

Introduction to Numbered First Folio Texts

The texts here shown are from the First Folio of 1623. They are presented in a quite particular way in order to display the line number of each spoken line of text in relation to where it is placed not only in a whole play, but also in each act and in each scene. Line numbers are shown to the left of the main column of text. In the columns to the right of the text we have the line numbers working backwards through the play, again for the whole play, each act and each scene. These reverse numbers, strange though they at first may seem, allow one to find and investigate matching symmetrical lines of text (sometimes referred to as ‘mirrored’ lines).

By presenting the texts in this way the reader may use them not only as a companion to Sylvia Eckersley’s writings, but also as a means for the researcher to explore further correspondences and layers of meaning within the numerical and geometrical architecture of the different plays.

Many thanks are given to Michael Best and ‘Internet Shakespeare Editions’ for the generous usage of the meticulously accurate First Folio Texts that were employed as the basis for these presentations. The downloaded text was reformatted and, during the writing process, checked with a facsimile of the 1623 First Folio (‘Facsimile Edition of First Folio’ Kokeritz and Prouty, Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press 1955). The letter-forms employed by ‘Internet Shakespeare Editions’ (e.g. The modernisation of the long “s”) have been retained as they provide the possibility of most readers being able to follow the texts with flow and comfort.

It must be emphasised that it is important for the serious student/researcher to have a facsimile copy to hand (e.g. With regard to the exact setting out of the columns and pages in the original text) for, indeed, many questions still remain concerning the meaning and significance of the setting out of this wonderful book.

How to Use the Numbered Texts

The numbers next to each text have been set out in such a way that they can be used not only to show the position of a line in relation to its scene, act, and the whole play, but also in order to find the matching, symmetrical lines of text. Each line may then be seen as part of a spacial/geometrical entity.

1. Choose the line to be explored and note, in the columns on the left of the text, its play-number, act-number and scene-number.

2. Find the mirrored/symmetrical line by looking for the same number in the appropriate right-hand column (this number will be marked by a dash to show that it has been counted in reverse).

E.g. play-line 12 in 'Macbeth' is: '*King*. What bloody man is that? he can report,' and the mirrored play-line, play-line 12-, is: 'In such an Honor nam'd: What's more to do,'

Key to Numbered Texts

S = Scene Centre,

A = Act Centre,

P = Play Centre.

The Key for the text of Macbeth also includes

B = beginning of 'Weary Sev'nights.'

E = end of 'Weary Sev'nights.'

* = 'Weary Sev'nights.'

Deg. = degrees of the Great Circle.

° = degrees of Act Circles.