A.C. Partridge: Stratification in *Thomas of Woodstock*

Astley C. Partridge, author of more than a dozen books on Elizabethan and Jacobean orthography, was Professor of English at Witwatersrand University 1957-66. The chapter below is from his best-known study, *Orthography in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama; A Study of Colloquial Contractions, Elisions, Prosody and Punctuation* (University of Nebraska Press, 1964, which included a chapter on *Woodstock*.

While Partridge's meticulous accumulation of data may seem dry and scholarly, it allows him to demonstrate what he calls 'Stratification,' or the overlaying, in the process of copying or editing, of later orthographic usages upon earlier. These data, like rock formations, suggest an original composition date of 1592-4 for *Woodstock/1 Richard II*, with its edited copy, Egerton 1994, made about 1607.

'**The Manuscript Play, *Thomas of Woodstock*,' by A.C. Partridge, in *Orthography in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama; A Study of Colloquial Contractions, Elisions, Prosody and Punctuation* (University of Nebraska Press, 1964). pp. 127-152.**

This anonymous play of twenty-five folio leaves (2989 lines) is actually without title, and forms part of the British Museum manuscript collection of fifteen playbooks (Egerton 1994), supposed to have been assembled by William Cartwright, a King's Revel's actor 1629-37, who during the Civil War became a bookseller and collector of plays. The manuscript is in the shapely English hand of a copyist, who makes an unskilled attempt at Italian script for the speakers' names. His spelling is old fashioned and unorthodox (see p. ix of Miss Wilhelmina Frijlinck's introduction to the Malone Society reprint); but in his elisions, parentheses and use of the semicolon the copyist reveals that his punctuation has affinities with the work of the seventeenth century. This contradiction leads to the belief that the irregular and archaic spellings are attributable to the material which the copyist had before him. This, according to Miss Frijlinck, was not the author's manuscript, but a rough draft, since speech prefixes were added after the copy had been made (and are consequently sometimes wanting when passages have been deleted), line division is faulty, and stage directions occasionally appear where they have no bearing on the text. But she does point to a few linguistic features that should be the author's (pp. ixx), words that are unnoted or rare in the Oxford English Dictionary.

The manuscript was obviously a prompt copy, because of the number of prompt directions added in different hands and inks, which point to repeated revivals. The deletion of 'my god 'in line 142 suggests a revision for performance after 1606, when the enactment prohibiting oaths on the stage came into force. But the internal evidence and end-stopped verse of the play indicate that the original composition belongs to the early nineties of the sixteenth century. In spirit and plot it belongs to the chronicle period of *Edward II* and the *Henry VI* trilogy. Most critics regard certain verbal parallels in *Richard II* as implying precedence for *Thomas of Woodstock.*

The subject of the chronology of this group of plays has been ably handled by Mr. A. P. Rossiter in his *Woodstock, a Moral History* (1946), in which he urges consideration of the order *2 Henry VI, Woodstock, Edward II* (followed, one assumes, by *Richard II*), and suggests the limits 1591-4 for the writing of *Thomas of Woodstock.*

If the above reasoning is correct, the extant manuscript of this play was made by the copyist (not a professional scribe) probably ten or more years later than the original date of composition. Additional evidence for placing the transcript in the early seventeenth century is (1) the high incidence of later contracted forms such as *th'are* for *they are* (the orthography of which suggests post1600 theatrical

revisions, see Pronouns (g) below); (2) the sophisticated use of elision, particularly the Jonsonian type (e.g. 244, *we'had*)[1]; and (3) the occurrence of the combined contraction *shalls* (= shall we). The use of *us* for *we* is first cited in O.E.D. from Dekker and Webster's *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (1607). The contraction *s* is frequent in Shakespeare, but *shalls* only occurs in one quarto, the doubtful *Pericles* (1609), and in folio texts of late date such as *Coriolanus*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, all of which must have been written between 1607 and 1610.

The more important instances of contraction are as follows:

Articles
(a) Proclitic *th*: 496 *th'*unhoulsome, 2045 *th'*important, 2440 *th'*eternall, 2668 *th'*old.
(b) Proclitic *t*: *t*'other, 454, 832 *t*other, 463 *t*oth'er (misplaced apostrophe).
(c) Enclitic *th* after prepositions: 9 b*yth*, blcst Saints (= *by the*; the comma may be an apostrophe placed too low). The use of the contraction *th*, before consonants is an innovation, much resorted to after 1600 by dramatists who favoured these new combined contractions. The earliest observed use of *byth* by another sixteenth century dramatist occurs in *Romeo and Juliet* (Q2), 1599. The usual spelling in *Woodstock* is *bith*, and it is found commonly in the oaths out of which this form of combined contraction seems to have arisen, e.g. 105 *bith rood*. The frequency and variety of this contraction type in *Woodstock* make it almost certainly the author's.

149 *i*'*th* grass, 159 i*th* country. (This is a double contraction, the usual orthography being *eth* (1320, 1543, 1562 etc.), which may have been the author's spelling.)
668 to*th* block, 2618 to'*the*, 1745 and 2392 *th*oth erroneously. Jonsonian elision occurs at 1166 to *'the queene*, which is apparently the orthography of the copyist.
856 *oth* (generally *ath*)

Adverbs
949 *backeward* (but 1565 *towards*, 2467 *sometymes*. Before 1600 adverbial types, without final s, were most commonly used; after the turn of the century, there was considerable competition from the -s forms).
1291 *nere*
1452 etc. *ene* (= even), 1567 *en*

Prepositions
The most important innovation is the double contraction combination of preposition and definite article, e.g. 149 *i'th*, 856 *oth*. The orthography is varied; but as stated, the spelling *eth*, of the first is probably the author's, the more sophisticated *i'th* the copyist's.

In: 149 *i'th*, 1591 *ith*, 1320 etc. *eth*; 24, 1296 *ifaith*, 217 *e faith*, 382 *efaith*; 1413 *a*godsname. (This expression, with preposition reduced to a, goes back to the early fourteenth century, and was used by Chaucer.)

Of: 801 *o'* the lower, 856 *o*th parliament, 1851 *a*th Realme, 2604 *a*th sudden; 187 Anne *a* Beame (= Anne of Bohemia. So 359, 409 etc.).

On: 1727 sett you *a* worke, 1804 *a*makeing.
To: 982 *t'*abridg, 1257 *t*assist. (The earliest citation of the reduced form *t* in O.E.D. is from Chaucer's

[1] The name for this type of elision was given by W. W. Greg (*The Library*, March 1942, XXII, pp. 213-15), Jonson using it frequently in *Sejanus* and later plays. He was not, however, the originator. The name applies to a combination of two words in which elision of a vowel is intended and indicated by an apostrophe, though graphic suppression docs not actually take place. (See Chapter VIII.)

Roumant of the Rose); 2595 *to*'excuse (Jonsonian elision).
Poetic forms (*with aphesis or contraction*) 317 'gainst, 2019 gainst, 846 ore etc.

Pronouns
Though in *Woodstock ye* is much used as a weakened form of *you*, it is not confined to the post- verb position, and is not as frequent as in *John a Kent*.
(a) Proclitic *it*: 86 *t*were, 262 *t*will etc. (This poetical combination is very common.)
Enclitic *it*: (i) after conjunctions: 198 tho'*t*, 474 1f*t*.
(ii) after prepositions: *a'nt* (= on it; apostrophe misplaced; *ant* (1145, 1452, 1540 etc.) must have been the author's form; *ont* (976) is less frequent); 488, 1583 fort*e*, 1269 too*t*, 1433 by*t*, 2269 in*t*; (iii) after verbs: 146 is*t*, 1484 was*t*, 72 hcar'*t*, 1664 sha*t* (= shall it), 1832 hat*e* (= have it), 2855 seal*t*.
(b) Proclitic *thou*: 139 etc. *th*art, 2005 *th*'ast (apostrophe misplaced), 2270 *th*ast, 896 thadst, 1137 *th*'adst.
(c) Proclitic *ye* (singular): 164, 425, *y*'are, 1456 etc. *y*are, 377 *y'ave*.
(The contraction *'y*, first cited in OED, 1631, occurs erroneously at I.iii.180 (*y'owe*) of *Richard II* (Q1) 1597, but not again before 1600 in my investigations.)
(d) Proclitic *he*: 1441 *h'as* (= he has). See Chapter 2 and classification of contraction types (7), Chapter 4).
(e) Proclitic *we*: 486 *w*'ere. (Apostrophe probably misplaced; contraction of *are* (*we're*) intended.)
(f) Enclitic *us*: 101, 1207, lctt*s*, 1623 lend*s* (= lend us), 999 shall*s*. (This is the earliest use of the contraction *s* (= we) after *shall*.)
(g) Proclitic *they*: 1210 *th*'are (and four identical uses up to line 1589); 1654, 1763, *th*'are (apostrophe misplaced); 1674, 2092 *th*are; 1657 *th*'ar; 1902 *th*ar (O.E.D's first citation of the contraction *th* for *they* is from Weevcr's prose *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, dated assigned 1540, but no printed until 1631. Jonson used the contraction, always with apostrophe, for verse elision only, first in line 187 of the Induction of the quarto of *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1600); he seems to have introduced it into verse drama . In *Woodstock* the contraction *th* is used also in prose; but however employed, it is confined to less than 900 lines (1210-2092) in the middle of the play, which may indicate a theatrical revision of this part after 1600).
(h)) them: 1786 *um* (Nonce form.) The earliest uses of this contraction in O.E.D are from Chapman's *Gentleman Usher* (1606) and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (c. 1610).
(i) Enclitic *his* after prepositions and verbs: 1418 an'*s* (= on his), 1814 at*s*, 2612 a bout*s*, 2395 cutt*s*. The first citation of enclitic *s* for *his* in O.E.D. is from Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (c. 1592).
Auxiliary Verbs
Will: 72 I*le*, 437 hel*e*, 468 wel*e*, 487 we'*le*, 722 wel*e*, 165 you*lc*, 602 thei*le*. (These are common, with and without an apostrophe.)
1998 *thout* (= thou wilt; nonce form).
Would: 1068 I*de*, 2855 I*d*, 1830 you*d*, 45 h'ee*d* and 48 h'e*d* (apostrophe misplaced), 204 we*dc*. The contraction *d* for *would* is not cited earlier in O.E.D. than *Timon of Athens* (1607), in the form *thoud'st*.
Have: 591 *ha* done, 1832 *hate* (= have it).
Had: The contraction *d* for *had* is not found, but Jonsonian elision is once used, 244 *we'had*

Verb 'to be'
Am: 56, etc. I'*me* O.E.D. has no example of this contraction until Cowley's *Mistress* 1647. The normal orthography before 1600 is found in *Woodstock* 282 'I *am* sweld d more plump, than erst I was', the licence of elision or slurring being assumed by the actor.
Is: 137 tyme*s*, 189 that*s*, 379 etc. *hee*s, 383 *h'ees* (apostrophe misplaced),
674 ther*s*, 695 treason*s*, I572 what*s*.
Are: 315 you'*re*, 486 w'*ere* (apostrophe misplaced), 2091 we'*are* (Jonsonian elision). Contraction of *are* is not common in this play, and may be another mark of revision. Porter used it, but there is no date in O.E.D. *Woodstock* generally has proclitic contraction of the pronoun *ye* (sec *Pronouns* (c).

Aphaeresis or contraction of notional verbs
16, 237, 580 etc. tayne. (Always in this spelling, which was apparently the author's.)
1415 light (= alight)

Aphaeresis nouns
2405 havior (= behaviour).
Interjections
(a) *Aphesis*: 383 las (= alas).
(b) *Proclitic* 's' or 'z' (= God's) *in oaths*: 229 etc. *s*blud, 467 etc. *s*foote, 270 etc. zounes.
Notable *grammatical features of the play* are concerned mainly with verbal inflexions:

1. Third pers. sing. pres. indic. of *have*: Except at 1722 where *hath* is affected as the legal phraseology, Nimble always uses *has*, and so do the country folk and tradespeople whom he is persecuting. Elsewhere the use of *hath* and *has* is indiscriminate, and more or less of equal incidence. The use of colloquial *has* in verse by king, queen and nobleman, suggests post-1600 revision of the text. In folk plays, such as Peele's *Old Wives Tale*, both *has* and *does* had been in sparing use since 1590.

2. Third pers. sing. pres. indic. of *do*: *Does* outnumbers *doth*, of which only two examples were noticed (750 and 2380), in the first and last parts of the play, where the work of the author seems to have been best preserved. Subsequent revision affected mainly the middle of the play.

3. Third pers. sing. pres. indic. of notional verbs: -s endings are regular, even with *say* and *dare*; please*th* (108) is accounted for by the sibilant stem-final.

4. Solecisms of concord, so common in plays before 1600, in which plural subjects are in agreement with apparently singular verbs, were noted as follows, and are in the mouths of all social ranks:
557 be shrowe the churles that *makes* my queene so sadd
938 his cursses frights not mee
1097 the dukes of yorke and lancaster /who as I guess Intends to ryd with hime
1103 what revells keepes his flattering minions
1116 (400) Archers In a guard attends them
1324 at one feast *was servd* (10000) dishes
1623 our owne hands *undoes* us
1892 we (4) comes presently
2037 those about *hir. feares* hir sudden death (The intrusive full-stop is a feature of the punctuation)
2091 some sports *does well*
2134 so many wyld boores *rootes & spoyles* our lands
2706 the warrs *has* don
2746 those flattering mynions that ore *turnes* the state
5. The conjunction *whilse* (1827), or a spelling variant of it, is regularly used instead of *while* or *whilst*.

Some *orthographical features* noted are:
1. The copyist puts numerals in brackets throughout
2. He has a fondness for capital *I*, sometimes even in the middle of a word e.g. 890 en*I*oy. Generally he prefers the prefixes *im-*, *in-* to *em-*, *en-*.
3. In the preterites and past participles of weak verbs there is the same regularity of inflexions as is found in *Richard II* (Q1): with one exception (1448 *earnt*), *-d*(*e*) is used after voiced stem-finals, and *-t*(*e*) after unvoiced, *-ed* being reserved for instances wh re the ending is required to be syllabic, e.g. 545 learn*ed*. As consistency is maintained throughout the play, the copyist seems to have been responsible. His system dispenses with the necessity for apostrophes, the rare instance 568 *disgrac't* possibly denoting omission of *s*, as *gracst* is the spelling in line 439.

4. Unlike Munday's, the copyist's marks of elision are confined almost entirely to the colloquial and poetical contractions, but their incidence is most irregular, and often misplaced. This may be attributed to his lack of experience of the forms, the author's being probably void of elisions and distinguishable such orthographies as *ath*, *eth*, *en* (= even), *efaith*, *ats* (= at his), *tayne*, etc. 5. Author-spellings arc a matter of conjecture, but the following are idiosyncratic: 113 *boeth* (both), 137 *byssye*, 199 *wardropp* (wardrobe), 228 *vissett*, 34I surssarays (*certiorari*), 454 hoss (hose), 475 *collomes*, 497 *otians* (ocean's), 539 *swome* (past participle of swim), 652 *teranaye* (tyranny), 692 *higth* (height), 845 *descifard* (deciphered), 991 *dyneing Rome* (dining-room), 1038 *Royatous* (riotous), 1108 *pickes* (peaks), 1128 *sigth* (sigh), 1149 *grasher* or 1558 *Graysher* or 1575 *gratier* (grazier), 1245 *varlott*, 1322 *Rueind*, 1372 *cronicld*, 1409 *strocke* (struck), 1460 scilence, 1604. *benydissete* (benedicite), 1615 *puuding*, *nosses*, (noses, cf. 454), 1708 *casses* (cases), 1710 *whissels*, 1733 *caves* (calves), 1764 *gitt*, 1843 *dromes* (drums), 1922 *subsites* (subsidies), 2104
a massed (amazed), 2163 *vinards* (vineyards), 2265 *Aretchmaticke*, 2298 dossen (cf. 454, 1658).

The irregularity of the spelling and orthography of contraction compels the conclusion that the extant manuscript of *Woodstock* is a good example of stratification, the final version being prepared not earlier than about 1607. The naive and idiosyncratic elements appear to be the author's. As there is in dramatic works a progressive increase of contractions and elisions, as well as modernization of spelling, with each decade of the period 1590 1620, it is logical to infer that the simpler use of apostrophe antedates the more sophisticated, and that archaic spellings precede those which are more up-to-date. Most professional scribes about this time used Italian script and revised glaring irregularities. The copyist of *Woodstock*, however, was a literary man, with a good English hand, but no pretensions to skilled editing. He made as faithful a copy as he could of his material, which was in the hand sometimes of the author, sometimes of the playhouse editors, who had prepared and perhaps altered the play for performance. This, in itself, appears to have been a composite business on the lines of Dover Wilson's 'continuous copy', and dictated by the needs of presentation over a period of years. The original author was given to colloquial contractions, and the improvers continued in that spirit with more up-to-date forms. The dramatic stock-in-trade of cant phrases, oaths, clichés and contractions was gradually built up, and individual authors and producers followed current fashions. Even such improvements as a copyist might have made would have been the result of improving notions of orthography, under the influence of practicing men, such as Jonson, and reputable printers, such as Field, rather than of grammarians.

A verse characteristic of *Woodstock* is the frequency of lines with light, weak and feminine endings, a somewhat nerveless verse that anticipates the manner of Fletcher, e.g.,

1124 ere many dayes agcn lie vissett *ye* (light ending)
1497 lie dublc his reward thers (12) pence for *ye* (weak ending)
1135 our guard of Archers, kcepe the doores I charge *ye* (feminine ending)

Lines with weakened *you* have been selected, because it is noteworthy that, in the same circumstances (there is one within-the-line exception (1786)), the full form *them* is retained, as one believes it to have been in Shakespeare's drafts, e.g.,

523: we lett ye know those guifts are given to *them* (weak)
1988: we shall with greater ease arrest and take *them* (feminine)

Had *Woodstock* been rewritten in the second decade of the seventeenth century, when Fletcher had succeeded Shakespeare as principal playwright of the King's Men, the new contraction *em* of *Demetrius and Enanthe*, or its variation *um* found in *Bonducca*, would almost certainly have appeared in the falling

rhythm of line-endings such as those cited.

The so-called Fletcherian line was, in fact, no innovation. It occurred in plays of the fifteen-nineties, such as *Woodstock*, which aimed at securing a type of verse approximating closely to the natural rhythms of speech. Wilson Knight, in his essay 'Henry VII and the Poetry of Conversion' (*The Crown of Life*, pp. 267-9) rightly points to the incidence of such lines in Shakespearian plays from *King Lear* at the end of the dramatist's career. What is characteristic of Fletcher, however, is the higher percentage of such lines, and the combinations of the final falling rhythm with colloquial contractions, especially *em* and *ye*.

Comparing the chronicle tragedy *Woodstock* with the comedy *John-a-Kent* it becomes apparent that the use of colloquial contractions depends not simply on the material handled, or the characters and setting of the play, but on the peculiar style and taste in language of the author. Additions and alterations, *ex hypothesi*, preserve the spirit of the original; but if they are as much as twelve years later, as is suggested in the case of *Woodstock*, the earlier contraction types would be overlaid by later ones by later ones, and especially by a different orthography and more precise use of the apostrophe. Thus, in *Woodstock*, *shalls*, *th'are*, *hang um* and *I'me* are probably later than the other contractions, and so are the forms *has* and *does* for the author's *hath* and *doth*. These additions and revisions affected mainly the Nimble and Tresilian scenes, which provide the comic relief.

When alterations to a play become extensive and complicated, or the theatre copy worn through much handling, a fresh draft becomes an important desideratum. What degree of regularization in the orthography then takes place depends on the experience and professional competence of the copyist. But a copyist, even of Ralph Crane's standing, would not venture to modify much more than spelling, marks of elision and punctuation. The copyist of *Woodstock* was not nearly so enterprising, and indeed must have been rather slavish. The frequent use of full-stops, where a modern editor would use a comma or no stop at all, seems to have been a theatre practice, sometimes varied with colons, intended to mark the rhythmical units for the actor's delivery. The alternative is to suppose that what are now periods were in the original draft imperfectly tailed commas, which the maker of the fair copy misinterpreted.

If *Woodstock* had gone to the printer, the latter would have removed the brackets from the numerals, reduced the unnecessary full-stops, modernized the more inconvenient of the author's archaic spellings, increased the apostrophes, regularized the capital letters at the beginning of verse lines, and confined them in the body of the sentence to certain classes of nouns (see Chapter 8). But, here again, the extent of improvement would depend upon the professional competence of the printer's staff. The setting up of *Hamlet* (Q2), as Dover Wilson has shown, was the work of an apprentice compositor; the printing of Field's quartos of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* was another matter. Field's printing of poems reached the educated classes; but unfortunately plays did not always fall into the hands of reputable printers.