The popular image of anyone who works professionally producing Shakespeare is that they are an irrelevant group of “artistes” who are lazy, pampered, self-indulgent, often neurotic, a drain on the public purse, snobs who perform to other snobs, and people who should get a “proper job.” That was certainly the type of view shared by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who made it a priority in her first term in government to investigate the Royal Shakespeare Company. She sent Clive Priestley and a team from the “Efficiency Unit” (i.e., Cuts Unit) to the company headquarters in Stratford to discover how much money was being wastefully floated down the Avon in the name of “art.” The resulting Priestley Report became known as the “love letter on white paper” as not only did he find sound financial management but concluded that the RSC was “palpably under funded” and recommended an increase rather than a reduction in subsidy. One of the things Priestley highlighted was the “devotion” of the staff. Simply put, he couldn’t believe that people were working so hard, with such dedication, producing such quality, for so small a financial return.

Clive Priestley was right, of course. An incredible amount of time and energy is expended before an audience sees a Shakespeare play performed. This not only includes the heavy contribution of the production departments but long hours of rehearsal which might incorporate stage fighting, acrobatics, vocal coaching, movement classes, singing, dance, historical research, and close study of the text. It’s no exaggeration to say that actors will invest their whole being into creating a role and their scrupulous endeavors to “get it right” continue throughout the run of a play. Every area is examined and reexamined down to the smallest detail—apart from one. Modern professional theatre doesn’t question the text they are working from. Everything else comes in for scrutiny but the actual words that are said (apart from cuts and some minor word alterations) are left unchallenged in the hands of the producers of the plays. Editors alter words, punctuation, the structure of both verse and prose, assign lines to different characters, and even change the characters in scenes. A more correct term for them would be editor/adaptors—they adapt the text and therefore the meaning. Here’s a small example from *Henry IV, Part 1*, Act 3, scene 3, line 196.

[H4 1 act 3](http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/facsimile/book/Bran_F1/385/?zoom=1017)

The First Folio printing of 1623 sets Hal’s dialogue as:

Go *Peto,* to horse: for thou, and I,  
  
Have thirtie miles to ride yet ere dinner time.

That seems simple enough. Most modern editions, however, follow the first two (probably unauthorized) quarto publications and add an extra “to horse” even though quartos 3–5 and all four folios have only one “to horse.” They alter a 9-beat line (perhaps indicating a hesitation from Peto so that the Prince has to qualify his instruction?) to one of 11 beats. Not too much of a difficulty to cope with, one might think, but the single word “Peto” has caused controversy among editor/adaptors. It is crucial that the director and the actor playing Peto should at the very least know who is actually in the scene. Not Peto, says the *New Cambridge Shakespeare*, and changes the character to Poins. Citing previous editor/adaptors Dr. Johnson and Edmond Malone, the New Cambridge edition argues:

Poins suits the metre…. I may also add that it would be strange for Poins to disappear altogether after l.146 and yet turn up later in *2 Hen. IV* with all his old vivacity.[3](javascript:void(0))

The third Arden version of the play differs and prints “Peto,” although it still adds the extra “to horse.” The editor/adaptor, David Scott Kastan, remarks that to change “Peto” to “Poins” “seems editorially inappropriate, correcting Shakespeare, rather than trying merely to recover what he wrote.”[4](javascript:void(0)) The Warwick Shakespeare agrees with him and places Peto in the scene, although the lines are set as prose, not verse, leaving one to speculate why the extra “to horse” is also included since there is no “problem” with the meter to justify it. Perhaps the most schizophrenic volume when it comes to this passage is the well-regarded Oxford Shakespeare. An early “Complete Works” edited by the noted scholar W. J. Craig follows Dr. Johnson by printing “Go Poins.” Incorrect, proclaims the current Oxford Shakespeare individual publication of *Henry IV, Part 1*, who returns it to “Peto.” The more recent Oxford “Complete Works” contradicts both colleagues and sets something entirely different: “Go Harvey.” The editor/adaptors argue that this was Shakespeare’s original intention before Elizabethan politics caused a name change, but although “Harvey” can be found as a stage direction in the first quarto it is not printed within the body of the dialogue. The same character reappears in *Henry IV, Part 2* but, in the Oxford “Complete Works,” not as “Harvey”—he suddenly becomes “Peto” again.

Confused? It’s no wonder. And this is just one word, in one scene, of the 36–40 plays that Shakespeare wrote or had a hand in. As the pressure from the “Shakespeare Industry” increases to come up with new angles, pruning the language has become the norm so that each fresh edition has become almost like a new play. As an example, the Oxford “Complete Works” alters Iago’s military title of “Ancient” to “Ensign.” One of its editors, the highly respected Stanley Wells, explains, “‘Ancient’ could be seriously misleading, so we prefer ‘Ensign.’”

His view is that the audience and reader might mistakenly think Iago is old. This type of alteration is the start of a slippery slope. Should the Apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet* be called a Pharmacist? The Soothsayer in *Julius Caesar* be referred to as an Astrologer? Or Dr. Pinch in *The Comedy of Errors* have his title “Conjurer” reassigned to Exorcist? This is not editing the plays but translating them. An actor and director will search in vain to find a consistent and secure text that supports them in performance. Shakespearean academics appear unconcerned with how the words might play on the stage. The major difference between an academic and a performer’s approach to the text is that where an academic will propose an *explanation* of a line, an actor will seek its *motivation.* The former’s purpose is to provide a solution to the overall meaning of the play, but the latter will attempt to discover exactly why and how the characters have created the circumstances in the script.

F1-1623(36ish) F2–1632(36) F3-1663 (second issue-1664, also had 7 additional plays attributed to Shakespeare, most of which (except Pericles) have been rejected) F4(43 plays)-1664

Only in FF:

All’s Well That Ends Well, Antony and Cleopatra, As You Like It, Comedy of Errors, Coriolanus, Cymbeline, 1 Henry VI, Henry VIII, Julius Caesar, King John, Macbeth, Measure for Measure, Taming of the Shrew, Tempest, Timon of Athens, Twelfth Night, Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Winter’s Tale.

At the beginning of the 18th century anyone who wanted to read Shakespeare’s plays was forced to resort to the bulky and ill-printed Folio’s. Notwithstanding Thomas Rymer’s criticism in “A Short View of Tragedy (1693), that Shakespeare was ‘barbarous, irrational, and exuberant”, there was manifestly an increasing demand for his works, which the folios were inadequate to supply. Publishers then, as now, were looking to supply what the public wanted. Jacob Tonson was an enterprising, wide-awake publisher (He had purchased the copyright of “Paradise Lost”, had published many of Dryden’s works, and no doubt realized that to make Shakespeare’s plays more readily accessible to the reading public would be a sound business venture. To make them more readily accessible it was essential to print them in a more readily accessible format and it was also necessary that something be done towards reforming the text. For that purpose Tenson selected **Nicholas Rowe**, by profession a barrister but by choice a poet and dramatist.

To Nicholas Rowe accordingly belongs the double honor of being the first editor and the first biographer of Shakespeare. The introduction to his edition (6 volumes 8vo), published in 1709, was the first attempt at a formal biography of Shakespeare. [Rowe on ebay](https://www.ebay.com/itm/1709-6vol-Tonson-Shakespear-First-Edition-after-the-Folio-Editions-Scarce-N-Rowe/132625269246?ssPageName=STRK%3AMEBIDX%3AIT&_trksid=p2055119.m1438.l2649)

Rowe used the text of F4, divided and numbered the plays into Acts and scenes, modernized spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and in the many cases where lacking he supplied a list of the dramatis personae. His experience as a dramatic poet, coupled with his natural ability and taste, enabled him to make some sound emendations but he made no attempt at collating any of the previous F’s or Quarto’s.

A 7th volume, a ‘piratical production’ of the notorious Edmund Curll(c1675-1747), containing the poems and critical remarks on the plays, appeared in 1710.

Rowe was followed by **Alexander Pope** whose 6 vol Quarto edition appeared in 1725. [Pope's edition](https://archive.org/stream/worksofshakespea01shak_4#page/n9/mode/2up) It became the storm-center of one of the bitterest controversies in the annals of English literature, the history of which has been interestingly told by Professor Lounsbury in his “Shakesperian Wars” [lounsbury at archive.org](https://archive.org/details/cu31924013155662) (p161 and following) Pope followed Rowe’s text except for the spurious plays, and was the first to indicate the place of each new scene, and subdivided the scenes as given in F’s and Rowe’s edition. His emendations are sometimes ingenious, but he frequently took unwarranted liberities witht the text and sometimes even attempts to “improve” upon Shakespeare. Pope’s edition of Shakesperae made no material contribution to Shakespeare scholarship and added nothing to Pope’s reputation. It did, however, add materially to his fortune, for him it was a profitable venture.

A year later, Lewis Theobald published his celebrated “Shakespeare Restored”, thereby not only incurring the everlasting enmity of Pope, but gaining the unenviable distinction of becoming the hero of the first Dunciad. *The Dunciad* is a landmark mock-heroic narrative poem by Alexander Pope published in three different versions at different times from 1728 to 1743. The poem celebrates a goddess Dulness and the progress of her chosen agents as they bring decay, imbecility, and tastelessness to the Kingdom of Great Britain. Pope told Joseph Spence (in *Spence's Anecdotes*) that he had been working on a general satire of Dulness, with characters of contemporary Grub Street scribblers, for some time and that it was the publication of *Shakespeare Restored* by Theobald that spurred him to complete the poem and publish it in 1728.Theobald's edition of Shakespeare was not, however, as imperfect as *The Dunciad* would suggest; it was, in fact, far superior to the edition Pope had himself written in 1725. However, Pope's reputation had been impugned, as the full title of Theobald's edition was *Shakespeare restored, or, A specimen of the many errors, as well committed, as unamended, by Mr. Pope : in his late edition of this poet. Designed not only to correct the said edition, but to restore the true reading of Shakespeare in all the editions ever yet published.* Although Theobald was certainly Pope's superior in the realm of historical editing and criticism, *The Dunciad* shows Pope flexing his superior creative muscles, and it succeeds to the extent that Pope's work is the chief reason Theobald is remembered.

In spite of the abuse which has been heaped upon him – he has been lampooned as “a drudge”, “a pedant” and “a dunce” –Theobald was a man of unusual critical acumen and made many ingenious and brilliant emendations in his edition, (7 volumes, 1733). Among the most celebrated of his emendations is in Henry V. Hostess Quickly’s description of Falstaff’s last hours, as it originally stood, reads as follows: [Folio H5 2.3](http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/facsimile/book/Bran_F1/429/?work=h5&zoom=1017)

“For after I saw him fumble with the Sheets, and play with Flowers, and smile upon his fingers end, I knew there was but one way: for his Nose was as sharp as a Pen, and a Table of greene fields.”

Before Theolbald no one could make anything out of this meaningless phrase. But he, by the addition of one letter and the alteration of another, gave the world the immortal phrase –

“a babled of green fields.” thus giving pith and sense to the whole passage.

Theobald was deeply read in Elizabethan and classical literature, and was the first to point out the value of comparing the passage to be emended with other parallel passages. His method of comparing parallel passages to support suggested emendations has been followed by every other commentator.

A new edition of Shakespeare’s works, in six quarto volumes, known as the “Oxford Edition” appeared in 1743-4. Although it appeared anonymously it was well known that **Sir Thomas Hanmer**, speaker in the House of Commons, was the editor. It was not critically valuable, but sold at considerably more than Pope’s edition(10 guineas vs only 16 shillings for Pope’s).

**Bishop Warburton**, the “supercilious” Warburton, Boswell called him, having quarreled with both Pope and Theobald, and later with Hanmer, made up his differences with Pope, and a year after Pope’s death, in 1747, published a new edition of Shakespeare, as the joint work of Pope and himself. The title page unblushingly states that the text has been “collated with all the former editions”. In fact it is founded, not on Pope’s but on Theobald’s text and appropriates, without shame and without acknowledgement, Theobalds notes and emendations. There is no evidence that Warburton himself ever consulted the Folios or the Quartos. It is the opinion of the Cambridge editors that the excellence of Warburton;s edition was by no means proportionate to the arrogance of the editor, and the world has refused to accept Dr. Johnson’s dictum that, as a critic, Warburton “would make two-and-fifty Theobalds cut into slices”. Neither as editor nor as critic does Warburton rank with the much-maligned Theobald.

And this brings us to the great **Dr. Johnson**, whose long delayed edition of Shakespeare finally appeared in 1765. It attracted immediate attention, was furiously attacked, and cannot be said to have fulfilled public expectation. It is now chiefly remembered for its famous *Preface* , which sets forth with much force and clearness the principles which should govern textual criticism of Shakespeare.

**Edward Capell’s** edition (10vols 8vo) was published in 1768. Of the preface, which was considered a most valuable contribution to Shakespearean criticism, Dr. Johnson said, “He doth gabble monstrously”. The zeal and industry which Capell displayed have never received the recognition they deserve.

**George Steevens,** who constantly quarreled with his literary associates and has been called “the Puck of Commentators”, was a man of deep learning and made substantial and lasting contributions to Shakespearean scholarship The edition of Shakespeare which he published in 1773, a revision of Dr. Johnson’s edition, with substantial improvements, was reissued in 1778, 1785, and 1793, and was long regarded as a standard text. It was Steevens who inserted some obscene notes on certain coarse passages in the plays, and, with characteristic perversity, attributed them to two amiable clergymen who had offended him.

To **John Bell**, publisher, belongs the distinction, such as it is, of producing what has come to be known as “the worst” edition of Shakespeare ever published. It is “Bell’s Edition of Shakespeare’s Plays” (1773-74 9 vols). In spite of being generally damned, it scored a greater success that any previous issue, 800 sets being sold in one week. It was dedicated to David Garrick, and also the first edition with artistic illustrations.

The next editor, **Edmond Malone**, A great Shakespearean scholar, distinguished himself by extensive researches and valuable contributions to the literature and history of the English stage. To the second edition of Johnson and Steevens text (1788), he contributed his famous *Essay on the Chronology of Shakespeare’s Plays* , the first attempt to ascertain the order in which Shakespeare’s plays were written. Malone published his edition of Shakespeare in 1790. The text was accepted as the most trustworthy text that had yet been published. Malone continued to devote himself to Shakespearean research and collected an enormous amount of material for a variorum edition in 21 volumes. This he did not live to complete. It was finished in 1821 by James Boswell, the son of Johnson’s biographer.

In 1791-1802 appeared the celebrated **Boydell** edition in 18 parts, later forming 9 volumes, with a series of 100 copperplates from paintings by the most celebrated English artists of the time. The production of these sumptuous plates later (1802) issued separately, in two elephant folios, swallowed up a huge fortune estimated at 300,000 pounds. According to the prospectus issued in 1786, a type foundary, an ink factory, and a printing house were all specially erected for the production of this edition.

In 1803, **Isaac Reed**, a modest and conscientious though not a brilliant scholar, revised the third (1785) edition of Johnson and Steevens. This was the “first” variorum, in 21 volumes. He also revised the fourth(1793) edition of Steevens, which became the “second” variorum”, published in 1813.

The first American edition was published in Philadelphia in 1795-6, in 8 volumes, with a portrait of the poet ,the first to be produced in the United States, from an original in the collection of the Duke of Chandos. This edition was the forerunner of a long line of scholarly editions published in the U.S.

In 1807, **Thomas Bowdler**, who gave the English language a new verb, published the expurgated or “family Shakespeare”, followed in 1818 by a second edition “in which nothing is added to the original text, but those words and expressions are ommitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in family”.

**John Payne Collier,** who published his edition in 1844, ruined a long and distinguished career as a Shakespeare scholar and learned antiquarian by his forgeries in the “Perkins Folio” [collier forgery](http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/forgery/collier.htm), which he attempted to cite as authority for his emendations.

The enormous volumes of **J. O. Halliwell** (1853-65) – later known as Halliwell-Phillips- contain endless stores of Shakespearian lore. This edition, in 16 volumes, included all the original novels and tales on which the plays were founded, copious archeological annotations on each play, and essay on the formation of the text, and a life of the poet. It contained 142 plates, in addition to numerous textual woodcuts. It was limited to 150 sets, sold by subscription at 105 pounds (or 25 sets at 150 pounds on more expensive paper). It constitutes the most extensive repository of literary, historical, and archeological information concerning Shakespeare to be found in any single work and, typographically, was the most sumptuous edition that had yet to be published.

Then came the **Cambridge Editions** (1863-66) edited by those eminent scholars William George Clark, John Glover, and W. Aldis Wright. In 1864 they published the one volume Globe edition, founded on the Cambridge Shakespeare. The Globe at once became and for many years continued to be the standard text for all modern editions. The Cambridge Editions moved away from the practice of a single editor following his own sometimes capricious instincts and judgments. It was followed by the New Cambridge Edition first published in 1921. The text of the Arden Shakespeare, First series(1899-1924) was based also based on the 1864 "Globe". The Arden second series began in 1946, with a new group of editors freshly re-editing the plays, and was completed in the 1980s.

There followed numerous editions of every conceivable variety not only in England and the U.S., but in every country throughout the civilized world. The monumental **New Variorum**, begun in 1871 under the editorship of the well-beloved Dr. Furness, and upon his death, continued by his son H H Furness, Jr., represents perhaps the ultimate in inexhaustible scholarship and research. Since the death of the younger Furness, it has been continued under the sponsorship of the Modern Language Association of America.

The most radical edition in the twentieth century was the **Oxford Shakespeare**, prepared under the general editorship of Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. It aims to present the texts as they were originally performed, which results in numerous controversial choices, including presenting multiple texts of *King Lear*, a text of *Hamlet* in which the scenes presumably cut by Shakespeare are relegated to an appendix, and an emphasis on the collaborative nature of several of the plays.

In 1939, The Limited Editions Club published a slim volume titled “Shakespeare – A Review and a Preview”. The “review” portion contained an article by Mark G. Holstein titled “Landmarks in the Publishing of Shakespeare” – from which most of the preceding material is sourced. The “preview” portion contained a George Macy article entitled “A note upon a new Shakespeare” and one by Herbert Farjeon titled “The text of the new Shakespeare”. Three times in these articles is the idea of this new work described as “a text which may approximate more closely than any other yet printed to the text Shakespeare himself would have chosen to read.”

The text of this modern Folio attempts something never before attempted in the history of Shakespearean editorship. Substantially, it is an Old Spelling and Old Punctuation Text, reprinted from the First Folio and the Quarto editions of Shakespeare’s plays published in his own time, and so restoring the essential flavor that has been dissipated by modernization. Farjeon writes, “It is in the confident belief that every sensitive reader must prefer the mounting style of the original text to the flatness of its successors that the editor of the Shakespeare has chosen to restore the old orthography,; the old use of capital letters; the old expressive parenthesis; and the old punctuation, which was a practical guide to the actors rather than a useless slave to grammarians and syntacticians.

Shakespearean Punctuation, 1911, Percy Simpson (see pdf p 74 for TOTS reference)

Shakespeare's Producing Hand: A Study of His Marks of Expression to be Found in the First Folio– Richard Flatter, 1948

The Norton Facsimile (the First folio of Shakespeare), Charlton Hinman, 1968

Shakespeare’s First Texts, Neil Freeman, 1994

Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan, Tiffany Stern, 2000

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare – The Original Approach, Patrick Tucker, 2001

Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance – Don Weingust, 2007

Shakespeare in Parts, Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey, Nov. 2007

Shakespeare’s Authentic Performance Texts: the Case for Staging from the First Folio*,* Graham Watts, 2015

Performing Shakespeare Unrehearsed, Bill Kincaid, 2018

Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance – Don Weingust a review by Michale Freidman in Shakespeare Quarterly Fall 2008

In the late 1990s, Patrick Tucker's Original Shakespeare Company (OSC) gave three experimental performances of unedited Shakespeare plays at the reconstructed Globe Theatre. These productions represented an attempt to replicate not only the performance conditions of Shakespeare's company but also its methods of preparation, a process now called original practices or First Folio techniques. Don Weingust is both a professional actor and a literary scholar, and his book draws heavily upon his experience observing Tucker's company prepare for *King John* (1998) and *Cymbeline* (1999) at the Globe. Noting that a prominent textual scholar once referred to a proponent of First Folio techniques as " 'the devil' " (ix), Weingust sets out "to play the devil's advocate" (44) by exploring the sources and development of the original-practices movement and defending its controversial principles. This partisan stance renders the book less than objective, but as an in-depth introduction to the theories and practical applications of First Folio techniques, the book provides valuable information and provocative suggestions to theatrical personnel, as well as to scholars interested in the performance of Shakespeare's plays on early modern and contemporary stages.

Weingust divides his book into three chapters: the first explicates the nature and origins of First Folio techniques, the second considers them in the context of twentieth-century textual disputes, and the third illustrates their employment in Tucker's productions. According to Weingust, Austrian translator Richard Flatter lays the groundwork for the original-practices movement in his book *Shakespeare's Producing Hand* (1948). Flatter identifies several puzzling textual features of Shakespeare's First Folio, such as metrical gaps, irregular stresses, and uneven line divisions, which he ascribes to the "directorial sensibilities and intentions of the author" (Weingust, 9). Where modern editors tend to regularize such anomalies, Flatter sees them as significant cues embedded in the original scripts by Shakespeare in order to shape his actors' performances. To gain access to these authorial cues, Flatter's theatrical disciples work directly from First Folio texts. Of course, this attribution of textual inconsistencies to Shakespeare himself rests on unstable ground, given that they could have been introduced into the Folio by scribes, compositors, or printers. Weingust supplies the arguments of the New Bibliographers who attacked Flatter for his naïve belief in unmediated access to Shakespeare's intentions through printed texts, but Weingust also answers these objections by seconding "Flatter's broader definition of 'Shakespeare' " (13) as a corporate entity encompassing all of the "processes and technologies that went into the creation of the promptbook" (13). Even if textual features cannot be traced back to Shakespeare the playwright, Weingust argues that they are, by virtue of their creation by individuals linked to the Renaissance playhouse, closer to Shakespeare's intentions than the misguided interventions of modern editors, who strive to render the plays as literary, rather than theatrical, documents.

Weingust's second chapter places First Folio techniques within the context of recent editorial debates surrounding textual instability. With the death of the New Bibliography (and its goal of establishing a single, definitive Shakespeare text) came an emphasis on the multiplicity of texts in their original printed forms. Such early texts may appear to lack the unwritten para-text of stage directions provided by modern editions, but advocates of original practices contend that these cues are still present in the Folio texts: we have simply neglected the strategies for recognizing them. Modern editors, Weingust claims, exacerbate this problem by obliterating the textual irregularities that constitute such cues and by replacing them with their own conjectural stage directions, paradoxically leading readers away from authentic theatrical practices. In his call for renewed attention to the incidental features of Folio texts, Weingust makes compelling arguments, but his criticism of the New Bibliography's treatment of such features is occasionally overstated: "Its theoretical findings with regard to many textual incidentals are just those: theories. Many of these are quite thorough and persuasive. They are not, however, definitive.

Weingust’s final chapter, which takes us behind the scenes of Tucker’s productions, contains much of the book’s most provocative and illuminating material. This section examines the ways in which the members of Tucker’s OSC prepared their Globe productions in accordance with their understanding of Shakespeare’s company’s own preparation. For example, OSC actors received sides containing only their own lines and brief cues, which denied them knowledge about their characters gleaned from the rest of the play, but made the actors listen carefully to each other in performance, since they were actually hearing the words for the first time. Nevertheless, Tucker’s productions also included a feature based entirely on conjecture – he hypothesized that Richard Burbage was given access to the full prompt copy of the play before each opening performance, and that Burbage “apprised his fellow actors of the important business or significant moments for which he might require their forewarned cooperation.

Weingust acknowledges that the OSC’s equivalent rehearsal, called a “Burbage”, represented a concession that a certain amount of group work is absolutely necessary, and that Shakespeare’s theater may not have featured the libertarian acting experience Tucker envisioned for the OSC. One day before a performance, the OSC members conducted the equivalent of a combination of a first rehearsal, full blocking rehearsal, first technical rehearsal, and first dress rehearsal, all rolled into one. Understandably, their productions were a bit rougher than the Globe was used to, but Wiengust asserts that such performances achieve a more genuine interactive spontaneity, a superior actor-audience relationship, and a better use of theatrical space than the conventionally prepared and directed productions offered by the Globe’s resident companies. Still, one worries about the poor player who took the role of Jove descending from the heavens in Cymbaline whose entrance was tested during only one technical rehearsal.

On the whole, Weingust’s book is unlikely to dispel all doubts about the authenticity of First Folio techniques, but even skeptics may be won over by the exciting theatrical possibilities that spring from these alternative methods of reading texts and preparing them for performance. The recent success of other theatrical organizations that employ modified First folio techniques, such as Ralph Cohen’s American Shakespeare Company in Staunton, VA, tends to confirm the validity of Weingut’s proposal.