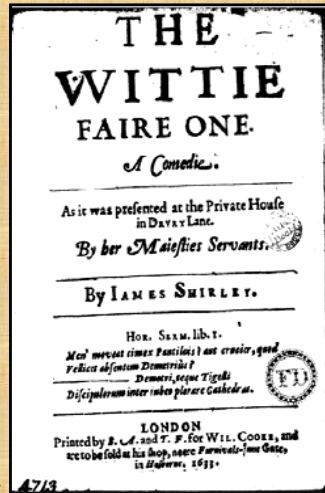


Textual Collation of the First Edition of *The Wittie Faire One* by James Shirley

Introduction

The aim of this project was to locate and collate as many British copies of James Shirley's *The Wittie Faire One* (1633) as possible. The project was based in Cambridge University as it was the site of the largest concentration of copies. The aim of collation is to discover, as far as possible, all textual variants created in the printing process. It is a crucial component of the editorial process as it allows the play's editor (in this case, my project supervisor Dr Teresa Grant) to make decisions about the content of their modern printed play based upon actual textual evidence. Collation is necessary in the editing of early texts, including those of this period, as printing methods were very different from today; common presses used re-usable, moveable type which were inked and then printed from. However, despite the fact that by 1633 matter printed in this way was the primary means by which the literate population encountered the written word, it was also of notoriously low quality. This can be attributed to a number of factors:



- The speed at which material had to be printed
- Interruptions to the process
- General lack of authorial involvement in the printing process
- The increased potential for human error

However, it is this human element which also meant that such errors were easily corrected and such 'stop-press corrections' are of great interest in collation. Common discoveries in the collation of plays are changes of punctuation, words, lines, line attribution and stage directions. Some or all of these can have a profound effect upon the overall tone of (and thus the way we read) a line, scene or character, even the play itself. Additional changes are usually typographical ones which often reveal much about the printing process itself. Before beginning this task it would be impossible to predict the number of differences I would expect to find but it would be unusual to encounter none at all.

Method

For this project I adopted the Shirley Project's standard method of collation: acetate copies are made of each opening of a single copy of the play (here a copy from the Bodlein library, Oxford); these openings are then placed over each corresponding opening of the paper copy. Frequently in this case, the acetates exactly match the paper copy, showing no difference between them. When discrepancies between the texts did occur, it was indicated by an obvious blurring of a word, letter or entire line - often due to the necessary re-justification of the text. When this happened I lifted the acetate and compared/analysed the exact differences by eye. I noted all differences and then entered them into the table described in part below.

Results

I discovered, through my collation of 7 of the currently known 11 British copies of *The Wittie Faire One*, a number of variants within them. My most prominent discoveries were the removed, added or altered; punctuation; letters; words; lines and stage directions. In addition to these textual differences, I encountered some disparity in the presentation of the copies; altered line justification; dropped letters; inked blocks and reformatted fonts in the running titles of the pages. As the short-hand notation of these differences is largely un-standardised I was required to create my own key to enable general comprehension. Entering my findings into a table was the clearest way of collecting my results as it allows all copies to be compared on a line-by-line basis. Below are examples of the types of differences I found during collation and samples from the results table produced from these findings.

Original Text	Example of Table								
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Page	Line	B1, Cam, Ca2, BL1	Ca1, ULL, BL2						
F2v	r/t	On[swash e]	One						

Symbol	Meaning
Spaces	Equivalent to spaces in copy
=	Long s
r/t	Running title
[swash]	Swash letter used
*	Absence of text

Location Key: B1 - Bodlein; Cam - Cambridge UL; Ca1 - St Catharine's College, Cambridge (Z30); Ca2 - St. Catharine's College, Cambridge (Z58); ULL - University of London Senate House Library; B1 - British Library (c.12.f.15.(6)); B2 - British Library (Ashley1701).

Conclusion

Over the course of this collation project I was surprised to find as many variants as I did (62 in total). Considering that no one text was distinct enough from another to be described as an alternate version or edition, changes, mistakes, omissions and additions were prevalent. This has emphasized the hurried, erroneous and publisher (rather than author) - centric nature of the printing process in Renaissance England. On a larger scale, what I have achieved with this project is a body of information for the play's editor to consult in its editing for the OUP Complete Works of James Shirley.