never stated his accusations publicly.⁵ Evidence from the Reading Experience Database, meanwhile, indicates that at least one contemporary reader was disappointed with *Double Falsehood* as a Shakespearean play. In 1728, Gertrude Savile recorded in her diary that she had stayed up one night reading “‘Double Falshood” a play of Shakespear’s never acted till this winter. I think it a poor one for his’, she concluded.⁶

More recently, Harriet C. Frazier and Jeffrey Kahan have resuscitated the earlier Popean accusations that Theobald forged the play, reading in the ambiguities and silences that surround Theobald’s writings and actions concerning *Double Falsehood* signs of duplicity and guilt. Frazier finds it ‘most important’ in assessing Theobald’s honesty that ultimately ‘he did not see fit to include the original manuscript of the play he earlier claimed to have adapted’ in the 1733 *Works of Shakespeare*.⁷ Kahan, meanwhile, focuses on the lack of material corroboration for the survival of a *Cardenio* manuscript into the Restoration period and beyond as evidence that the play as a whole was a forgery. Surely, he writes, such a notable manuscript would have left some material traces of its existence—‘some newspaper article or theatre documents concerning its discovery’—or at least a contemporary notice advertising its sale.⁸ Despite the forcefulness with which Frazier and Kahan make their accusations against Theobald, however, the grounds on which they base their arguments are thoroughly anachronistic. Moreover, both make basic factual and bibliographical errors that undermine the strength of their claims.⁹ Frazier ignores the fact that Theobald was simply an *editor* of Shakespeare, not the holder of Shakespeare’s copyright, and may not have had ultimate control over which works were included in the 1733 edition. Kahan’s objection, on the other hand—the lack of

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the eighteenth-century controversy over the play’s provenance, see Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, 66–70; 307–19.

⁶ Gertrude Savile, *Secret Comment: The Diaries of Gertrude Savile, 1721-1757*, Thoroton Society Record Series XLI, Alan Saville, ed. (Kingsbridge: Kingsbridge History Society, 1997), p. 94, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/recorddetails2.php?id=458>, accessed 21 July 2010.

⁷ Harriet C. Frazier, *A Babble of Ancestral Voices: Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Theobald* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 87.

⁸ *Shakespeare Imitations, Parodies and Forgeries: 1710–1820*, Jeffrey Kahan, ed., 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004), I, 160.

⁹ Hammond provides a quietly devastating list of Kahan’s inaccuracies in the Introduction to his Arden edition, pp. 89–90. Frazier and Kahan also confuse the Shakespearean editor William Warburton with Sir John Warburton, Somerset Herald, whose collection of manuscript plays may or may not have been destroyed by his cook, and which may have contained a manuscript of *Cardenio*.

newspaper reporting at the time of the *Cardenio* manuscript's re-emergence and possible revision for the stage during the Restoration—is hardly surprising. Regular press advertisements for London plays only started to appear after 1705, before which date performance records are at least 90% incomplete.¹⁰ Moreover, there is little sign that the kind of theatre documents that Theobald actually claimed to possess—Restoration scribal transcripts of working theatre documents—would have been viewed as intrinsically valuable or noteworthy in the early eighteenth century. Kahan is expecting to find in the earlier period an essentially Romantic attitude to literary manuscripts, one that would not, in fact, arise for many decades.¹¹

There were, in fact, compelling historical reasons for Theobald's eventual silence on the matter of *Double Falsehood*'s Shakespearean provenance. The climate into which the play emerged in 1727–28 was an especially inhospitable one for a 'new' Shakespearean play. Two years earlier, Alexander Pope's 6-volume collected Shakespeare had introduced an interventionist, Erasmian style of editing to Shakespeare. In the Preface to that work, Pope placed connoisseurship, taste, and the exclusion of non-canonical works at the centre of the Shakespearean editorial project. As the dispute between Pope and Theobald over the authenticity of *Double Falsehood* indicates, authorial attribution in the eighteenth century could be a highly complex and contested practice, in which ethical, socio-cultural, and political concerns were strongly implicated. *Who* was making the claim for authorship could count for as much as—or more than—the *content* of the argument put forward. Pope's eventual humiliation of Theobald in their battle over the authorship of *Double Falsehood* therefore marks a critical juncture in eighteenth-century editorial scholarship. Earlier collected editions of English authors were often marked by their inclusiveness. Publishers promoted new editions of old works on the basis that they expanded their authors' canons, adding 'new matter' from manuscript. By 1728, however, this practice had changed. 'New' plays never in print before posed potential threats to the valuable publishers' monopolies in classic English authors that arose in the wake of the 'copyright act' of 1710. Editors, meanwhile, retreated from any attempt to expand their authors' canons, and turned their attention instead to anatomizing their parts.

¹⁰ Robert D. Hume, 'English Drama and Theatre Research 1660–1800: New Directions in Research', *Theatre Survey*, 23 (1982), 71–100 (76–77).

¹¹ For reflections on the rise of this attitude to literary manuscripts, see Stephen Ennis, 'In the Author's Hand: Artifacts of Origin and Twentieth-Century Reading Practice', *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, 2 (2001), 106–120.

The perceived value of their work came to lie not in the canonical extensions they could make, but in their connoisseurship, their ability to separate the genuine from the spurious. The early eighteenth-century reception of *Double Falsehood* provides a vivid illustration of these processes in action.

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Collected editions of English authors have a history stretching back to the early sixteenth century, with the publication of successive multi-part editions of Geoffrey Chaucer.¹² The canonization in Folio of English dramatists would not begin for another century. By the time the London theatres closed in 1642, however, the conversion of company repertories into author-centred canons via the medium of the printed collection had gained traction. Sometime in the early 1630s, Thomas Heywood attempted to publish a five-play collection of his works.¹³ In 1647, Humphrey Moseley played a central part in assembling the first collection of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, a volume modeled closely on the 1623 Shakespeare Folio.¹⁴ Over the following years, Moseley actively pursued the publication of drama, accumulating in the process a large stock of playhouse manuscripts.¹⁵ He also issued an innovative series of play collections organized around the works of particular playwrights—Richard Brome, James Shirley, Philip Massinger, and Thomas Middleton.¹⁶ What is especially noticeable about many of these collections is their *expansiveness*. Publishers like Moseley sought to engender their products with novelty by printing previously unpublished manuscripts and promising ever-increasing comprehensiveness. This phenomenon had a precursor in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Chaucer Folio collections, whose compilers periodically added 'new' works to the canon from manuscript (Pask, 16–17). These enhanced

¹² See Kevin Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 9–29.

¹³ See Benedict Scott Robinson, 'Thomas Heywood and the Cultural Politics of Play Collections', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 42 (2002), 361–80.

¹⁴ For the resemblances between the two Folios, see Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 148–50.

¹⁵ Moseley's Stationer's Register entries are tabulated in W. W. Greg, ed., *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1957), III, 1531–32.

¹⁶ Paulina Kewes, "'Give Me the Sociable Pocket-Books...': Humphrey Moseley's Serial Publication of Octavo Play Collections", *Publishing History*, 38 (1995), 8–10.

collections were typically advertised with a title-page inducement along the lines of ‘dyvers workes ... never in print before’.¹⁷

The Preface that Moseley provided for the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher collection appeals to a similar set of readerly expectations. ‘You have here a *New Booke*’, he announces, ‘for of all this large Uolume ... not one, till now, was ever printed before’.¹⁸ Although Moseley assured purchasers that they would possess the entire Beaumont and Fletcher canon by buying the Folio—‘you will finde here ... no *Omissions*; you have not onely All I could get, but All that you must ever expect’ (A4^r)—the booksellers’ Preface to the Second Beaumont and Fletcher Folio belied these assurances. The ‘courteous reader’ of the 1679 edition is offered several new prologues, epilogues, and songs communicated in manuscript by ‘an ingenious and worthy Gentleman’, as well as ‘the addition of no fewer than seventeen’ further plays.¹⁹ The 1664 second issue of the Shakespeare Third Folio followed this aspect of the 1647 and 1679 Beaumont and Fletcher Foliots, offering readers the addition of ‘seven Playes, never Printed in Folio’.²⁰

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, this style of packaging authorial canons had changed. Thomas Seward, for instance, devoted a good part of the Preface to his 1750 *Works* of Beaumont and Fletcher to speculating how the styles of Beaumont and Fletcher might be distinguished, and how each differed from Shakespeare and Jonson.²¹ In his 1775–8 edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Thomas Tyrwhitt cast a skeptical eye over the previous two centuries’ legacy of ‘supplements’ to the canon, dismissing them as ‘spurious’ additions that no modern reader would have ‘any relish’ for (I, xixn).²² Seward, his editorial successor George Colman, and Tyrwhitt seem to have assumed that, in the earlier Foliots that their editions were designed to replace, their authors’ canons had reached their fullest extents. Instead of finding material to add to the existing collections, they instead

¹⁷ William L. Alderson and Arnold C. Henderson, *Chaucer and Augustan Scholarship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), p. 49.

¹⁸ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Gentlemen* (London: H. Moseley, 1647), A4^r.

¹⁹ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Fifty Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* (London: J. Martyn, H. Herringman, and R. Marriot, 1679), A1^r.

²⁰ See Don-John Dugas, *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print, 1660–1740* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), pp. 102–9.

²¹ *The Works of Mr. Francis Beaumont, and Mr. John Fletcher*, ed. by Thomas Seward, 10 vols. (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1750), I, ix–xxxviii.

²² *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, ed. by Thomas Tyrwhitt, 5 vols. (London: T. Payne, 1775–78), I, xvi–xx.

turned their attention instead to anatomizing their parts. In the eighteenth-century collected edition, in other words, the connoisseurial skills of editors and commentators gain prominence. The perceived value of their work lay not in the canonical extensions they could make, but in their connoisseurship, their ability to separate the genuine from the spurious.

Instrumental in bringing this attitude of canonical skepticism to bear on Shakespeare was Alexander Pope.²³ Pope's 1723–5 edition was the first to omit the seven 'apocryphal' plays added in 1664 from the canon. Regardless of whether this idea was his or Jacob Tonson's, Pope advertised it prominently in his Preface as one of the edition's distinguishing features. 'If I may judge from all the distinguishing marks of [Shakespeare's] style', he wrote, 'I make no doubt to declare that those wretched plays ... cannot be admitted as his'.²⁴ Characteristically, however, Pope extended his anatomizing vision further, nominating the Folio plays *Love's Labours Lost*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Titus Andronicus* as likewise spurious, with only a few passages in each being genuinely Shakespearean (*Works 1725*, I, xx). (The 1728 version of the Preface added the *Comedy of Errors* and what he termed 'a thing called *Double Falshood*' to the list of falsely attributed plays.²⁵) All of these plays, Pope argued, had originally been 'pieces produced by unknown authors, or fitted up for the theatre while it was under [Shakespeare's] administration' and had then been 'adjudged to him, as they give Strays to the Lord of the Manor.' Were these accretions removed from the body of Shakespeare's works, Pope asked, 'how many low and vicious parts and passages might no longer reflect upon [Shakespeare's] great Genius, but appear unworthily charged upon him?' (*Works 1725*, I, xxi).

For Pope, the editor's task was to distinguish between the valuable (genuine and exemplary) and the worthless (contaminated, interpolated, and inauthentic), casting the latter aside. The editor's role as Pope saw it, then, was not merely scholarly; it also encompassed ethical, moral, and creative dimensions. At its centre lay the reputation of the author, which had to be cleared of the 'imputations' made against it by interpolations and misattributed works. David Nichol Smith has aptly

²³ See Edmund G. C. King, 'Fragmenting Authorship in the Eighteenth-Century Shakespeare Edition', *Shakespeare*, 6 (2010): 1–19 (4–9); and J. Gavin Paul, 'Performance as "Punctuation": Editing Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 61 (2010): 390–413 (398; 400–6).

²⁴ *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (London: J. Tonson, 1723–25), I, xx.

²⁵ *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 9 vols. (London: J. Tonson, 1728), I, xxi.

compared Pope's attitude to that of a literary executor.²⁶ In other respects, it accords with what J. Paul Hunter identifies as one of the central preoccupations of early eighteenth-century criticism—the impulse 'to define the insignificant, the inappropriate, and the inadequate out of literature' altogether.²⁷

Pope had set out his own views about the relationship between reputation and canonicity eight years earlier in the Preface to his 1717 *Works*. The concept of 'fame' is central to the Preface, and, in the final paragraph, Pope concentrates on defining what, exactly, the enduring literary value of poetry relies upon.²⁸ This, he argues, is the freedom of writers to select their own canons:

I believe no one qualification is so likely to make a good writer, as the power of rejecting his own thoughts; and it must be this (if any thing) that can give me a chance to be one. For what I have publish'd, I can only hope to be pardon'd; but for what I have burn'd, I deserve to be prais'd.²⁹

In return for these 'sacrifices', Pope asks his audience to accept unquestioningly the canonical boundaries he sets for them. No other works except those he explicitly lays claim to should be regarded as genuine.

Pope continued to display this preoccupation with canonicity throughout his career. For the 'last' volume of the *Miscellanies* which he compiled with Jonathan Swift in 1728, he and Swift composed a Preface that agonizes at length over the ethics of authorial attribution. Acting as both an apology for publication and an attack on the book trade's disregard for authors' reputations, the Preface bemoans the fact that the collection had to be published at all. Neither author, however, can 'quite disown' the pieces within it because of those 'distinguishing Marks of Style' that allow 'Persons of Taste' to discern their authorship, and so, the Preface maintains, the authors have reluctantly collected them under their names.³⁰ Having made this act of selection,

²⁶ David Nichol Smith, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 34.

²⁷ J. Paul Hunter, 'Literary Theory and Literary Practice: The Example of Pope', in *Talking Forward, Talking Back: Critical Dialogues with the Enlightenment*, ed. by Rüdiger Ahrens and Kevin Cope (New York: AMS Press, 2002), p. 322.

²⁸ See James McLaverty, "'For Who So Fond as Youthful Bards of Fame?": Pope's *Works* of 1717', in *The Culture of Collected Editions*, ed. by Andrew Nash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 49–50.

²⁹ Alexander Pope, *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope* (London: B. Lintot, 1717), [b2]^f.

³⁰ Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, *Miscellanies: The Last Volume* (1728; repr. London: B. Motte and C. Bathurst, 1736), A4^v, A3^v.

however, Pope and Swift are adamant that this sets a boundary on their acknowledged works. These poems are, they insist, the last genuine and unadulterated pieces circulating among the reading public:

they are *Ours*, and others should in Justice believe they are *All* that are *Ours*. If any thing else has been printed in which we really had any Hand, it is either intolerable imperfect, or loaded with spurious Additions We declare, that this Collection contains every Piece, which in the idlest Humour we have written; not only such as came under our Review or Correction; but many others, which however unfinished, are not now in our Power to suppress. Whatsoever was in our Possession at the Publishing hereof, or of which no Copy was gone abroad, we have actually destroyed, to prevent all Possibility of the like Treatment. (Pope and Swift, *Miscellanies*, [A6]^f)

For Pope and Swift, a genuine work was an authorized one, and they reserved the right to suppress—or even physically destroy—pieces in which either had written ‘below himself’ (A3^v). Moreover, the Preface conflates ‘imperfect’ works with ‘spurious’ pieces—suggesting that both misattributed works, and genuinely authorial works that had miscarried in execution, were likewise ‘intolerable’. The criterion for canonical inclusion is clearly not the *authenticity* of a work, but whether that work adds to its author’s *reputation*.

It was Pope’s belief that authorial reputation relied on canonical selectivity that, I would argue, best explains his hostile response to Theobald and *Double Falsehood*. Indeed, the *Double Falsehood* episode was only one in a series of disputes between them, each of which in its own way centred upon the ethics of authorial attribution. Between 1705 and 1710, Pope had been involved in revising the poems of William Wycherley with an eye to eventual publication. At some point, however, Pope claimed that Wycherley had decided against printing his verses, judging that the poems should never circulate outside his immediate social circle.³¹ After Wycherley died, however, Theobald, who had worked as an attorney for Wycherley’s heirs, obtained the rights to publish them.³² In 1729, a year after Theobald’s edition appeared, Pope took the extraordinary step of issuing his own ‘corrected’ version of it. Pope’s main contributions were a set of newly published letters between himself

³¹ See Pope, ‘To the Reader’, in *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. by George Sherburn, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), I, xxxv.

³² Shef Rogers, ‘Uncovering Wycherley’s *Miscellaneous Remains*’, *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 25 (2001), 149, 153.

and Wycherley, an anonymous address ‘To the Reader’, and an annotated version of the original contents page.³³ In the latter, Pope laid out precisely the details of authorship and attribution of which Theobald, as an outsider to the Wycherley circle, had been ignorant. It seems clear that Pope saw Theobald’s edition as a threat to Wycherley’s posthumous reputation, and his 1729 edition was therefore an attempt to restore the damage he believed had been done to Wycherley’s name, as well as his own. The problems with Theobald’s edition, Pope argued, were manifold. It contained unfinished works that were not intended for print. There was no indication that Pope had revised particular poems—Pope, in other words, had not been given credit for his own work. Finally, Pope implied, Theobald himself had adulterated some of the verses in an attempt to foist off his own poetry as Wycherley’s.

Pope would develop this portrait of a careless and untrustworthy Theobald more fully in the *Dunciad Variorum*, published that same year. Here, Pope went beyond simply trying to demonstrate *Double Falsehood*’s literary worthlessness and accused Theobald of writing the play himself. After inserting the line ‘None but Thy self can be thy parallel’ into the poem, complete with an ironically dignified piece of gnomic pointing, an oversized left-hand quotation mark, Pope glossed it as follows: ‘A marvellous line of *Theobald*; unless the Play call’d *Double Falshood* be (as he would have it believed) *Shakespear*’s It is granted ... no man doubts but herein he is able to imitate *Shakespear*’.³⁴ In the next note, Pope belittlingly summarized the arguments that Theobald had presented in support of his manuscripts’ authenticity:

The former Annotator [i.e., Pope himself] seeming to be of the opinion that the *Double Falshood* is not *Shakespear*’s; it is but justice to give Mr. *Theobald*’s Arguments to the contrary: first that the MS. was more than sixty years old; secondly, that once Mr. *Betterton* had it, or he hath heard so; thirdly, that some-body told him the author gave it to a bastard-daughter of his: But fourthly and above all, ‘that he hath a *great mind* every thing that is good in our tongue *should be Shakespear*’s’. I allow these reasons to be truly critical. (Pope, *Dunciad Variorum*, 161n)

Theobald, as we have seen, had claimed authority for his account of the *Double Falsehood* manuscripts by appealing to the testimony of unnamed gentlemen. Here, in

³³ For Pope’s authorship of the preface, see his letter to the Earl of Oxford, 16 October 1729, in Sherburn, ed., *Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III, 58–59.

³⁴ Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad. With Notes Variorum and the Prolegomena of Scriblerus*, 2nd ed. (London: Lawton Gilliver, 1729), pp. 160–61n.

the *Dunciad Variorum*, Pope ruthlessly unpicks this technique, reducing Theobald's 'credible information' to a series of unsourced and unreliable assertions. Having focused on the inadequacy of Theobald's claims, Pope seeks to further undermine him by drawing out what he sees as their *scurrility*. Among other things, Pope seems to have objected to Theobald's suggestion that Shakespeare had had a 'bastard-daughter'. For Theobald to profess a 'Partiality' for Shakespeare's works and reputation while simultaneously including such a detail in his account no doubt seemed to Pope both tasteless and hypocritical.

As Pope's various reactions to Theobald show, a large part of the hostility between the two editors stemmed from disagreements about the making of authors' canons. In particular, Pope felt that Theobald lacked the poetic sense to distinguish one personal style from another, and lacked a proper reverence for authorial reputation. What impact, if any, did Pope's skepticism have had upon Theobald's subsequent approach to Shakespeare's dramatic works? Although Theobald was apparently unwilling to make a case for *Double Falsehood*'s authorship explicitly, he does not appear to have modified his views on the issue between 1728 and 1733. In a note subjoined to *1 Henry VI* in the 1733 *Shakespeare*, he listed a series of verbal parallels for the line, 'Nought, but *itself*, could be its *Parallel*', in the plays of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and 'the best *Roman* classics', adding,

I have produced these Authorities, in Reply to a Criticism of Mr. *Pope*'s; because, in the Gaiety of his *Wit* and *good Humour*, he was pleas'd to be very smart upon me, as he thought, for a Line, in a *posthumous* Play of our Author's which I brought upon the Stage ... Double Falshood. (*Works 1733*, IV, 188n)

If the text of the play did not appear in the 1733 *Shakespeare*, Theobald at least managed to include his critical opinion on its authorship, even if were buried in the notes to a canonical play whose authenticity he doubted.

Cardenio/Double Falsehood was not, however, the only play omitted from the 1733 *Shakespeare* that Theobald believed was genuinely Shakespearean. In his Preface to the edition, he claimed unequivocally that all of the plays added by Chetwind in 1664 were, at least in part, in Shakespeare's hand. Of 'those Seven', he writes, 'I can, beyond all Controversy, prove some Touches in every one of them to have come from his Pen' (*Works 1733*, I, vii). As if to underline this claim, Theobald

makes occasional use of these plays for parallel passages in his critical notes. This extension of the ‘conference of places’ method to include disputed plays thus acts as a form of canonical rhetoric. By drawing on non-canonical plays as if they were indeed Shakespeare’s, he confers upon them a *de facto* critical authority that their textual exclusion would seem at first to deny.³⁵ At other times, as in his remarks on ‘Nought, but *itself*, could be its *Parallel*’ in the notes to *1 Henry VI*, he states explicitly that these plays are, in some way at least, genuinely Shakespearean.

Lochrine, for instance, rates at least three mentions in the 1733 edition, and on each occasion Theobald stresses the possibility that Shakespeare wrote it. When emending ‘Bail’ to ‘Bale’ in *Coriolanus*, he writes, ‘we meet with [Bale] ... in a Play, attributed to [Shakespeare], call’d *Lochrine* (*Works 1733*, VI, 9n). In a note to *2 Henry VI*, he places yet more emphasis on the attribution’s claim to authority: ‘*Lochrine*’ is ‘a Play ascrib’d to our Author, and printed above 20 years before his Death’ (IV, 291n). In the footnotes to *Titus Andronicus*, it is simply ‘his *Lochrine*’ (V, 350n). *Pericles*, too, though again referred to only in passing, receives a strong endorsement of genuineness, if not quality, from Theobald. ‘This absurd Old Play’, he writes,

was not entirely of our Author’s penning; but he has honour’d it with a Number of Master-Touches, so peculiar to himself, that a knowing Reader may with Ease and Certainty distinguish the Traces of his Pencil. (II, 490n)

During his preparations for the edition, Theobald discussed the play with his then-correspondent, the future editor of Pope and Shakespeare, William Warburton. In a letter dated 20 May 1730, he mentions that he is sending Warburton a copy of *Pericles*, with the reminder that ‘you were so kind to say, tho’ bad you would take the Trouble of reading over [the play] wth. a strict Eye’.³⁶ Theobald also credits the suggestion that Shakespeare had collaborated on *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ‘a Play in which’, he observes in a note to *Coriolanus*, ‘there is a Tradition of our Author having been jointly concerned’ (*Works 1733*, VI, 100n).

³⁵ See also Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 135n14, and Gabriel Egan, ‘Editorial Treatment of the Shakespeare Apocrypha, 1664–1737’, Paper Presented at the Conference ‘Leviathan to Licensing Act (The Long Restoration, 1650–1737): Theatre, Print and Their Contexts’, Loughborough University, 15–16 September 2004, paras. 13–14.

³⁶ Richard Foster Jones, *Lewis Theobald: His Contribution to English Scholarship with Some Unpublished Letters* (1919; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 272.

Given Theobald's conviction that *Lochrine* and *Pericles* were Shakespeare's, at least in part, it is not surprising that he devised some emendations on them. As he and Warburton neared the end of their marathon epistolatory commentary on the 1728 octavo reissue of Pope's *Shakespear*, Theobald asked Warburton whether his copy contained 'the ninth volume, which contains the contested Plays of our Shakespeare'. If so, Theobald promised him 'some entertainment from the emendations that I have made upon *Lochrine* and *Pericles*, by way of excursion, if you will indulge me in this liberty'.³⁷ Theobald, however, does not seem to have followed through on this offer. The letters printed in the *Illustrations* end with *Othello*, the last play in Pope's eighth volume. Some of Theobald's emendations on the play have nevertheless survived, marked up on quarto copies of the play that Theobald either owned or consulted. As Suzanne Gossett notes, however, these annotations were apparently unknown to later editors.³⁸

What might explain the discrepancy between the inclusive Shakespeare that Theobald hints at in his notes and preface, and the conservative, thirty-six-play canon that actually appeared in the 1733 edition? Why, after all their conflicts over canonicity, did Theobald finally restrict himself to the works that Pope had identified as Shakespeare's in his 1725 Preface? Part of the answer may lie in eighteenth-century copyright law. According to Peter Seary, Theobald would have had no say over which plays to include in his edition. These kinds of decisions, he argues, were commercial ones, designed to preserve booksellers' monopoly interests in their copies. The 1710 'copyright' act guaranteed a fourteen-year exclusive right for the publication of new material, and, Seary suggests, the Tonsons used this to assert a series of 'new' rights in Shakespeare throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century (Seary, p. 134). By having their editors devise, and then sign over to them, a constant stream of new dedications, prefaces, notes, glossaries, and indices, the Tonsons would have been able to create a perpetually self-renewing right in Shakespeare.³⁹ In order to preserve this unbroken chain, Theobald would have been directed to use as the basis for his own text the most recent in the sequence, Pope's

³⁷ *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by John Nichols, 8 vols. (London: J. Nichols, 1817–58), II, 557.

³⁸ *Pericles*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, ed. by Suzanne Gossett (London: Methuen, 2004), p. 38.

³⁹ See the sixth item in Theobald's 1731 publishing contract with Jacob Tonson, reproduced in Seary, p. 217.

1728 edition, and thus the boundaries of Pope's canon came to determine those of his own. Tonson's strategy for maintaining a monopoly hold over Shakespeare, Seary's scenario suggests, effectively prevented Theobald from including plays that Pope had not edited—*Double Falsehood*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the apocryphal plays (Seary, p. 135).

More recently, however, both Simon Jarvis and Andrew Murphy have challenged Seary's hypothesis.⁴⁰ It certainly seems unlikely that Jacob Tonson, in 1733, would have been so mindful of the time limit on copyrights imposed by the 1710 Act when, as William St Clair has shown, members of the eighteenth-century book trade routinely ignored the Act and behaved as though perpetual copyright still existed.⁴¹ However, Seary may nevertheless still be right in arguing that publishers of collected works generally dictated the *extent* of those editions. An important piece of evidence in favour of this is that the contents of eighteenth-century Shakespeare collections in what St Clair calls the 'high monopoly period' almost always stayed frozen at thirty-six plays. Even when editors' prefaces contested the boundaries of the traditional canon, only the plays printed in the First Folio actually appeared in the texts of their editions. Edward Capell, for instance, identified Shakespeare as the author, or part-author, of no fewer than 58 plays, though only the traditional 36-play Folio canon actually appeared in his 1768 edition.⁴² In 1793, George Steevens complained that his publishers had forced him to include *Titus Andronicus*—a play he says he would otherwise have discarded from his edition.⁴³ As Maureen Bell points out, once plays became part of particular collections, they tended to remain with them, their individual copyrights becoming subsumed in the general mass.⁴⁴ Hence, there was a powerful inertial force acting in during this period that prevented the

⁴⁰ Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearian Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725–1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 94–95, and Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 73–74.

⁴¹ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 93–94, 154–57.

⁴² *Mr William Shakespeare His Comedies Histories and Tragedies*, ed. by Edward Capell, 10 vols. (London: J. Tonson, 1767–8), I, x.

⁴³ *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, ed. by George Steevens, 15 vols. (London: T. Longman, 1793), I, vii.

⁴⁴ Maureen Bell, 'Booksellers Without an Author, 1627–1685', in *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p. 271.

reallocation of particular pieces of literary copyright from one authorial canon to another.

Even had they wanted to, then, it would have been difficult for Shakespeare's eighteenth-century proprietors to obtain the rights to publish extra-canonical plays associated with other blocs of literary property, such as *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The expansion of existing canons would have posed other complications for copy holders. Adding previously unprinted pieces to an author's collected works could potentially justify the creation of a new right in that author's literary property. John Urry and Bernard Lintot based part of their application for a Royal License to publish the works of Chaucer on this claim (Alderson and Henderson, p. 91). The License grants Urry his rights on the grounds that he had produced

a compleat and correct Copy of the Works of *Jeoffrey Chaucer* ... amending many Errors and Corruptions that have crept in ... remarked many Pieces in them falsely ascribed to *Chaucer*, and added several entire Tales never yet printed, as well as many single Lines hitherto omitted in former Editions of this Work; by which Alterations, Amendments and Additions, the Work is in a manner become new.⁴⁵

Urry and his collaborators included almost all of the material that had been attributed to Chaucer in earlier editions, and added three further works from manuscript.⁴⁶ The addition of manuscript material, in the form of *Cardenio*, thus had the potential to create a precedent that Shakespeare's proprietors would want to avoid. The play's subsequent purchase by Tonson's associate, John Watts, and its omission from the 1733 *Works* may, then, have been motivated by a desire to protect the Tonsons' monopoly rights in Shakespeare (Freehafer, p. 513).

Even had he been able to act independently of his publisher, however, there were good reasons why Theobald may have been unable, or unwilling, to publish the *Cardenio* manuscript, or at least *Double Falsehood*, in the 1733 edition. No matter how axiomatic this seems from a twenty-first century perspective, it would have been an intensely problematic action for someone in Theobald's position. Printing *Double Falsehood* as part of Shakespeare's *Works* would have given Pope a fresh chance to

⁴⁵ 'Proposals for Printing [...] the Works of [...] *Jeoffrey Chaucer*', bound with Alexander Pope, *The Temple of Fame* (London: B. Lintot, 1715), [n.p.].

⁴⁶ Kathleen Forni, *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Counterfeit Canon* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp. 80–81.

attack him, and his failure to include it might have been motivated by a desire to avoid further embarrassment. The expectation that Theobald might have published the *Cardenio* manuscript that underlay *Double Falsehood*, on the other hand, is almost certainly anachronistic. The private printing of Thomas Middleton's manuscript play *The Witch*, the first publication event of this kind, would not occur until 1778.⁴⁷

Steevens's and Isaac Reed's edition of *The Witch* was the product of a very different environment from that of the early 1730s. Not only were Steevens and Reed much more financially secure than the perpetually needy Theobald, and thus in a position to fund an expensive private printing, but the cultural status of theatrical manuscripts themselves seems to have changed over course of the eighteenth century. Auction records show that manuscripts were often inadequately described in the early part of the eighteenth century, or bundled with other miscellaneous material. The 1712 sale catalogue of Nehemiah Grew's library, for instance, listed a 'Variety of ... stitched Pamphlets and MSS. Also a Collection of STONES engraved or cut out'.⁴⁸ In the middle of the eighteenth century, fifty volumes of manuscripts belonging to the Jacobean courtier Sir Julius Caesar narrowly avoided being sold for £10 to wrap cheese, before a bookseller intervened.⁴⁹ It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that a reliable market for literary manuscripts seems to have emerged. This phenomenon is perhaps reflected in the fortunes of *The Witch*, whose manuscript increased in price from £2 14 s. in 1788 to what Edmond Malone called 'the enormous price of £7.10.0' when he purchased it at the sale of Steevens's library in 1800 (O'Connor, pp. 996–97). A reliable printing apparatus for *publishing* historical literary manuscripts, outside of occasional private printing events like the 1778 edition of *The Witch*, meanwhile, would not emerge for another century, with the founding of the Early English Text Society.

Moreover, it seems unlikely that Theobald thought the original manuscripts worthy of publication in their own right. Theobald himself, in his 1733 Preface, stated that 'no authentic Manuscript' of Shakespeare's 'was extant' (*Works 1733*, I, xxxvii). The theatrical documents that underlay Shakespeare's text were, he supposed, mostly

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the play's publishing history, see Marion O'Connor, 'The Witch', in *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*, ed. by Taylor and Lavagnino, pp. 996–97.

⁴⁸ *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by John Nichols, 9 vols. (London: J. Nichols, 1812–15), III, 614–15.

⁴⁹ John Freehafer, 'John Warburton's Lost Plays', *Studies in Bibliography*, 23 (1970), 159.

assembled from corrupt and interpolated actors' parts (Seary, 142–48). Those manuscripts of *Double Falshood* that he had managed to acquire would have fallen into this category. Restoration transcripts of what Theobald would have regarded as inherently unreliable theatre documents, the *Cardenio* manuscripts stood at some distance from the lost Shakespearean originals that could conclusively 'set [Shakespeare's] Meaning right' (*Works 1733*, I, xli).

Some indication of Theobald's attitude to the authority of the original *Double Falshood* manuscripts can, of course, be seen in the fact that he had felt the need to revise and adapt the play before it could be performed. Another appears in the 1728 letter he had published in *Mist's Weekly Journal* defending the play against Pope's *Peri Bathous*. Vindicating the line, 'None but itself can be its parallel', Theobald wrote,

If this were such nonsense as Pope would willingly have it, it would be a very bad plea for me to alledge, as the truth is, that the line is in Shakespear's old copy; for I might have suppressed it.⁵⁰

As this passage indicates, the boundary between adaptation and editing seems to have been somewhat blurred for Theobald, at least when it came to *Double Falshood*. Theobald hints that he, as adapting playwright, has both the power and the obligation to 'suppress' material that might harm Shakespeare's reputation. In his earlier dispute with the playwright-watchmaker Meystayer over who should take credit for *The Perfidious Brother*, Theobald displayed a similar belief that unrevised dramatic manuscripts did no credit to their authors. In response to Meystayer's claims that Theobald had stolen his play, Theobald threatened to publish the original manuscript, minus Theobald's corrections, thus allowing 'the world to judge of [its] Grammar, Concord, or English'.⁵¹ I do not want to imply that Theobald's attitudes to *Double Falshood* and *The Perfidious Brother* were identical. However, there are commonalities between the two episodes. In both, Theobald reserves the right to 'create anew' or 'suppress' parts of the original text, and, in the case of *The*

⁵⁰ *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Robert Shiells, 5 vols. (London: R. Griffiths, 1753), V, 284.

⁵¹ Alfred Harbage, 'Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest', *Modern Language Review*, 35 (1940), 297.

Perfidious Brother, at least, he insinuates that publication of the ‘uncorrected’ document might not be in the best interests of its author’s reputation.

Ultimately, Theobald was content to restrict his opinions on the Shakespeare canon to the Preface and footnotes of his edition. Indeed, the critical note seems to have been the ideal medium for the ambivalent style of authorial attribution that Theobald practised. Unlike Pope, who physically disrupted the text itself to express his canonical judgements, Theobald left the text block undisturbed. Instead, he undermined it, sniping at the folio canon with notes that questioned the authenticity of certain canonical plays, and vouching for the genuineness of others outside it. In doing so, he set the scene for the footnote-laden variorums that would dominate Shakespeare editing by the late eighteenth century (Murphy, p. 75). Yet, by restricting his opinions about authorship to the notes, Theobald ultimately enabled *Pope’s* version of the Shakespeare canon to prevail. Theobald’s footnote strategy would have drastic consequences for *Cardenio*. By leaving the play in manuscript and restricting his remarks on it to a single note in the 1733 edition, he ultimately rendered it, too, something that has seemed, until very recently, to be nothing more than a tantalizing footnote in the history of Shakespeare’s text.