

Shakespeare Sunday – The Scripts: Cymbeline

by [Justin Alexander](#)

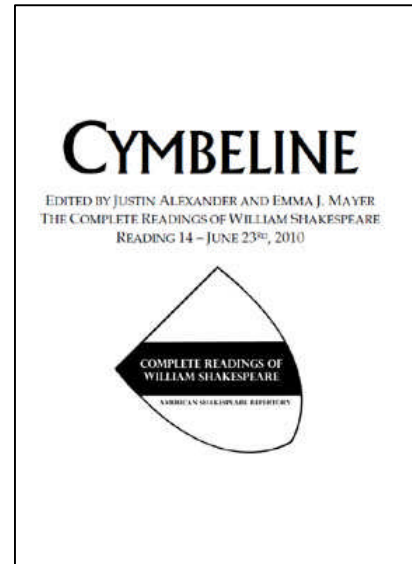
February 8th, 2015

The First Folio of 1623 is our only original source for [Cymbeline](#), and so naturally the ASR script for the play is based upon it.

[CYMBELINE – FULL SCRIPT](#)

[CYMBELINE – CONFLATED SCRIPT](#)

In working with the script, it quickly became apparent that a heavier hand than usual would need to be employed with emending the punctuation of the text: At some point there was either a scribe or a typesetter who was passionately enamored with commas, and *Cymbeline* became dedicated to their love. In addition to a wide practice of what can only be described as random commatization, one can be ensured upon finding an “and” or a “but” in the original text that a comma will be strategically inserted immediately before it (even if it renders the sentence into utter nonsense).



This love affair with the comma is strewn everywhere, and their use is so frequently contrary to *any* sense that even when they can be hammered into some *semblance* of sense, I feel there is good cause to doubt them.

NOT-SO-LOOSE VERSE

Another aspect of the *Cymbeline* text to note is the ease with which a great quantity of seemingly irregular verse in the play can be trivially regularized. For example, the text beginning on page 2 reads, in the original Folio text:

By her election may be truly read, what kind of man he is.
2 I honor him, euen out of your report.
But pray you tell me, is she sole childe to'th'King?
1 His onely childe:

Which virtually all modern editions (including the ASR script), regularize to:

By her election may be truly read
What kind of man he is.

2 GENTLEMAN I honor him
Even out of your report. But pray you tell me,
Is she sole child to the king?

1 GENTLEMAN His only child:

But there are longer passages as well. For example, his passage from Act 3, Scene 7 (pg. 41):

In our script you can read the corrected scansion as:

IMOGEN To Milford-Haven.

BELARIUS What's your name?

IMOGEN Fidele, sir:

I have a kinsman who is bound for Italy;
He embark'd at Milford, to whom being going,
Almost spent with hunger, I am fall'n in this offense.

BELARIUS Prithee (fair youth) think us no churls,
Nor measure our good minds by this rude place
We live in. Well encounter'd, 'tis almost night;
You shall have better cheer ere you depart,
And thanks to stay and eat it: Boys, bid him welcome.

GUIDERIUS Were you a woman, youth, I should woo hard,
But be your groom in honesty: I bid for you,
As I do buy.

ARVIRAGUS I'll [make it] my comfort,

Most modern editions will leave the first line as "To Milford Haven. / What's your name?" (which is short at just 8 syllables). This also leaves the next line ("Fidele, sir, I have a kinsman who") short at 9 syllables. These editions will attempt to correct the further error at the end of this passage (which in the Folio reads long at 13 syllables as: "I bid for you, as I do buy." / "I'll make't my comfort") by emending "I bid for you, as I do buy" to read "Aye, bid for you as I'd buy".

But if we identify the colon after "*Fidele Sir:*" in the Folio as the indication of a line break, the rest of the passage quickly falls into remarkably regular verse.

TEXTUAL PRACTICES

Source Text: First Folio (1623)

1. Original emendations in [square brackets].
2. Speech headings silently regularized.
3. Names which appear in ALL CAPITALS in stage directions have also been regularized.
4. Spelling has been modernized.
5. Punctuations has been silently emended (in minimalist fashion).

SCENE NUMBERS: Modern tradition has conflated several of the Folio's shorter scenes into longer scenes, frequently altering the dramatic structure of the play to achieve this. This script adheres to the original Folio scene breaks, which means that its scene numbers will not always correspond to modern texts.

Special thanks to Emma J. Mayer who worked with me in editing this text. Emma has recently moved away from the Twin Cities and her work on the project will be sorely missed.

Originally posted on October 25th, 2010.

Shakespeare Sunday - Cymbeline

Geeking About “Geek”

by [Justin Alexander](#)

February 15th, 2015

You may have heard that the word “geek” was originally used to describe circus freaks who would entertain the crowd by biting the heads off of live fish (or some other bizarre feat).

While it’s true that circus freaks were referred to as “geeks” in the early 20th century, it’s *not* true that this is the original usage of the term. The word actually dates back to 1515 when it appears, according to the [Oxford English Dictionary](#), in Barclay’s [Egloges](#): “He is a foole, a sottie, and a geke also, which choseth the worst [way] and most of jeopardie.”

What’s interesting, however, is that the OED lists this citation under the word “geck”. The word is spelled as “gecke” in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and apparently that became the “accepted” spelling of the word by most authorities. (Although the OED also cites an 1876 glossary which defined a “gawk, geek, gowk, or gowky” as “a person uncultivated; a dupe” — so clearly the “geek” usage did not actually disappear.)



Shakespearean authority for a word can be weighty, but *Twelfth Night* isn’t the only place Shakespeare used the word. It also appears in *Cymbeline*, and there he spells it “geeke”:

Why did you suffer Iachimo, slight thing of Italy,
To taint his nobler hart & brain with needless jealousy
And to become the geeke and scorne o’th’others vilany?

So if the earliest known occurrence of the word is spelled “geke”, why does the OED list “geck” as the original form of the word? I don’t know. But what I find truly odd is that virtually all modern editions of *Cymbeline* emend the text to read “geck” instead of “geek”.

The ASR script, of course, doesn’t do that. So come see *Cymbeline* tonight, where we’ll proudly be wearing our geekery on our sleeves.

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