

Shakespeare in the Restoration Royal Libraries:
Drama, Collecting, and Continuity in Late Seventeenth-Century Library
Catalogues

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A month before Charles I's execution on 30 January 1649, a news pamphlet reported that he was "pretty merry" in his imprisonment, and spent his time reading "Sermon Books, and sometimes Shakspeare and Ben: Johnsons Playes".¹ Shakespeare's function in the late 1640s as a comfort to royalty is further testified by the survival of Charles's copy of the second folio, now in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, which he inscribed on its contents page with the names of characters from the comedies and on the recto side of the fourth flyleaf with a consoling motto, "*dum spiro spero*": 'while I breathe, I hope'.² After Charles's death, the book was appropriated by Thomas Herbert, whose official title of Groom of the Bedchamber disguised his role as Charles's jailer, and who added his own inscription in Latin, marking it as the gift of a king to his "humble servant".³

Since the reacquisition of Charles's second folio for the Royal Library, it has become one of the most famous surviving copies of this impression, frequently drawing focus from the Royal

¹ *Perfect Occurrences of Every Daies iournall in Parliament Proceedings with His Majesty. And other Moderate Intelligence. From His Excellency the Lord Fairfax's Army, and other Parts, from Fryday December the 22 to Fryday Decemb. the 30. 1648* (London: Printed by I.C. for John Clowes and Robert Ibbitson, 1648), [777–78] sigs. 5L3v–4r.

² See Gordon McMullan, "The 'Disappointment' of Charles I's Shakespeare Second Folio", in Sally Barnden, Gordon McMullan, Kate Retford and Kirsten Tambling (eds), *Shakespeare's Afterlife in the Royal Collection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

³ "Ex dono sereniss[im]i Regis Car[oli] Seruo suo humiliss[im]o. THerb[er]to." Inscriptions in *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies Histories and Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies. The second impression* (London: Printed by Thomas Cotes for Robert Allot, 1632), Royal Collection Inventory Number 1080415, 4th flyleaf.

Collection's remounted, unannotated copy of the first folio, a George IV acquisition.⁴ The book's fame testifies to the enduring appeal of the story of a doomed monarch finding solace in Shakespeare. Eric Rasmussen paints a picture of Charles fleeing to the Isle of Wight on a small boat, yet still choosing to carry with him this relatively large and cumbersome book, surely "one of his dearest possessions".⁵ Though Shakespeare's works were read on both sides of the conflict in the seventeenth century, they already had (and, I would argue, retain today) an association with royalist politics – in part an association shared by all commercial drama as a result of the closure of the theatres during the Commonwealth and Protectorate and their re-opening upon the Restoration.⁶ John Milton, despite his own deep engagement with Shakespeare's work, remarked sardonically in *Eikonoklastes* on Charles's adoption of Shakespeare as "the Closet Companion of these his solitudes", suggesting that Richard III's false piety could serve as a model for Charles's own.⁷ The news pamphlet, presenting Shakespearean reading as private consolation, nonetheless made Charles's reading practices a matter of public knowledge; Milton's comments, in a pamphlet justifying the king's execution, can leave us in little doubt that reading and collecting Shakespeare were actions that could be invested with political significance.

After the Restoration, Charles II made efforts to reacquire books that had been in his father's collection. Herbert was called upon to surrender those that were in his possession and declared that he had returned all "papers, books or writings of public use", though he clearly did not consider the Shakespeare folio to fall in that category – the exclusion reinforces a sense that

⁴ See Emma Stuart, "Why did George IV own a First Folio?" in Barnden, McMullan, Retford and Tambling (eds), forthcoming (cf. note 2).

⁵ Eric Rasmussen, *The Shakespeare Thefts: In Search of the First Folios* (Basingstoke: Houndmills, 2011), 115.

⁶ Emma Depledge argues that Shakespeare's later cultural prominence has its origins in his plays' recruitment to advocate the Tory position during the Exclusion Crisis. See Depledge, *Shakespeare's Rise to Cultural Prominence: Politics, Print, and Alteration, 1642–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–2.

⁷ John Milton, *Eikonoklastes in Answer to a Book Intitl'd Eikon Basilike the Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings*, (London: Printed by Matthew Simmons, 1649), sig. D3r. Milton's annotations to his own first folio have been discussed in detail in Claire M. L. Bourne and Jason Scott-Warren, "'thy unvalued Booke': John Milton's Copy of the Shakespeare First Folio", *Milton Quarterly* 56.1–2 (2022), 1–85.

collecting English drama was an activity belonging to private life, not the kind of prestigious collecting that might form part of a monarch's public profile.⁸ Instead, the book found its way to the open market, its value augmented by its status as a relic of a king who had been reinvented as a martyr, and it passed through two further libraries before it was purchased by the Shakespeare scholar and editor George Steevens, at whose sale it was bought back into royal possession by an agent of George III.⁹ Given the belatedness of the relic copy's return to a royal collection, we might reasonably ask whether Shakespeare's association with royalty endured during the Restoration, or, more prosaically: what was Shakespeare's place in the royal libraries of the late seventeenth century?

This essay, introducing two library catalogues previously unknown to Shakespeare scholars, will put the printed Shakespeare in late seventeenth-century royal libraries in context. The library catalogues support some prevailing critical conclusions about early modern English drama in late seventeenth-century collections – for instance, that Shakespeare, Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher were beginning to take precedence over their contemporaries thanks to their plays' publication in folio, but that Shakespeare had not yet attained the exceptional status which he would later be afforded.¹⁰ They indicate a collecting practice that supplemented the plays in the folios with Sammelband volumes of collected quartos, often grouped by attribution

⁸ Letter from Sir Thomas Herbert to Charles II, 1 September 1662, BL MS Egerton 2538, f. 124; see T.A. Birrell, *English Monarchs and Their Books* (London: British Library, 1986), esp. 47. Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Gáldy and Adriana Turpin have shown that collecting can be used to position a monarch in relation to hierarchies of wealth, taste and power and to assert their relationship to lineage and national identity. See Bracken, Gáldy and Turpin, *Collecting and Dynastic Ambition* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

⁹ *Bibliotheca Steevensiana: A Catalogue of the Curious and Valuable Library of George Steevens, Esq.* (London: J. Barker, 1800), p. 85. Annotated copy, British Library, General Reference Collection 123.f.15.

¹⁰ Paulina Kewes finds that “though the ‘triumvirate of wit’ (the phrase customarily used to describe Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher) was revered ... its members were by no means regarded as a standard beyond the reach of the present day”. See Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660–1710* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 10. Richard Schoch draws similar conclusions from his study of late seventeenth-century booksellers' lists. See Schoch, *Writing the History of the British Stage, 1660–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 53, 67.

in imitation of the folios' construction of authorship. One of these, a volume of Shakespearean apocrypha, has attracted some attention from scholars interested in canon-building and the literary value of Shakespeare's works. The library catalogues allow this volume to be assessed in context for the first time and show that while the existence of a royal apocrypha volume does not in itself suggest that Shakespeare was exceptionally favoured, it does indicate a desire to collect Shakespeare beyond the folios.¹¹ Noting that these catalogues appear to build on a pre-existing collection of English drama, and that they show a royal collection developing across successive reigns, I further read the libraries as professions of royal continuity, effacing the sharp caesura in royal collecting which had been imposed by the dispersal of Charles I's books. The two catalogues that form the basis for this study are Harley MS 4180 at the British Library, titled *Catalogus Librorum* (hereafter 'the Harley catalogue') and *A Catalogue of the Books in the King's Closet MDCXCI*, manuscript CIM I 272 at Landesbibliothek Oldenburg ('the Oldenburg catalogue').¹² Though the libraries that they record have significant overlap, the two documents differ in important ways. The Harley catalogue was in the British Museum by the late eighteenth century and on the basis of the coat of arms on its binding was listed in the catalogue of Harleian manuscripts as "probably" belonging to Charles II's library at Whitehall.¹³ John Goldfinch has since confirmed this, observing that some of Charles II's

¹¹ See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 206, 220.

¹² The founding collection of the Landesbibliothek Oldenburg is that of the lawyer and collector Georg Friedrich Brandes (1719–1791), whose visits to London and connections in Hanoverian government may have enabled him to acquire the royal library catalogue. The catalogue is said to have been in the possession of Brian Fairfax (1676–1749) until his death (in a footnote in Thomas Birch's *Life of Henry, Prince of Wales*). If Brandes did not acquire the manuscript from Fairfax, it may have arrived in Oldenburg later, perhaps having been sold with the bulk of Fairfax's library to Francis Child of Osterley Park and retained until the Osterley library sale in 1885, which included a collection of manuscript library catalogues as lot 385. See Thomas Birch, *The Life of Henry, Prince of Wales: Eldest Son of King James I* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1760), 166, and *The Osterley Park Library, Catalogue of this important collection of books, the property of the Rt. Hon the Early of Jersey...* (London: Dryden Press, 1885), 27.

¹³ *A catalogue of the Harleian manuscripts in the British Museum. With indexes of persons, places, and matters [...]* Printed by command of His Majesty King George III (London: British Museum, 1808–1812), Vol. 3, 122.

surviving books in the King's Library at the British Library bear manuscript shelfmarks matching those in the Harley catalogue.¹⁴ Though the catalogue is undated, Goldfinch estimates its date of compilation to be in the late 1670s based on the latest publication dates of books in the collection.¹⁵ John Evelyn spent several days in 1680 roaming unsupervised in the Whitehall library, and found it well established by that date; he reported seeing "a few histories, some Travels and French books, abundance of maps and sea charts, entertainments and pomps, buildings and pieces relating to the navy, [and] some mathematical instruments".¹⁶ The catalogue is written in a single hand by an anonymous compiler, and its pages were trimmed contemporaneously, probably for binding; some entries partially cropped out have been resupplied in the same hand. It is organised alphabetically by both title and author, and most items appear more than once under variant titles – in one extreme case, a single quarto of Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* is entered five times, under "Cutpurse Moll a play", "Dekker's Roaring Girle", "Girl Roaring a play", "Mal Cut Purse a play" and "Roaring Girl a play". Opposite each entry is an alphanumeric code directing the user to the case, shelf, and book where it can be found – thus *The Roaring Girl* is listed F.2.41, corresponding to a volume in which it was bound with three other plays attributed to Dekker. The Harley catalogue, then, anticipates a user who is looking either for a specific work or for a title keyword or an author's name, and who will use the catalogue as a finding aid to navigate the six bookcases, thirty-four shelves and almost eight hundred titles that constituted the Whitehall library.

The Oldenburg catalogue was compiled in 1691 by Henri Justel, who had been appointed keeper of the royal library at St James's Palace in 1689.¹⁷ This catalogue simply lists the contents of the library shelf by shelf, recording nearly 1,200 titles arranged on forty-six shelves,

¹⁴ In particular, the substantial topographical holdings of Charles II's Whitehall library seem to have later formed the foundation of George III's topographical collection. John Goldfinch, "Royal Libraries in the King's Library", in Kathleen Doyle and Scot McKendrick (eds), *1000 Years of Royal Books and Manuscripts*, (London: The British Library, 2013), 213–236, esp. 232.

¹⁵ Goldfinch (2013), 232.

¹⁶ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. by William Bray (New York and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), Vol. 2, 2 September 1680.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Treasure, "Justel, Henri (1620–1693)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004.

grouped by language and sometimes by size.¹⁸ The largest books, especially “Land and Water Atlases” were kept separately in “Two Great Presses” (cupboards).¹⁹ Though, at a glance, this gives a clearer sense of the layout and organisation of the collection than the Harley catalogue does, it would have made a less convenient finding aid – instead, it presents itself as an inventory of the King’s Closet (by 1691, that of William III), a document perhaps intended for use by the library’s keepers and caretakers rather than by visiting readers. The antiquary Thomas Hearne complained that Justel was “a very ingenious man, but far from being learned”, and that under his stewardship, there was “[n]o Catalogue of the Books in St James’s Library, w[hi]ch thereby is no use.”²⁰ Justel’s cataloguing practice and the books’ location in a ‘closet’, a private room, hints that use of the library in the extant catalogue was reserved for a select group. The location of the library is unknown, and may have been at Whitehall, Kensington Palace, or Hampton Court.²¹ A high number of identical titles suggests that many of the Whitehall books from the earlier catalogue were in “the King’s Closet” by 1691, but the later catalogue shows a library which has expanded both by acquiring new publications and by absorbing works from other royal libraries. However, reduced numbers of Latin and Spanish books in the later catalogue show that the Whitehall library did not arrive in the King’s Closet in its totality.

English drama is prominent in both library catalogues. The Harley catalogue includes a copy of the 1640/1 second volume of Jonson’s *Works* and a Beaumont and Fletcher folio, possibly the 1647 first folio in a presentation binding bearing the armorial stamp of Charles II as Prince

¹⁸ English and French books are mixed together, but separate shelves distinguish those in Latin, Spanish, and Italian.

¹⁹ Henri Justel, *A Catalogue of the Books in the King’s Closet MDCXCI*. MS CIM I 272, f. 127r. Landesbibliothek Oldenburg. Available online at <https://digital.lb-oldenburg.de/lbolha/content/titleinfo/806299>, last access 23 April 2023.

²⁰ *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. by C. E. Doble (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), Vol. 3, 54.

²¹ Goldfinch argues tentatively in favour of Kensington, noting that Mary II took an interest in developing royal libraries both in England and in the Netherlands and that the Kensington library would later be a key source of volumes appropriated for George III’s Buckingham House library. Goldfinch (2013), 229–31.

of Wales, which is now in the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds.²² This volume seems to have become separated from the library by the time of the 1691 catalogue. But the later catalogue and the surviving books themselves show that Charles II possessed a 1616 Jonson folio and a Shakespeare third folio by his death – both were bound in the red leather used for his official library at St James’s, which may account for their omission from the Harley catalogue of books at Whitehall.²³

The folios were complimented by a collection of English drama in quarto which occupied the majority of shelf F.2 in the Whitehall library and the whole of shelf nineteen in the King’s Closet. Plays are disproportionately conspicuous in the Harley catalogue compared to the space they occupied in the library it records, partly due to the compiler’s habit of offering multiple alternate titles, but also because he itemizes the contents of each of twenty-eight Sammelband collections of plays in quarto (178 plays in total).²⁴ Most other small-format books in the Whitehall library were either bound individually – this seems to have been the case, for example, for a quarto of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* – or given collective titles – for instance, the book identified only as “Hackett’s Sermons” is likely to have gathered separately published quarto editions of individual sermons by Thomas Hackett. Aside from the English play quartos, a handful of Italian novellas and plays were bound in small nonce collections – Torquato Tasso’s *Aminta Favola Boscareccia* and Guidubaldo Bonarelli’s *Filli di Sciro* survive

²² “The Brotherton Library acquires King Charles II’s Beaumont and Fletcher Folio”, *Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures News*, 1 February 2021. <https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/arts-humanities-cultures/news/article/1728/the-brotherton-library-acquires-king-charles-ii-s-beaumont-and-fletcher-folio>, last access 23 April 2023.

²³ Charles II’s Shakespeare and Jonson folios are 80.1.3 and 79.1.3 respectively in the British Library. The Jonson folio belonging to Charles I, mentioned among his reading material in the 1648 news pamphlet, is identifiable by his habit of writing “*dum spiro spero*” into his books. Like the Shakespeare second folio, his Jonson volume left royal possession at his death, and was last accounted for at a Sotheby’s sale in 1902. Sale of Lt-Col. Edward George Hibbert, Sotheby’s, 9/4/1902, lot 434, £61 to Quaritch.

²⁴ On Shakespeare’s circulation in Sammelband volumes, see Jeffrey Todd Knight, “Making Shakespeare’s Books: Assembly and Intertextuality in the Archives”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009), 304–40; *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

in a single binding in the Royal Library at Windsor.²⁵ But the volumes of English drama are much larger, containing between four and nine quartos each. Justel took a different approach to cataloguing the play collection in the 1691 catalogue – though a handful of drama volumes are scattered seemingly at random across the twenty-seven shelves devoted to English and French books, the majority are gathered in a single entry as “Eight and Twenty Volumes of Tragedies Comedies and Playes” with a list of forty-two authors whose work is represented among them. Justel’s approach was certainly labour-saving compared to that of the anonymous Whitehall cataloguer, and for a researcher interested in the organisation of the libraries it is considerably less informative, but it also has the effect of setting the bulk of the printed English drama apart from the main library (as he does also for manuscripts, maps, and bundles of pamphlets) and asserting its status as a distinct collection within a collection.

The coincidence of the twenty-eight identifiable Sammelband volumes in the Harley catalogue and the entry for “Eight and Twenty Volumes” in the Oldenburg catalogue is in some ways misleading. The list of playwrights in the latter includes a handful whose works are not represented in the earlier catalogue, most notably John Lyly and Aphra Behn, and several of the authors to whom plays in the Whitehall catalogue are now attributed are not mentioned in the Oldenburg catalogue, though perhaps because their plays were deemed anonymous or were attributed elsewhere: these include George Peele, Edward Sharpham, Anthony Munday, Barnabe Barnes, and Henry Chettle. A few of the Whitehall volumes appear elsewhere in the Oldenburg catalogue, and therefore are probably not included in the twenty-eight – a volume of Thomas Goffe’s Turk plays (F.2.30) and a volume of unattributed plays including William Cartwright’s *The Royal Slave* and Munday and Chettle’s *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* (F.2.52) have their own separate entries. Some volumes, however, were almost certainly consistent between the two catalogues. The list of authors in the Oldenburg catalogue is not alphabetical; instead, the order suggests that it was informed by the distribution of plays across volumes. That Thomas Kyd, Cyril Tourneur and Elizabeth Cary appear consecutively in the list of authors reflects the gathering of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Atheist’s Tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Mariam* in a single volume (F.2.35). Similarly, William Rowley, Robert Chamberlaine and Thomas Nashe are grouped together in the list as in the volume F.2.51, while

²⁵ The volume retains the E4 shelfmark which corresponds to its entry in the Harley catalogue. See RCIN 1081382, *Royal Collection Trust*. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1081382/aminta-favola-boscareccia-del-signor-torquato-tasso-torquato-tasso-with-filli-di>, last access 23 April 2023.

Gervaise Markham and William Sampson are listed alongside an otherwise unknown “L.W. Hoffman”, perhaps because their *Herod and Antipater* had been bound with a quarto of Chettle’s *The Tragedy of Hoffman*.²⁶

I suggest that it is possible to trace three distinct taxonomies governing the collection of quartos into the twenty-eight Sammelband volumes in the Harley catalogue. The most conspicuous, as I have indicated above, is authorial attribution: seventeen volumes are assigned to a particular playwright in the catalogue, though in several cases the attributions of specific plays are odd or surprising. Besides the predominantly apocryphal Shakespeare volume, the library also included a volume attributed to Robert Greene that included three plays by Christopher Marlowe. Nonetheless, grouping the texts by author reflected the established economy of authorship that had emerged in folio play collections in the early seventeenth century and had been solidified by the practice of stationers such as Humphrey Moseley in the 1650s.²⁷ Frances Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater’s possession of a Sammelband volume of “Diuers Playes by Shakespeare” as early as 1602 indicates the long history of taxonomies based on authorship.²⁸ Among the remaining eleven volumes of play quartos in the Harley catalogue, seven appear to have contained plays grouped alphabetically by title. The other four may be grouped at random

²⁶ A further example is the grouping of Thomas May, Henry Shirley, and Aston Cockayne, corresponding to volume F.2.45.

²⁷ See David McInnis, *Shakespeare and Lost Plays: Reimagining Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 191; David Scott Kastan, “Humphrey Moseley and the Invention of English Literature”, in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin (eds), *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 105–24.

²⁸ Erne proposes that Egerton’s volume may have contained almost all the Shakespeare quartos that were then available. Erne (2013), 202–06. See also Heidi Brayman Hackel, “The Countess of Bridgewater’s London Library”, in Jennifer Andersen, Elizabeth Sauer and Stephen Orgel (eds), *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 138–59. The collection of Shakespeare quartos sold collectively by Thomas Pavier in 1619 are another important early example; on the Pavier quartos see Tara L. Lyons, “Serials, Spinoffs, and Histories: Selling ‘Shakespeare’ in Collection Before the Folio”, *Philological Quarterly* 91.2 (2012), 185–220, and Zachary Lesser, *Ghosts, Holes, Rips, and Scrapes: Shakespeare in 1619, Bibliography in the Longue Durée* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

as, for instance, were the play collections in sixteen volumes in the earls of Northumberland's library at Petworth House.²⁹ However, I propose that traces of a taxonomy based on genre are discernible among these volumes. In one, F.2.35, Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* was bound with Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter*, and a play called *Pompey the Great* – probably Kyd's translation of Robert Garnier's *Cornélie*, published in its second issue in 1595 as *Pompey the Great His Fair Cornelia's Tragedy*, though another possibility is the collaborative translation of Pierre Corneille's *Pompey the Great* published in 1664. This gathering, not least due to the titles of the first three plays, suggests a deliberately assembled volume of tragedies. The other three volumes in this category seem to collect plays based on history. Two of them deal primarily with distant and ancient history – F.2.14, whose contents included the anonymous play *Marcus Tullius Cicero* and Webster's *Appius and Virginia*, and F.2.34, which included Markham and Sampson's *Herod and Antipater* bound with Thomas Nuce's translation of Seneca's *Octavia*. The third, F.2.49, focused on English history, with plays including Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Jasper Fisher's university play *The True Trojans (Fuimus Troes)*, and John Day, George Wilkins and William Rowley's *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*. If there are indeed three different logics governing the organization of plays (authorship, title, and genre), it may indicate that the twenty-eight volumes reflect the practices of more than one collector or of different librarians, and perhaps of a collecting practice that developed over the course of multiple reigns.

Since the catalogue does not provide any dates for the playbooks, it is difficult to estimate when the *Sammelband* volumes were bound. Though several of them cannot have been bound before the 1660s, others may have been assembled much earlier.³⁰ The 'tragedy' volume discussed above, F.2.35, has the earliest possible compilation date – assuming its *Pompey* play is that of

²⁹ See Maria Kirk, "Books and their Lives: The Petworth House Plays", in Robert F.W. Smith and Gemma L. Watson (eds), *Writing the Lives of People and Things, AD 500–1700: A Multi-Disciplinary Future for Biography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 203–226. Also Erne (2013), 211–21.

³⁰ For example, unless a lost earlier quarto existed of *Hengist, King of Kent* (or, as it was initially titled, *The Mayor of Quinborough*), the volume F.2.44 (containing plays attributed to Middleton) must have been bound in the 1660s. The volume F.2.27, containing plays attributed to Webster, similarly cannot have been bound before the 1661 publication of *The Thracian Wonder*.

Garnier and Kyd, it could have been assembled as early as 1613, upon the publication of *The Tragedy of Mariam*.³¹ But the catalogue also shows that some volumes bound recent publications alongside much older books. The volume attributed to Shakespeare, F.2.31, which with the exception of *Love's Labour's Lost* contained apocryphal plays, included a 1598 quarto of *Mucedorus* bound with three 1631 publications. Peter Kirwan connects the gathering of apocryphal plays in this volume to a flurry of publishing and collecting activity after the publication of the second folio in 1632, supplying plays attributed to Shakespeare that were omitted from that volume.³²

Seven out of the eight constituent quartos from the Shakespeare volume are still accounted for today, all of them in the British Library.³³ Their survival and documentation are an effect of Shakespeare's increasingly exceptional status from the mid eighteenth century. Edward Capell's note on plays attributed to Shakespeare in his 1768 edition of the playwright's works

³¹ The catalogue records *The Tragedy of Mariam* three times, each time misreading its subtitle *The Faire Queene of Iewry* as "fairy queen": it appears as "Mariamne, fairy Queene, a play", "Queene Fayry a play" and "Fairy Queene, a play", with a faint suggestion that the catalogue's compiler imagined Cary's play as a dramatization of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

³² Peter Kirwan, "The First Collected 'Shakespeare Apocrypha'", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.4 (2011), 601. Kirwan cites Eric Rasmussen and G. R. Proudfoot's suggestion that the 1634 publication of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was positioned as "a supplementary volume to be sold in association with the Shakespeare Second Folio". *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. by Rasmussen and Proudfoot. Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii.

³³ The volume contained eight playbooks in the following order: *The Puritan* (Q1, 1607, BL C.34.1.4), *I Sir John Oldcastle* (Q1, 1600), *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (Q2, 1613, BL C.34.b.14), *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (Q2, 1613, BL 643.c.12), *The London Prodigal* (Q1, 1605, BL C.34.1.3), *Mucedorus* (Q1, 1598, BL C.34.b.34), *Fair Em* (Q2, 1631, BL 643.c.14), *Love's Labours Lost* (Q2, 1631, BL C.34.k.21). See George M. Kahrl and Dorothy Anderson, *The Garrick Collection of Old English Plays: A Catalogue with an Historical Introduction* (London: British Library, 1982), no. 326, 407, 664, 777, 821, 973, 974 and 1050. After Garrick's collection was bequeathed to the British Museum, the volume was broken up and the plays rebound individually; since then the copy of *I Sir John Oldcastle* has been lost, possibly in the 1788 duplicates sale. See *A catalogue of the duplicate Books, Coins, and Medals of the British Museum ... sold ... by order of the Trustees* (London: British Museum, 1788), 42, no. 1114.

mentions a volume, “now in Mr Garrick’s possession, that did belong to King Charles the first, which is titl’d upon the back, ‘SHAKESPEAR Vol. 1’”.³⁴ Capell’s note was periodically repeated by later scholars interested in the doubtful or apocryphal plays, since the volume represents the only known attribution to Shakespeare of *Fair Em*, and a rare example of a compiler following Edward Archer’s 1656 “Exact and perfect Catalogue of all the Plaies” in attributing to Shakespeare both *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* and *Mucedorus*.³⁵ George Steevens echoed Capell’s note in his 1778 edition of Shakespeare’s plays, reporting that both *Merry Devil* and *Mucedorus* were in David Garrick’s collection in a volume formerly belonging to Charles I, and Steevens was repeated in turn by Edmond Malone in 1790.³⁶ Kirwan observes that references to the volume began to mention Charles the *Second* from the late eighteenth century and traces this shift to Steevens’ 1793 variorum edition, where his three footnotes mentioning the volume are all reproduced verbatim from the earlier edition, except that in each case Charles I has become Charles II. This alteration was then reproduced by Steevens’ successors, including Malone in 1821 as well as, more recently, John Jowett, Richard Preiss, and Pavel Drábek.³⁷ Further confusing matters, Edward Harwood had written to the

³⁴ William Shakespeare, *Mr William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* [...], ed. by Edward Capell. 10 Vols (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1768), Vol. 1, “Table of His Editions”, sig. f8r.

³⁵ The *Mucedorus* attribution in this volume is perhaps particularly surprising given that it contained a first quarto, lacking the Jacobean additions “of which Shakespeare could possibly be guilty”, according to Richard Proudfoot (email to the author, 23 March 2020). Edward Archer, “An Exact and perfect Catalogue of all the Plaies that were ever printed...”, appended to Philip Massinger, *The excellent comedy called, The Old Law, or; A new way to please you* (London: Edward Archer, 1656), sig. b1v. On attributions and booksellers’ catalogues, see Adam G. Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare: Biography, Bibliography, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 152.

³⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare. In Ten Volumes. With the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators; To Which Are Added Notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, ed. by George Steevens. 2nd edn, 10 Vols (London: C. Bathurst et al, 1778), 1: 260n.

³⁷ Kirwan (2011), 596; John Jowett, “Shakespeare Supplanted”, 39–73 and Richard Preiss, “A Play Finally Anonymous,” 117–140 in Douglas A. Brooks (ed.), *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*

Gentleman's Magazine in June 1792 with an anecdote about how Garrick, showing off his library, had implied that many or all of his playbooks were derived from Charles II's collection.³⁸

Kirwan's 2011 essay alerted modern scholars to the fact that this volume included eight plays rather than just three (previous scholarship having focused on the volume's potential to support Shakespeare's authorship of *Mucedorus*, *Fair Em* and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*), and made a case for the Charles I provenance based on Capell's primacy and the 1631 publication date of three constituent quartos. Following Kirwan, Lukas Erne included this volume on a list of examples testifying to Shakespeare's popularity in print and especially the idea that "Shakespeare's books were bought to be preserved" in the seventeenth century.³⁹ The perspective granted by the Harley catalogue of seeing the Shakespeare volume as one among twenty-eight volumes of early modern drama perhaps reduces its capacity to indicate that Shakespeare was particularly favoured. And while the catalogue proves that this book belonged to Charles II (and displaces Capell's authority as the earliest witness), it does not necessarily preclude the possibility that it was originally bound for Charles I – as mentioned earlier, Charles II attempted to recover the royal books that had been dispersed after the regicide. I would further suggest that the variety of taxonomic principles and the wide range of publication dates support the theory that the collection of English drama in the Whitehall library was assembled over an extended period which could have begun during the reign of the first Charles. The inclusion of Shakespeare's name in the Oldenburg catalogue's list of dramatic authors suggests that the volume remained in royal possession until at least 1691; its route from there to Garrick's library over some seventy years is unknown.⁴⁰

(Lampeter, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), esp. 39, 121; Pavel Drábek, "Shakespeare's Influence on *Mucedorus*", in Drábek, Klára Kolinská, and Matthew Nicholls (eds), *Shakespeare and His Collaborators over the Centuries* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 45–54.

³⁸ "Mr Garrick shewed me his library, in which I noticed a very large collection of Plays in 4to, which he told me were once in the possession of King Charles the Second." Edward Harwood, Letter to *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1792, 522.

³⁹ Erne (2013), 219–20.

⁴⁰ A few of the other volumes from Whitehall landed in Lord Charlemont's library; the catalogue for his sale in 1865 advertised "five volumes of masques, historical plays and tragedies from the library of King Charles II [with] a list of contents in the King's autograph

The possibility that the Shakespeare volume originated in a collection belonging to Charles I is also interesting in light of that monarch's apparent taste for Shakespearean comedy. Charles's annotations on the contents page of his second folio refer exclusively to comedies, perhaps because these were his favourites or because, as T. A. Birrell suggests, he "substituted sensible and practical titles" such as "Benedick & Betrice" for Shakespeare's more aphoristic *Much Ado About Nothing*.⁴¹ The collecting practice in the Harley catalogue also shows a slight preference for comedy. With three volumes devoted to his works, James Shirley was the playwright whose work featured most heavily in the collection; it included twenty-one of his plays, all of which were in print by 1640, but the six Shirley quartos in print by that date which were absent from the collection included all four of his available tragedies.⁴² The Shakespeare volume suggested the same preference. Its contents were mostly comedies, along with the two history plays *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* and *I Sir John Oldcastle*. Among the plays which might have been included in a Shakespeare volume meant to supply omissions from the second folio, it notably excludes *The Tragedy of Locrine* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*; the three plays which are included without any substantial claim to Shakespearean authorship are all comedies of a broadly romantic type: *Fair Em*, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, and *Mucedorus*.⁴³

on the flyleaf", as well as a further single-volume collection of Philip Massinger's works from Charles's library (perhaps F.2.32). See Nicholas D. Smith, *An Actor's Library: David Garrick, Book Collecting and Literary Friendships* (New Castle, DW: Oak Knoll Press, 2017), 125; *A Catalogue of some highly important and valuable books and manuscripts of a nobleman of great literary and artistic taste [...] which will be sold by auction, by Messrs Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge [...] on Friday, the 11th day of August, 1865, etc.* (London, 1865).

⁴¹ Birrell (1986), 45. His theory is less convincing with regards to some of Charles's other interventions, such as retitling *All's Well that Ends Well* as "Mr Paroles" and *Twelfth Night* as "Malvolio".

⁴² The prevalence of Shirley in the collection invites comparison with the Petworth collection, which, as Maria Kirk notes, contained fifteen out of the seventeen Shirley quartos in circulation by 1638. Kirk (2016), 222.

⁴³ I am grateful to Richard Proudfoot for drawing my attention to this. Email to the author, 23 March 2020. *Locrine* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* had been attributed, respectively, to "W. S." and "W. Shakspeare" in quarto and both would be included in the third folio of Shakespeare's plays published in 1664.

The quarto collection's relationship to the folios in royal libraries provides another tentative sign of its compilation over more than one reign. Ben Jonson's quarto publications are entirely absent from the collection, with the exception of the collaborative *Eastward Ho!*, here attributed to George Chapman, but both Charleses owned copies of Jonson's 1616 *Works*. Beaumont and Fletcher are similarly conspicuous by their absence – we have seen that Charles II possessed a copy of the 1647 folio, presented to him while Prince of Wales. Charles I, conversely, did own some of Fletcher's works in quarto: the Malone collection at the Bodleian library contains a volume of nine Fletcher plays annotated in Charles's hand.⁴⁴ If Charles II assembled a drama collection in the 1660s and 1670s partly by recovering some of his father's books, he did not need the Fletcher volume, since the folio was already in his possession. Both Charleses owned a Shakespeare folio: Charles I, of course, owned the annotated second folio now at Windsor; Charles II owned a third folio with a forty-three play canon, which was later absorbed into George III's library at Buckingham House and presented with it to the British Museum in 1823. Given that the quarto collection shows a tendency to supply omissions from the folios, we could speculate that the contents of the Shakespeare volume indicate that it was bound for the first Charles, since all its contents except *Love's Labour's Lost* were missing from his second folio, whereas his son's third folio contained all the plays in the volume except *Fair Em*, *Mucedorus*, and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*.

If the royal collection of English drama was inaugurated before the regicide, it is also clear that it went on evolving after the Restoration: the 1691 Oldenburg catalogue indicates that the "Tragedies, Comedies and Playes" in the King's Closet included works by Aphra Behn, John Lyly and Thomas Jordan which were absent in the 1670s when the Harley catalogue was created. The Oldenburg catalogue also shows the movement of books within and between royal libraries: two of the *Sammelband* volumes recorded in the earlier catalogue are still present but have been shelved separately from the rest of the collection; the Shakespeare and Jonson folios are now in the same library as the majority of the drama in quarto, but the Beaumont and Fletcher folio has gone. The changes suggest that the library was in use, that books moved between royal palaces as required by their owners, and that successive monarchs and their agents and librarians continued to improve the collection. Contemporary scholarly practice tends to set Restoration drama apart from pre-1642 plays, and not without reason given the

⁴⁴ See Percy Simpson, "King Charles the First as Dramatic Critic", in *Studies in Elizabethan Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 131–7; and Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

significant changes to theatre practice that took place in the 1660s, such as the legalisation of women actors.⁴⁵ What I have shown here, however, is how these royal library catalogues treat English drama as a continuous category, thus effacing the ruptures both in dramatic production and in royal collecting during the eleven years of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and in so doing asserting both royal and dramatic continuity.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz stellt zwei Kataloge der königlichen Bibliothek aus dem späten 17. Jahrhundert vor, anhand derer die Bestände an Shakespeare-Stücken und anderen englischen Dramatikern in der königlichen Sammlung nach der Restauration untersucht werden. Die Kataloge ermöglichen es, einen Bestand von achtundzwanzig Sammelbänden mit Theaterstücken zu rekonstruieren, die sich in den 1670er Jahren im Besitz von Charles II befanden – einschließlich eines Bandes mit Shakespeare-Apokryphen, der zum ersten Mal in seinem ursprünglichen Kontext des 17. Jahrhunderts verortet wird. Der Aufsatz verwendet die Belege in den Bibliothekskatalogen, um Schlussfolgerungen über den Prozess und die Prioritäten der königlichen Sammeltätigkeit zu ziehen, und argumentiert, dass die Bibliothek nach der Restauration eine Möglichkeit bot, die Unterbrechung der königlichen und dramatischen Kontinuität während des Commonwealth und des Protektorats auszulöschen.

⁴⁵ Heidi Craig's recent work indicates that a royal collecting practice seeking to assert continuity would have been at odds with broader perception of pre-1642 drama as belonging to "a quickly receding cultural past". See Craig, *Theatre Closure and the Paradoxical Rise of English Renaissance Drama in the Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 3–4.