

## **Syme Reply, Appendix 1: Syme's misrepresentations of my references to other scholars**

(1)“Vickers ignores most of what Weiss writes about seriatim setting”

The excellent essay by Adrian Weiss, “Casting Compositors, Foul Cases, and Skeletons: Printing in Middleton’s Age”, occupies pp. 195-225 of Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds.), *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture. A Companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007). He discusses seriatim setting for 18 lines on p. 216: I cite the gist of his discussion on p. 29 of *The One King Lear [TOKL]* I have ignored nothing, unlike Syme.

(2)“Vickers ... declares Blayney’s epochal 740-page work on the *Lear* Quarto “not entirely satisfactory,”

All my references to Peter Blayney’s outstanding book are laudatory. Here Syme misquotes my comment on a specific passage in which Blayney, having shown that Okes set the 1608 Quarto seriatim, not by formes, nevertheless claims that “in another sense the whole text must have been cast off, in that the number of sheets it was to fill had been predetermined”. I commented: “This is a crucial issue, and Blayney’s account is not entirely satisfactory”, and went on to explain why (*TOKL*, p. 74). Only an exceptionally careless, or malicious reviewer would imagine that I would dismiss Blayney’s book as “unsatisfactory”, when I had hailed it in my Preface as a “magisterial study”, and “the second most important event in twentieth-century textual studies of the play” (p. xvi)

(3) “Vickers ... finds McKenzie disappointingly unaware of ‘the dynamics of typesetting.’”

Again, this is either a careless or a deliberate misrepresentation. In discussing the use throughout the 1608 Quarto of two distinct measures (i.e. line-lengths), first identified by W. W. Greg, I cited the illuminating essay by Don McKenzie (a scholar who I had the privilege of knowing, and whose work I have always admired) in which he explained how early modern printers used to set texts of varying widths by “indenting” the composing stick, that is, inserting long pieces of blank type (“quads”). I commented that neither he nor Greg had gone on to consider “*why* Okes produced so many pages mixing both measures”, narrow and wide, a phenomenon that I attribute to his constant need to adjust text space to print space, in what I call “the dynamics of typesetting” (*TOKL*, pp. 99-103). I never used the words “*disappointingly unaware*”.

(4) “Even the most strident critics of the authorial revision theory concede that the Folio *is* a different version of the play. And Vickers knows this, since he quotes one of those critics: ‘the question is not whether there was revision — of course there was — but who did it, and when, and why.’ That’s Richard Knowles, in a passage Vickers reproduces without comment despite the fact that he relies on Knowles more than on any other critic for support.”

I did indeed quote that passage (*TOKL*, p. 273 and n. 33), but Professor Syme, skimming his way through my book looking for faults, failed to notice that two pages earlier I had quoted a passage by Knowles making this supposition but added a footnote (p. 272, n. 25), in which I explicitly recorded my different reading of the evidence: “Despite the admiration and gratitude I feel for Professor Knowles’s scholarship, I must record my disagreement with the two passages where he suggests that the Folio contains ‘additions of a line or more to existing Q speeches, generally designed to expand or clarify motive or meaning’ and ‘local additions of lines’. My interpretation of the evidence is that these do not represent additions to the Folio but omissions from the Quarto” (p. 376, n. 25). A good reviewer reads the whole book.

(5) “A case in point is the late Ernst Honigmann, one of the most distinguished modern Shakespeare editors. Vickers presents Honigmann as an ally, a former believer in the revision theory who supposedly recanted in *The Texts of “Othello” and Shakespearean Revision* (1996 [p. 10]). Vickers quotes a long passage as if Honigmann were writing about *King Lear* and even claims that he ‘recognized [the Folio-only passages] as having been cut from the Quarto,’ but Honigmann does nothing of the sort. In fact, although he notes his change of mind about revisions in *Othello*, Honigmann explicitly sets aside the question of whether Shakespeare revised *Lear*: ‘whether or not this affects the case for the revision of *King Lear* I leave to others to determine’.”

In fact, Honigmann himself introduced the comparison between the cuts in *Othello* and *King Lear* on the page preceding my quotation, referring to the “strategies of revision discovered in *King Lear*” by the revisionists (p.9).” Syme chose not to cite the remainder of my quotation from Honigmann, in which he stated that there are numerous examples of “stupid and destructive cutting” in early modern play-books, including those made by Shakespeare’s own company:

At least one early production of *Henry V* omitted Chorus, arguably the second most important part in the play. And if *King Lear* was revised, some of the most powerful episodes were removed in the Folio, the ‘revised’ version – for instance, the mock-trial in 3.6, where Lear,

Edgar and the Fool vie with each other in madness. ‘The omission of the mad trial is, without question, the Folio’s most surprising cut’, said Gary Taylor, explaining that it was cut because it failed: ‘uncertainty of focus is apparent in the scene’s detail as well as its structure’. Others have also tried to justify this ‘cut’ – without, however, grappling with a related question. Isn’t this episode indispensable, as the geometric centre of the whole play? And if it can succeed in the modern theatre, why should it have failed at the Globe? Is there any evidence that it failed? (cited *TOKL*, pp. 289-90).

I also cited Honigmann’s doubts about the “Two Versions” theory, when he heard Stanley Wells expound it in 1982, recorded in his piece for the *NYRB* (*ibid.* p. 380, n. 2). I believe that I was not mistaken in citing Ernst Honigmann as an ally.

(6) Syme elsewhere quotes my words out of context, or with omissions. Under the heading “A Scholar Stumbles” Syme finds it “disappointing to discover that Vickers does not actually understand a good part of Blayney’s bibliographical argument: he puzzles why Blayney ‘should single out page C3v as the point at which seriatim setting certainly began,’ when Blayney in fact shows that, after page C3v, there is unequivocal *evidence* that the Quarto was set seriatim...” My complete sentence was as follows: “It is also not clear why Blayney should single out page C3v as the point at which seriatim setting certainly began, for in an earlier discussion he suggested that sheet C was ‘almost certainly’ set seriatim” (*TOKL*, p. 75, citing Blayney, *Origins*, p. 103. My puzzlement was that Blayney should be so definite at one point and less sure elsewhere. To claim that “Vickers does not actually understand a good part of Blayney’s bibliographical argument”, after you have omitted the key part of the sentence, is a cheap shot, especially given that Syme failed to note Blayney’s proof that the 1608 *Lear* was the first play that Okes had printed, and that he chose to set it seriatim due to the messy state of Shakespeare’s manuscript.

Brian Vickers

6 October 2016