
False Dating: The Case of the “1676” *Hamlet* Quartos

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TWO QUARTO editions of *Hamlet* bear the date 1676, known respectively as Q6 and Q7.¹ The imprints to both editions state that Andrew Clark printed them for John Martyn and Henry Herringman. Thus far, the existence of two “1676” *Hamlets* has (understandably) led scholars to believe that Shakespeare’s play was relatively popular at the time, with two editions within twelve months suggesting that the first edition sold out quickly. This essay builds on W. W. Greg’s hunch concerning false dating and uses paper evidence to demonstrate that Q7 in fact dates from

1. Wing S2950 and S2951. These editions contain the infamous note claiming that lines left out in performance are indicated in the text with leading double-quote marks. See Claire M. L. Bourne, “Dramatic Typography and the Restoration *Hamlet* Quartos,” in *Canonising Shakespeare: Stationers and the Book Trade, 1640–1740*, ed. Emma Depledge and Peter Kirwan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 153–70. Scholars tend to refer to these editions as “William Davenant’s,” or “Thomas Betterton’s” *Hamlet* because these theater managers were likely responsible for the cuts made for productions at the Duke’s Theatre during the Restoration period. They have also been called “Players’ Quartos.” I reject these labels as the text represented in the Restoration quarto editions is neither abridged nor adapted, so it seems most apt to refer to these as editions of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the same way that critics speak of Q5 *Hamlet* of 1637.

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1683–84, approximately eight years after its purported date.² I suggest that Richard Bentley probably financed the edition with the false date in collaboration with Jacob Tonson and the printer Robert Everingham, and offer a hypothesis as to why these men published *Hamlet* with a false date and imprint in 1683–84.

The type has clearly been reset between Q6 and Q7, so they are distinct editions, but they do bear close resemblance:

Q6. *Collation.* 4°: [A]² B–M⁴ [\$3 signed]; 46 leaves, pp. [4] 1–88.

Imprint. LONDON: | Printed by *Andr. Clark*, for *J. Martyn*, and *H. Herringman*, | at the Bell in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, and at the Blue | Anchor in the lower Walk of the *New Exchange*, 1676.

Q7. *Collation.* 4°: [A]² B–M⁴ [\$3 (-CDF₃) signed]; 46 leaves, pp. [4] [1] 2–88.

Imprint. LONDON: | Printed by *Andr. Clark*, for *J. Martyn*, and *H. Herringman*, at the Bell in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, and | at the Blue Anchor in the lower Walk of | the *New Exchange*, 1676.

The title pages match verbatim, but the compositor altered the spacing slightly, causing the imprint for Q7 to run over onto a fifth line. In terms of the order of printing, Greg noted that “several small points of typographical evidence agree in placing [Q6] before” Q7 and that Q7 is “a close reprint of [Q6], which may be some years later than its ostensible date.” He also noted that Q7 “was printed in two sections, A–F and G–M, in different types.”³ The title pages do not announce either edition as a new edition, as one might expect. Their close resemblance leads me to suspect that Q7 is not simply based on Q6, but also designed to look like it.

There are a number of reasons to share Greg’s suspicion that Q7 dates from “some years later than its ostensible date.” An edition of *Hamlet* was

2. I am also building on Greg’s exemplary use of watermark evidence to expose the so-called Pavier quartos as bearing false dates. See “On Certain False Dates in Shakespearian Quartos,” *The Library* 9 (1908): 113–31. For supplementary findings to Greg’s discovery, see especially Allan H. Stevenson, “Shakespearian Dated Watermarks,” *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951–52): 159–64, and R. Carter Hailey, “The Shakespearian Pavier Quartos Revisited,” *Studies in Bibliography* 57 (2005/2006): 151–95. On Restoration pirate publication more generally, see Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Publication of Plays in London, 1660–1800: Playwrights, Publishers and the Market* (London: British Library, 2015), ch. 1.

3. W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, vol. 1 (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939), 313.

advertised in the *Term Catalogues* for Hilary 1676, but I have not found reference to a second edition in the *Term Catalogues* from 1675–77. The publication of two *Hamlet* editions in 1676 also contradicts other indicators of Shakespeare's marketability in the mid-1670s. *Hamlet* was one of the most reprinted Shakespeare plays during the Restoration but, as with other Restoration Shakespeare quartos, the majority did not appear until after 1681. Almost forty years lapsed between Q5 *Hamlet* (published by John Smethwicke in 1637) and the two editions that bear the date 1676. Publication records suggest that demand for Shakespeare (more generally) was low for the first two decades of the Restoration: with the exception of the Third Folio, only one Shakespeare volume was published between 1655 and the 1676 *Hamlet*(s).⁴ That play was *Macbeth*, published by William Cademan in 1673.⁵ The next Shakespeare playbook to appear in print was *Othello*, published by Bentley in 1681. From then on the number of Shakespeare playbook publications increased significantly, with five quartos of *Julius Caesar* (1684, QU1–3,⁶ 1695), two of *Hamlet* (1683, 1695), two of *Othello* (1687, 1695), and one of *1 Henry IV* (1700). The Fourth Folio was also released in 1685, and demand remained sufficiently high to warrant the expense of reprinting missing folio sheets to produce what Eric Rasmussen and Lara Hansen have termed the "Fifth Folio" in 1700.⁷ Mar-

4. It is thought that the Third Folio's impact was significantly reduced by the Great Fire of 1666, which destroyed many warehoused copies. See Don-John Dugas, *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print, 1660–1740* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 114. 1655 saw the publication of Q3 *King Lear*, the eighth edition of *Lucrece*, and Q3 *Othello*.

5. The publication followed successful revivals of William Davenant's adaptation of *Macbeth*. Cademan appears to have gazumped Andrew Clark by publishing Shakespeare's play before he could come forward with Davenant's *Macbeth*—the play that theatregoers had recently enjoyed in performance.

6. "QU" stands for undated quartos, of which there were three. I am here adopting the labels used by John W. Velz in "'Pirate Hills' and the Quartos of *Julius Caesar*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 63, no. 3 (1969): 177–93. Velz's article offers corrections to Henrietta C. Bartlett's examination of the same texts in her article, "Quarto Editions of *Julius Caesar*," *The Library* 4, 3rd ser. (1913): 122–32.

7. For discussion of how Richard Wellington reprinted missing warehoused sheets of the Fourth Folio ca. 1700 in order to make the copies good and continue to sell the volume, see Rasmussen and Hansen, who identified distinct watermarks in the reprinted sheets from those in sheets of the Fourth Folio (printed in 1685) and matched the "Fifth Folio" watermarks to those in publications from 1700 ("Shakespeare Without Rules: The Fifth Shakespeare Folio and Market Demand in the Early 1700s," in Depledge and Kirwan, *Canonising Shakespeare*, 55–62).

tyn and Herringman acquired the rights to a large number of Shakespeare plays in 1674 and appeared to have been contemplating a folio publication. It is true that *Hamlet* is only one play, but if, as I suspect, the stationers were using the 1676 *Hamlet* to test the market and found that there was enough demand for two editions within one year, then why did they wait until 1685 to bring out the folio they had been considering since 1674?⁸ Thus, it seems that a market for Shakespeare playbooks did not really develop until after 1681.⁹

The most persuasive evidence to suggest that Q7 was furnished with a false date comes from the paper on which the two editions were printed. The two “1676” *Hamlets* were not printed on the same paper stock, and only Q6 can be linked to other publications issued in or around 1676. While each sheet of handmade laid paper is unique, it is possible to assess the likelihood that two sheets were made from the same paper mould or pair of moulds by examining watermarks—pictures or letters shaped out of thin wires and sewn onto a paper mould—and by measuring the width of chainspaces, and observing the position of a watermark in relation to chainlines.¹⁰ I have examined three copies of Q6,¹¹ and found that all feature a watermark with the letters “T” and “F” lying vertically as the page is

8. On Herringman’s involvement with and personal motivation for publishing the Fourth Folio, see Francis X. Connor, *Literary Folios and Ideas of the Book in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), ch. 4.

9. Performance records, for what they are worth, are also out of keeping with the apparent vogue for *Hamlet* in 1676. According to the *London Stage, Part I, 1660–1700* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), *Hamlet* was performed four times in 1661 and twice in 1663, but then only twice more before 1676 (in 1668 and 1674). *Macbeth*, by contrast, was performed fifteen times—almost twice as often as *Hamlet*—during the same period. On the limitations of *The London Stage* as a source for Restoration performance history, see Robert D. Hume, “Theatre Performance Records in London, 1660–1705,” *The Review of English Studies* 67, no. 280 (June 2016): 468–95, doi: 10.1093/res/hgv128.

10. Paper pulp settles around the wires on a paper mould, making watermarks and chainlines visible as lighter patterns when examined with a light sheet. The approach to paper analysis outlined here is adapted from what R. Carter Hailey calls the “mugshot-and-fingerprint technique” (see “The Dating Game: New Evidence for the Dates of Q4 *Romeo and Juliet* and Q4 *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58 [2007]: 367–87). For an illustration of a pair of paper moulds, see Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 58.

11. These are: Beinecke, Iq6c676; British Library, 1344.f.25; and Folger, S2950 (hereafter referred to as Folger Q6).

viewed (see fig. 1), plus another letter—either “E” or “F”—that lies horizontally and is only partially visible as the page is viewed.¹² The same watermark (and approximate spacing) is also found in the Folger copy of the 1676 edition of Thomas Shadwell’s *Epsom Wells*, which was printed by John Macock for Herringman (see fig. 2).¹³ It seems reasonable to assume that Herringman supplied the paper as the printers named in the imprints of Q6 and *Epsom Wells* are different but Herringman financed both publications.

Publications printed on the same paper are very likely to have been produced within a short space of time from each other. Like paper moulds, watermarks were very susceptible to wear and tear and, according to Philip Gaskell, a pair of moulds were usually replaced within twelve months, while a watermark might deteriorate and fall off within as little as six months.¹⁴ As R. Carter Hailey states, “because paper was expensive—probably between 30 and 40 percent of a publisher’s total production cost, depending on the quality used—stocks of printing paper were almost always bought for a particular job or jobs and rapidly consumed.”¹⁵ Paper was both a dear and a perishable commodity, so it would not make sense to leave it lying around for long periods of time, especially since it was likely purchased with capital borrowed at interest.

The watermark in Q6 is very different from the watermark in Q7, and I have not found the latter in any publications from the mid-to-late 1670s. Copies of Q7 are printed on paper that features a watermark of a large fleur-de-lys with the initials “APH” (see fig. 3), and I have found the “APH” watermark throughout sheets B–M of seven copies of Q7.¹⁶ The “APH” watermark, which is the predominant mark found in the paper used to print copies of Q7, is distinctive and uncommon, and is listed in Edward Heawood’s reference guide to watermarks of the seventeenth

12. The chainspace sequence showing the “I” watermark is as follows:
13 | 23 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 23.5 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 23.5 | 10.5 // 7 | 26 | 22.5 | 24.5 |
24.5 || 4.5 [21.5] || 24 | 24 | 23.5 | 14

Measurements taken from Folger Q6, leaves C3 and C4.

13. Wing S2844; Folger, S2844.

14. Gaskell, *New Introduction*, 63.

15. Hailey, “The Dating Game,” 372.

16. These are: Beinecke, Ig 6c 676B; British Library, 1344.f.30; Folger, S2951, copies 1–3; and New York Public Library, *KC 1676 78–384. Lukas Erne was kind enough to consult the Bodmer Library (Cologne, Switzerland) copy on my behalf.

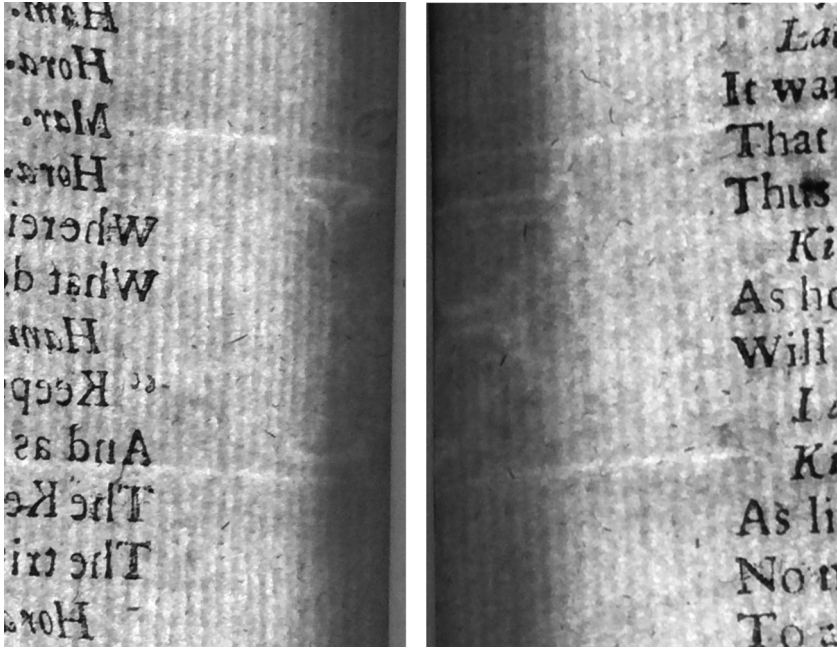


Fig. 1: Left, letter “T” watermark found in the genuine 1676 *Hamlet*, Folger S2950, leaf C4. Right, letter “F” watermark, leaf K3. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

and eighteenth centuries as number 1432, described as originating from a mill in “Frankfurt-a-M.” from 1681.¹⁷ As I outline below, I have also found an additional coat of arms watermark in five of the six copies of Q7 (see fig. 7 below), and an additional watermark of the letters “RD” in one of the six copies (see fig. 6 below). The coat of arms watermark is present in the halfsheet I have inferred to be sheet A of five of the six copies, the other is present only in the L gathering of one of the six copies I have examined.

The “APH” watermark found in the paper used to print copies of Q7 can also be found in copies of at least two publications from 1683/4, both of which may be linked to the stationers Jacob Tonson and Richard Bent-

17. See Edward Heawood, *Watermarks, Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Hilvursum: Paper Publications Society, 1950), PL. 204, 1432, 97.



Fig. 2: Left, letter “T” watermark in 1676 edition of *Epsom Wells*, Folger S2844, copy 1, leaf B3. Right, letter “F” watermark in 1676 edition of *Epsom Wells*, Folger S2844, copy 1, leaf M4. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

ley.¹⁸ John Dryden’s *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* was entered to Tonson in the Stationers’ Register on 2 April 1683, and published by Tonson in 1683. *The Vindication* is a response to a series of pamphlets that attacked Dryden and Nathaniel Lee’s banned Exclusion Crisis play, *The Duke of Guise*, which Tonson and Bentley published together the same year. All six of the Folger’s copies of *The Vindication* contain the same

18. In saying the “same watermark,” I wish to suggest that the watermarks come either from the same paper mould or else from watermarks produced in “twin” moulds used together. As Allan Stevenson explained, “twin watermarks might vary somewhat in height or position or details of design without affecting the certitude of their belonging together” (see “Watermarks are Twins,” *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951–52): 57–92, 64). It should also be noted that movement and deterioration of the mark is present in copies of all three publications.

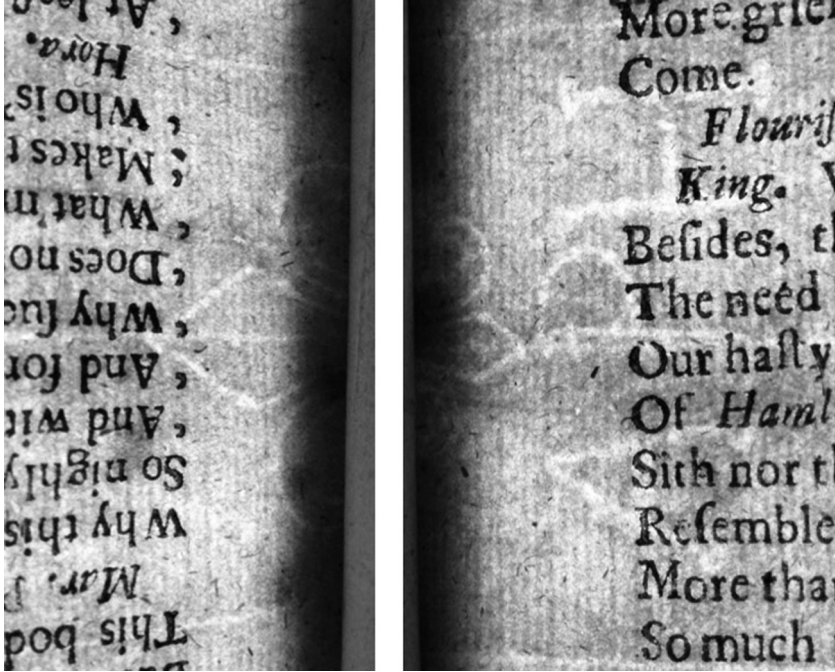


Fig. 3: Fleur-de-lys with letters “APH” watermark found in QZ, Folger S2951, copy 1, leaves B2 and E1. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

“APH” watermark (see fig. 4), as does the Victoria and Albert (National Library) copy. The second publication, which names both Tonson and Bentley in the imprint, is Thomas Otway’s *The Atheist* (1684). I have examined the Folger’s two copies of *The Atheist*, and the same “APH” watermark is present throughout both copies (see fig. 5).¹⁹ From comparison

19. Folger O541 and O541 Bd.w. B5326 copy 2. The chainspace sequences for *The Atheist* and QZ are as follows:

The Atheist:

3 | 24 | 24 | 23 || 22 | 24 || 22.5 | 23.5 | 25 | 14 // 6.5 | 22.5 | 23 | 22.5 | 24 | 22.5 |
23 | 23 | 24 | 13

QZ:

6 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 23 || 22.5 | 24.5 || 22.5 | 24 | 25 | 16.5 // 15 | 23 | 23 | 22.5 | 24.5 | 23 |
22.5 | 23.5 | 24 | 11

The copies have been trimmed. The average wireline density is 27/3 cm. These measurements are taken from leaves B3 and B4 of Folger O541 and leaves B3

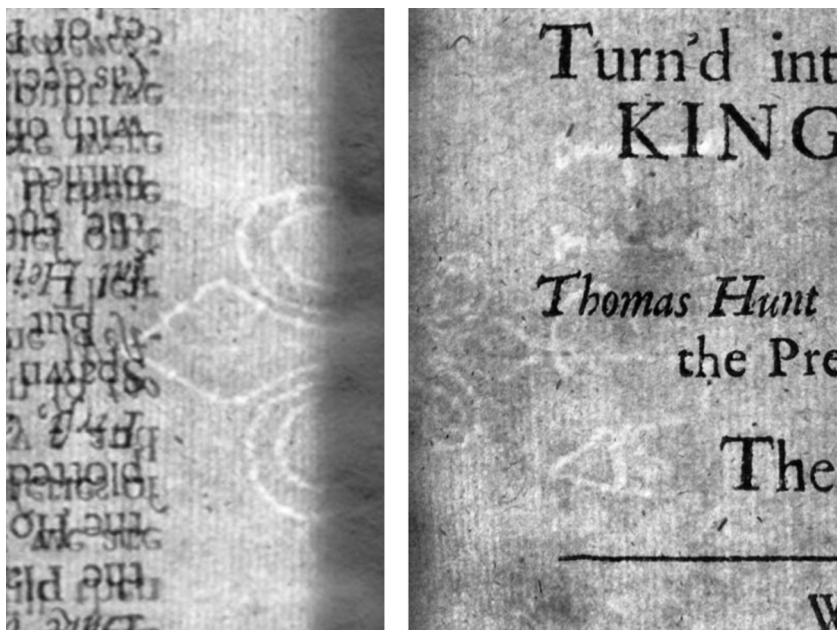


Fig. 4: Fleur-de-lys with letters “APH” watermark found in 1683 edition of *The Vindication*, Folger D2398, copy 3, leaf A4, and Folger D2206h, vol. 3, title page. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

of the watermarks and the paper used in copies of *Q7*, *The Vindication*, and *The Atheist*, I am confident that all three publications contain the same paper stock. That the same watermark is found in two publications printed in 1683–84 makes it highly probable that *Q7* was printed at around the same time.

A new edition of *Hamlet* was published by Herringman and Bentley in 1683 (*Q1683*), but it is hard to say whether it or *Q7* was printed first. The type has been reset between *Q7* and *Q1683*, and there are substantive differences between the two texts. Indeed, as Henry Paul demonstrated, *Q1683* is the first quarto-folio conflated *Hamlet* edition, and it may be that the publishers (Herringman and Bentley) employed someone like John Dryden as not just a “perfector” of the text, but also as a textual ed-

and B4 of British Library 1344.f.30 respectively. Bold type indicates the placement of the watermark.

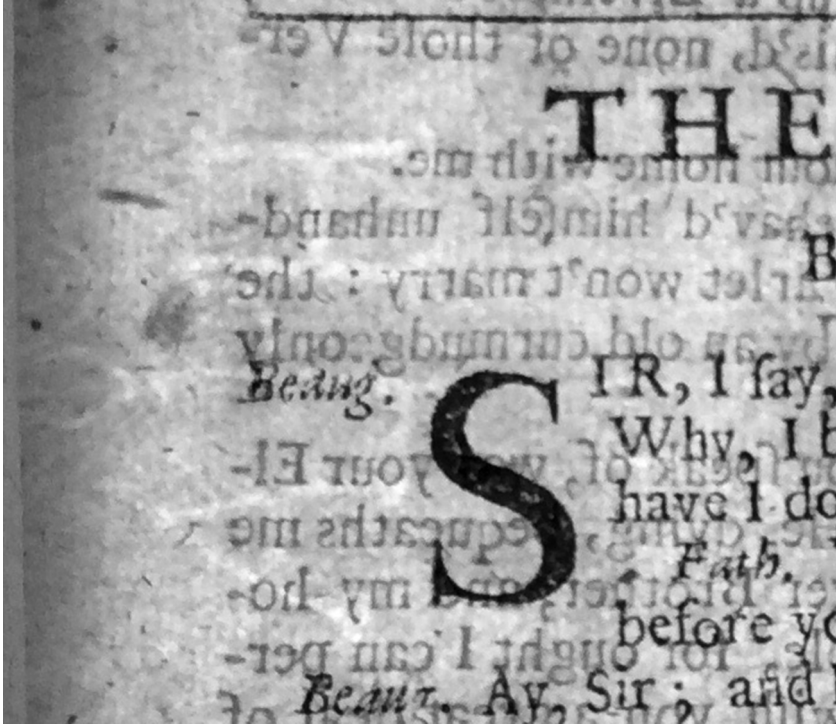


Fig. 5: Partial fleur-de-lys with letters “APH” watermark found in the 1683 edition of *The Atheist*, Folger O541, copy 1, leaf B1. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

itor tasked with the job of selecting readings from the quartos and folios according to his own judgment.²⁰ Two editions of *Hamlet* were therefore published within twelve months of each other, but in 1683–84 rather than 1676.²¹

20. The 1683 quarto of *Hamlet* was not used as the basis for subsequent editions. The 1695 and 1703 quartos appear to be based on those dated 1676. See Paul, “Players’ Quartos and Duodecimos of *Hamlet*,” *Modern Language Notes* 49 (1934): 369–75. On late seventeenth-century editing and “perfectors,” see Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 6.

21. As I have argued elsewhere, renewed interest in Shakespeare may be explained by the Exclusion Crisis of 1678–82, “a momentous juncture in Shakespeare’s authorial afterlife, when his plays dominated the new plays repertory and his name

Thus far, the paper used in copies of Q7 can be linked via imprints to Tonson alone and to Tonson and Bentley together, but it is very likely that the two stationers were working together for both of these publications. As James Raven has noted, the expiration of the Licensing Act in 1679 gave rise to “the development of new forms of partnership,” many of which “flourished outside the control of the [Stationers’] company.”²² It is therefore not exceptional to find few publications entered in the Stationers’ Register to either man during the years the act was in abeyance (1679–85), or an official record of their partnerships. From imprints, we know that Bentley and Tonson collaborated on at least eight publications from 1678 to 1688 (based on information taken from the *ESTC*).²³ Additionally, by the time the 1695 *Hamlet* edition was issued, Tonson’s name had made it into the imprint as a bookseller stocking the play. The 1695 *Hamlet* was issued with two imprints, one that mentioned Bentley’s name alone and one that stated that the play had been “Printed for *H. Herringman*, and *R. Bentley*; and sold | by *R. Bentley*, *J. Tonson*, *T. Bennet*, and *F. Sanders*. | MDCXCV.”²⁴ Herringman was by this point a wholesale publisher who had turned his shop in the New Exchange over to Sanders and Joseph Knight, but Tonson’s presence suggests that he invested in the play at some point, and we may simply have no record of his negotiations with Bentley and (or) Herringman. Andrew Murphy suggests that Q1695 *Hamlet* “would seem to have been Tonson’s first minor venture into the field of Shakespeare publishing,” but it now seems more likely that the 1683–84 *Hamlet* edition with the false “1676” imprint represents Tonson’s first involvement with a Shakespeare publication, and that Tonson and Bentley probably collaborated on more publishing projects than those for which we have records.²⁵

was repeatedly promoted to audiences via prologues delivered on stage” (Depledge, “Playbills, Prologues, and Playbooks: Selling Shakespeare Adaptations, 1678–82,” *Philological Quarterly* 91 [2012]: 305–30).

22. James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 90.

23. This does not include the most famous Bentley-Tonson joint publishing venture, the subscription edition of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1688), issued with separate imprints for the two stationers together and for Tonson alone.

24. Wing S2955 and S2954.

25. See Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 58.

Further evidence that Tonson and Bentley were jointly responsible for the publication of Q7 is provided by an additional watermark found in one of the copies examined. Rasmussen and Hansen claim that, "since printers received their paper supplies from the publisher in charge of the project, the appearance of the same watermark in different books provides some evidence that the books were published by the same individual."²⁶ Bentley's involvement in the project to publish Q7 is therefore suggested by the presence of a single sheet found in one copy of Q7. As mentioned above, one Folger copy of Q7 contains a fleur-de-lys with the single-wire letters "RD" underneath (see fig. 6),²⁷ found only on the sheet of paper used for the L gathering.²⁸ I have found the same watermark in a number of Bentley's publications also issued in 1683, including the *Duke of Guise* (printed by T[homas] H[odgkin] for Bentley and Tonson),²⁹ copies of *The Rehearsal*³⁰ and *The Souldier's Fortune* (printers not specified in the imprints),³¹ and *The Unequal Match*.³² This suggests that Bentley supplied the paper for at least the L gathering of the Folger copy. However, this evidence, coupled with the numerous links between paper used to publish (multiple) copies of Q7 and copies of other publications issued by Bentley and Tonson, makes it highly likely that the two men were jointly responsible for publishing an edition of *Hamlet* in 1683–84, and furnishing it with a false date and imprint.

26. Rasmussen and Hansen, "Shakespeare Without Rules," 60. Hailey also states that "the publisher usually supplied paper for a publishing venture" ("The Dating Game," 374).

27. Folger Prompt Ham. 55. The letters "RD" are located in the fourth chainspace from the gutter, with four chainspaces above. The fleur-de-lys is also found in the fourth chainspace but expands slightly beyond it at its widest point (27.5 mm in width). The average chainspace on this sheet is 24.1 mm.

28. Collation of the same section of text (on the L gathering of Folger Prompt Ham. 55) in Q1683 rules out the possibility that a printed sheet from the Q1683 edition was used to substitute a missing gathering in this copy of Q7 at a later date.

29. The single-wire "RD" can be seen on leaves A3, C1, D2, E1, F2, G1, I2, and K1 of Folger D2264, bd w. D2393.

30. Folger B5326, copy 1 of *The Rehearsal*, features the watermark of single-wired letters "RD" (see esp. leaf E2). Folger B5326, copy 2, an incomplete copy of *The Rehearsal*, which is bound with other plays published by Bentley, also contains the watermark of single-wired letters "RD" (see esp. leaves E4 and F1).

31. The single-wire "RD" can be seen most visibly in leaf D1 of Folger O563, which is Bd.w. B5326, copy 2, and on leaf H2 of Folger O563, copy 1.

32. See leaf G7 of Folger L134, bd. w. L133.

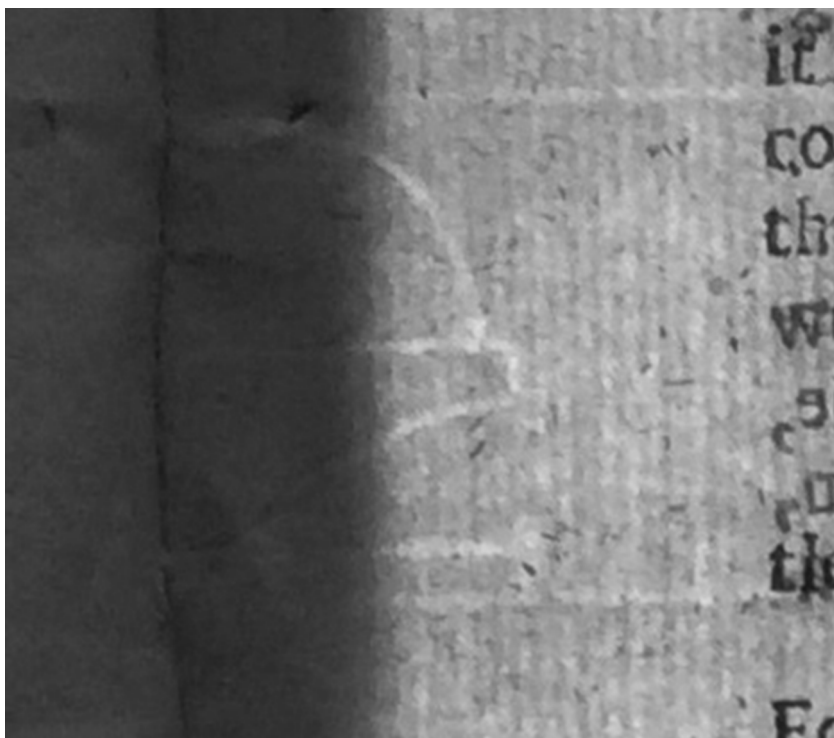


Fig. 6: Partial “RD” watermark in Q7, Folger Prompt Ham. 55, leaf L1. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

The same single-wired “RD” watermark is also among the marks found in Q₁₆₈₃ and the genuine 1683 *Hamlet* edition published by Bentley and Herringman, while *The Rehearsal* also contains another watermark found very frequently in copies of Q₁₆₈₃:³³ of a box around double-wired letters “RD” over a fleur-de-lys.³⁴ Thus, at least some copies of Q7 and Q₁₆₈₃, like a number of Bentley publications from 1683, were printed on the same stocks of paper. It would therefore appear that Bentley prob-

33. Other watermarks found in copies of Q₁₆₈₃, the genuine Q₁₆₈₃ *Hamlet*, include: fleur-de-lys with the letters “I W” or “I M”; fleur-de-lys with a box around the double-wired letters “RD”; and a fleur-de-lys with single-wire letters “RD.” This is based on examination of the following four copies: Beinecke Ig c6 683; Folger S2952, copies 1 & 2; Folger Prompt Ham. 54.

34. For *The Rehearsal*, see Folger B5326, copy 1 (leaf B2); B5326, copy 2 (leaves D1, G1).

ably provided the paper for both the genuine 1683 edition of *Hamlet* that he co-financed with Herringman (Q₁683) and the 1683–84 edition issued with a false date (Q7), and that the two editions were produced within a short space of time.³⁵

The most obvious explanation for the false date is that someone thought *Hamlet* would sell well in 1683–84 and wished to profit from sales of a play that they did not have the right to publish, or else where such a right might be disputed. By using the date found on an earlier edition, they could attempt to disguise the new edition as unsold stock left over from the previous edition and hope that the fraudulent act would go unnoticed. In 1679 the Licensing Act obliging stationers to enter copy had lapsed, and it was not revived until 1685.³⁶ The year 1683 was a key year in *Hamlet's* print afterlife, as it was not only published by Herringman and Bentley—as a conflated text for the first time and thus a substantively different edition to those dated “1676”—but the rights to publish it were also hotly contested by a series of entries in the Stationers' Register. “The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke” was entered to the printer Robert Everingham on 19 May 1683, with a note stating that Everingham was acting on behalf of Bentley because Bentley was not yet “free of the Company.”³⁷ This is a curious entry because, as mentioned above, the rights to Shakespeare's plays, including *Hamlet*, had been purchased by Herringman and Martyn back in 1674. A note in the Stationers' Register for

35. On mixed paper stocks, see Gaskell, who states that “a batch of paper was specially ordered from a paper supplier for a particular book,” and that while “batches of different papers would not as a rule be mixed,” sheets purchased for another project might make their way into a different (but presumably contemporaneous) publication, especially if a printer was using leftover sheets, or if he needed extra paper to print cancels (*New Introduction*, 142). Also see Stevenson, *The Problem of the Missale Speciale* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1967), ch. 6; and Hailey, “The Shakespeare Pavier Quartos Revisited,” 154–56. Speaking mostly of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Hailey writes that “moderately mixed paper stocks may ultimately be found to be something of a norm, and wildly mixed stocks not at all infrequent” (156), but my own experience examining copies of publications of the late 1670s and early 1680s has shown that mixed stocks are present but infrequent and that wildly mixed stocks are very rare.

36. For more on the lapse of the Licensing Act, see Timothy Crist, “Government Control of the Press after the Expiration of the Printing Act in 1679,” *Publishing History* 5 (1979): 49–78.

37. Bentley was admitted to his freedom on 25 June 1684 (G. E. Briscoe Eyre and C. R. Rivington, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers of London; from 1640–1708 A. D.*, 3 vols. [London: privately printed, 1913–14], 3:156).

6 August 1674 shows that the two men entered twenty-five plays, which included the following Shakespeare titles (including apocryphal plays):³⁸

<i>Henry the Fifth</i>	<i>Alls Well that ends well</i>
<i>S^r John Oldcastle</i>	<i>Twelwe Night</i>
<i>Titus & Andronicus</i>	<i>The Winters Tale</i>
<i>Yorke & Lancaster</i>	<i>The Third Part of Henry the Sixth</i>
<i>Pericles</i>	<i>Henry the Eighth</i>
<i>Hamlett</i>	<i>Coriolanus</i>
<i>Yorkshire Tragedy</i>	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	<i>Mackbeth</i>
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	<i>Anthony & Cleopatra</i>
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>
<i>As You Like it</i>	

This gave Martyn and Herringman a half share each in these plays. It has been suggested that the “Hamlett” in this list may have referred to a prose romance by that name, but its location within a list of plays attributed to Shakespeare suggests that Herringman and Martyn had *Hamlet* the play in mind when they entered it into the register.³⁹ In 1680 Martyn died, and Martyn’s widow requested that her late husband’s stock and copies go to Robert Scott and George Wells.⁴⁰ A second entry in the register followed that of Everington and Bentley on 27 July 1683, when “The tragedy of Hamlett, Prince of Denmarke” was entered to “Hen. Herringman & the assignes. Of John Martin, dec^d.” One month later, Martyn’s stock, including a half share in the block of Shakespeare plays listed above, which includes “Hamlett,” was entered as being transferred to Scott. A final reference to *Hamlet* was then added to the May entry in December 1683 as a corrective, noting that “a moyetie of this cobby belongs to M^r Henry Herringman . . . & was the whole entered to M^r Everingham

38. The list also contained “*Agin-court*” but this does not appear to be related to *Henry V*, which is also in the list (Eyre and Rivington, *A Transcript*, 2:488).

39. Giles E. Dawson, “The Copyright of Shakespeare’s Dramatic Works,” in *Studies in Honor of A. H. R. Fairchild* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1946), 9–35, 22.

40. See Eyre and Rivington, *A Transcript*, 3:181–91. Scott went into business with his brother-in-law, William Wells. Their copy passed down to Wells’s children, from whom Tonson bought the copy to a number of Shakespeare plays in 1709, having already acquired Herringman’s share two years earlier. See Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print*, 58 and David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148–49.

by mistake.”⁴¹ There was certainly some confusion as to which stationer(s) owned the rights to *Hamlet* in 1683. The fact that three entries containing *Hamlet* were made within the same year, and at a time when stationers were no longer legally obliged to register copy, suggests that the play was now deemed profitable enough for stationers to actively stake their claims to publish it.

As mentioned above, sheet A of most copies of Q7 contains a third watermark. The watermark is of a coat of arms that is distinct from the “APH” watermark usually found in other gatherings in copies of Q7 (see fig. 7), and also from the single-wire “RD” watermark found in one copy of Q7 (see fig. 6 above).⁴² The use of different paper for the A sheet may offer insight into the mystery of the false date and imprint found on Q7 as this sheet contains the title page, the note “To the Reader,” and “The Persons Represented.” It was not uncommon for such preliminaries to be printed separately, but in this particular case it may be that the title page to Q7 was changed as the print job was nearing completion, or soon thereafter. The Stationers’ Register entry indicates that, in the summer of 1683, Bentley and his printer, Everingham, thought they had the rights to publish *Hamlet*. A 1683 edition of *Hamlet* was advertised as “reprinted” in the *Term Catalogues* for Michaelmas of 1683, where it was said to be “printed for R. Bentley in *Russel street*, in Covent Garden,” with no mention of Herringman or any other shops where the play might be purchased.⁴³ This suggests that Q7 may already have been at the press before Herringman insisted on the corrective addition to the Stationers’ Register entry, making it clear that “a moyetie of this cobby belongs to M^r Henry

41. Eyre and Rivington, *A Transcript*, 3:156.

42. Many variations of this watermark, which can be traced back to the Durand paper mill, can be found in publications of the Restoration period, and this fact, coupled with the significant damage to the watermark visible in copies of Q7, makes it hard to convincingly match it to similar watermarks in other publications. See esp. Heawood, *Watermarks*, PL 103–4.

43. Herringman’s name is found in other *Term Catalogue* advertisements, so if this entry does refer to the genuine 1683 edition of *Hamlet*, then it is strange to see Bentley appear alone in the notice. Herringman’s name usually appeared in advertisements for other joint publishing ventures. For example, for Easter 1682, Herringman is named alongside a number of stationers responsible for publishing *The Posting of Parts* (Edward Arber, ed., *The Term Catalogues, 1668–1709*, 3 vols. [London: privately printed, 1903–6], 1:448).

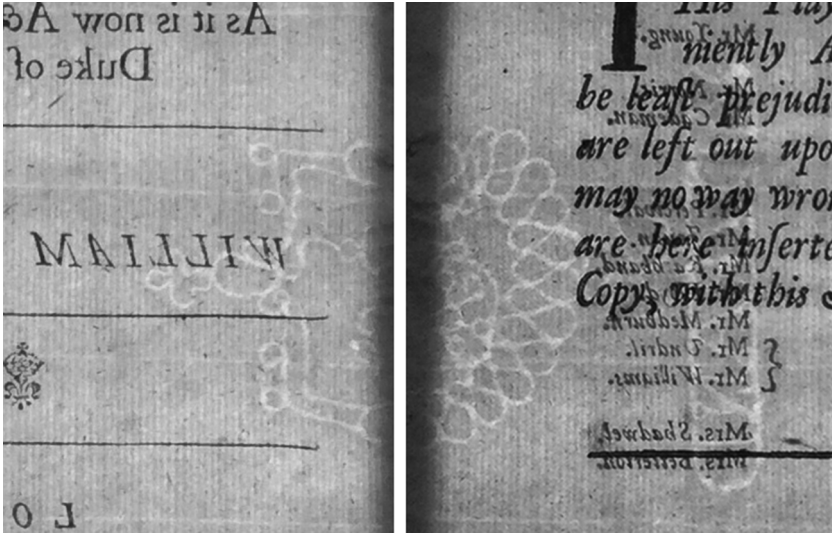


Fig. 7: Coat of Arms Watermark in Q7, Folger Prompt Ham. 55, title page and leaf A2. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Herringman . . . & was the whole entered to M^r Everingham by mistake." Perhaps, having gone to the expense of printing Q7, Bentley (and Tonson and Everingham) feared having to share profits with Herringman. It would thus have made good business sense to print a (new?) title page in which they attempted to disguise Q7 as left over stock from Q6. Bentley was both a publisher and a bookseller, so it is perfectly reasonable to think that he may have sold copies of the play Herringman and Martyn had published back in 1676.

Either way, Greg was right about Q7 dating from later in the Restoration. It dates from 1683–84 and was published by Richard Bentley, probably in conjunction with Jacob Tonson, who appears to have negotiated an off-the-record share in the play. By 1683–84, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was indeed popular enough to go through two editions within twelve months. Q6 represents the sixth quarto printing of *Hamlet* (Q6), and Q7 and Q1683 were produced within a short timeframe of one another.⁴⁴

44. I would like to thank Lukas Erne, Alan Farmer, Indira Ghose, and Joshua McEvilla for helpful advice and for commenting on draft versions of this article. I am also grateful to Erin McCarthy for checking Huntington Library copies for me.