

# SHAKESPEARE'S INFORMAL ENGLISH AND MODERN PUNCTUATION

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## ABSTRACT

From Shakespeare's informal English here are selected for consideration discourse markers, an aspect of language often ignored by editors of Shakespeare's plays. It is discussed what constitutes a discourse marker and where and in what form they appear. This leads to outline proposals for the way in which they should be punctuated in modern editions. To distinguish them from exclamations, forms of address and oaths, they should generally not be marked off with commas or any other punctuation. The exception to this rule is when a marker occurs within a clause and consists of a clause, where its status may need to be signalled by commas. Most of the examples are taken from *Hamlet*.

KEY WORDS: Shakespeare, discourse markers, punctuation, *Hamlet*.

## RESUMEN

Partiendo del inglés informal de Shakespeare se seleccionan aquí los marcadores del discurso para su posterior consideración, un aspecto del lenguaje a menudo ignorado por los editores de las obras de teatro de este autor. Se discute qué constituye un marcador del discurso y dónde y en qué forma se manifiesta; esto nos llevará a una primera propuesta para puntuar las ediciones modernas. Para distinguir los marcadores del discurso de las exclamaciones, fórmulas de tratamiento e imprecaciones, éstos deben generalmente no ir puntuados por comas o cualquier otro signo. La excepción a esta regla se manifiesta cuando un marcador se da dentro de una cláusula y consiste en una cláusula, en cuyo caso su estatus puede precisarse por medio de comas. La mayoría de los ejemplos que se presentan corresponden a *Hamlet*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Shakespeare, marcadores del discurso, puntuación, *Hamlet*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most modern editions of Shakespeare's texts appear in a modernised spelling system, which naturally involves punctuating the text in accordance with modern concepts of punctuation. But, although the advantages and disadvantages of a modernised spelling sometimes with a nod at the theoretical background of such modernisation are debated (e.g. Wells 1984 and Blake 1990), it is rare to find



punctuation given any attention in discussions of this sort (cf. Crewe 2000). This neglect is surprising because the rules of modern punctuation are somewhat flexible and do not cover all aspects of language. Many editors are satisfied to indicate that the punctuation in the quartos and First Folio is erratic and that therefore it can be ignored, allowing modern punctuation to be used instead. Punctuation in Modern English is a feature of the written text, and writing nominally observes the conventions of standard English. Increasingly, however, modern fiction and journalism tend towards reproducing a written version of the spoken language, which the rules of punctuation do not cover in any detail, since the spoken language does not observe the conventions found in written English. Shakespeare's plays, like most drama, attempt to provide an appearance of ordinary conversation and consequently they include many elements of the informal English of his day.

Discourse markers (sometimes referred to as pragmatic markers) are a significant feature of informal English. They are defined in many ways, but for my purposes in this article it is easiest to describe them as those elements of language (words, phrases or clauses) which in themselves and in their context carry little or no semantic content, though they do add colour and tone to their contexts (Brinton 1996:30-1). Discourse markers are closely related to exclamations, oaths and forms of address. They differ from exclamations in that they are without full semantic meaning and they must be incorporated within a sentence or clause; whereas exclamations carry meaning and can stand on their own. It is, however, possible to treat some forms as either exclamations or discourse markers by the punctuation used in an edition. In modern editions many forms are often turned into exclamations, probably because this is the linguistic category with which editors are most familiar. Discourse markers differ from oaths and forms of address in that the latter are semantically meaningful, though as forms of address and oaths become stereotyped and abbreviated they easily slide into the category of discourse marker. Sometimes judging whether a form is a marker or not is not easy.

Discourse markers are far more numerous than is usually appreciated, and their existence has largely been overlooked by editors of Shakespeare's plays. Their number is far greater than the examples given for Modern English by Brinton (1996:32). For the most part clauses or sentences which contain markers would, if the markers were not present, retain the same semantic content although their tone could be quite different. In fact, in the various texts of *Hamlet*, the play with which I shall principally deal, there is variation not only in the presence or absence of a marker among the first quarto, second quarto [Q2] and First Folio [F], but also in which marker appears in a given text. Although markers vary in the tone they may give to the context in which they appear, there is not unnaturally overlap in the emotional impact they give to sentences or clauses in Shakespeare's English as much as in Modern English. In this paper I shall concentrate on the punctuating of discourse markers in modern editions, for it is through punctuation that one identifies for the user of an edition what is a marker and what not. Since there are few rules for punctuating discourse markers in Modern English and since modern editors are not necessarily familiar with the concept of discourse marker, it is hardly surprising that there is diversity and confusion as to how to punctuate these items within a



modernised text. First, I consider the types and positions of discourse markers found in Shakespeare's plays, and then I offer suggestions as to how they might be punctuated in modernised editions. As there are many discourse markers in the plays which are not necessarily recognised as such by editors, this may naturally influence the way in which they have edited their texts. In what follows I have chosen my examples from *Hamlet* unless another play is given as the source for the quotation, but all quotations retain the F spelling and punctuation unless otherwise indicated.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE POSITIONING, TYPES AND NUMBER OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Discourse markers can occur at the beginning, middle or end of a clause and they can consist of one, two or three independent elements, and occasionally even more than three. They can consist of a single word, a repeated word, a phrase, a repeated phrase, a clause or even two clauses. In a continuous piece of text, especially if it is in prose, there may be some uncertainty whether a given marker is to be understood as coming at the beginning of one clause or the end of the previous one, and sometimes the punctuation in F may not be a sufficient guide. It is only when the marker comes at the beginning or the end of a speaker's contribution to the dialogue that one can be certain of the precise position of the marker in the clause. In the later discussion I mark examples from the beginning or end of a speaker's contribution to the dialogue <B> for 'beginning' or <E> for 'end' after the line reference.

The following list offers examples of the different types of marker indicated above without reference to their position in the clause; the markers are picked out in bold italic type:

(1)

- a) SINGLE WORD: *Oh speake.* (1.1.116), *Indeed my Lord, it followed hard vpon.* (1.2.178);
- b) REPEATED WORD: *Indeed, indeed Sirs; but this troubles me.* (1.2.224, Q2 reads *Indeede Sirs*);
- c) PHRASE: *Not I, my Lord, by Heauen.* (1.5.124);
- d) REPEATED PHRASE: *Very like, very like: staid it long?* (1.2.235);
- e) CLAUSE: *So please you, something touching the L. Hamlet.* (1.3.89);
- f) TWO CLAUSES: *Looke too't, I charge you; come your wayes.* (1.3.135).

Although the first three examples are relatively straightforward, some might wonder to what extent the latter three fall within the definition of discourse mark-

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<sup>1</sup> The lineation of the plays is keyed to the text found in Wells & Taylor 1988. Apart from Wells & Taylor, the editions of *Hamlet* used are Jenkins 1982, Edwards 1985 and Hibbard 1987.

ers. The repeated phrase *very like* might be taken as an affirmative response to Horatio's statement that the ghost would have caused Hamlet surprise and amazement. But the repetition is itself emotionally charged and Hamlet does not say *I* (i.e. 'yes') or something similar. Other examples of *very like* suggest that its meaning is 'perhaps, possibly', as when Gertrude responds to Claudius's question, whether Polonius's explanation of Hamlet's madness is the right one, with *It may be very like*. (2.2.154, Q2, where F has *very likely*). Here the sense of *very like* must be 'perhaps, possibly' as its link with *It may be* indicates. Hamlet's own response to Horatio is similar to that found in b) above, *Indeed, indeed*, which could as easily have formed his reply in item d). And there are many other repeated words or phrases which could have formed his answer: *well, well; perhaps, perhaps; in sooth, in sooth*; and so on. The effect is to create a sense of uncertainty which is formed partly from the choice of words and partly through the repetition, where one element of the repetition acts as an emotional trigger for the other one. In e) the clause *So please you* is an independent clause, which could be taken as a politeness formula. But this clause frequently alternates with words like *prithee, pray* and with phrases like *by my faith, on my word*, etc. While it is impossible in these two cases to say that *very like, very like* and *so please you* are indeed markers, this seems the most satisfactory explanation. Item f) differs in that it consists of three short clauses spoken by Polonius to Ophelia, any of which could be interpreted as a discourse marker. But the sense is probably best understood as 'Obey my instructions, I command you, and make sure you do so'. The most significant element is the instruction that Ophelia should carefully follow Polonius's order, and the last two elements emphasise the importance of doing that, for the first confirms it is a parental order and the second emphasises that this is what is expected of her. This is why I take the last two clauses as discourse markers. However, in many modern editions the last clause is often punctuated as a separate sentence which rather casts it adrift from the rest of the passage and becomes a vague instruction to do better. Indeed, we shall find as we go through other examples that what could be discourse markers are more often than not understood to have semantic content. This may be because editors often want to make every clause semantically significant instead of thinking of the dramatic impact which markers have.

The examples given so far have been of single or repeated words or phrases, except for f), and that item should remind us that it is possible to have a series of discourse markers in a single clause or utterance. It may be helpful to give some examples of multiple discourse markers here to make that point clear. An example with four single-word markers occurs in a couplet which Hamlet prepares extempore about the king's reaction to the play:

(2)  
 For if the King like not the Comedie,  
 Why then belike he likes it not perdie. (3.2.281-2)

Here the words *Why, then, belike* and *perdie* can all be classified as markers, with the first three in sequence and the last at the end of the line to complete the

rhyme, but parallel to and to be taken with the first three. In other words, markers can be separated in the clause but yet act together to create the emotional tone. This quotation as a piece of doggerel might not seem to reflect ordinary conversation, but it helps us understand the nature of markers. Modern editors punctuate the first three in different ways, most usually by putting commas after *then* and *not* (Jenkins 1982:306, Wells & Taylor 1988:673), but Edwards (1985:166) has a dash instead of the first comma, and Hibbard (1987:265) has commas after *then*, *belike* and *not*). The result is to reduce the number of markers. However, it is not uncommon to find three markers together in ordinary conversation and in drama this reflects the high emotion of a scene. When Hamlet criticises Guildenstern with *Why looke you now, how vnworthy a thing you make of me:* (3.2.351-2), it is possible to take *why* and *looke you* and *now* (two single words and a short clause) as three markers, as suggested by the punctuation in F. They undoubtedly are introduced to ratchet up the ironical and potentially angry tone of what Hamlet has to say. Hamlet comes up with a similar outburst when he sees his father's ghost in his mother's bedroom and breaks out with *Why look you there: looke how it steals away:* (3.4.125). The pattern here is the same as at 3.2.351-2 with a single word *why* followed by a short clause *looke you*, followed by another single word *there*. Many editors are prepared to have only a single marker here, namely *why*. They interpret *looke you there* as a command by Hamlet to his mother to 'look over there', which reduces the emotional intensity and rather undermines the force of the *looke how it steals away:* which follows. It is better to think of this as three markers highlighting Hamlet's emotional state as the figure of his father makes its move to leave the bed-chamber.

It is time now to consider the different positions that the markers can occupy within a clause. It is hardly surprising that they occur most frequently at the beginning of a sentence or clause. A few examples of single markers follow:

(3)

- a) BEGINNING: *Marry, now I can tell.* (5.1.33 <B>), *Faith en'e with loosing his wits.* (5.1.155 <B>), *Why heere in Denmarke:* (5.1.157 <B>), *Oh terrible woer,* (5.1.242 <B>, Q2 *O treble woe*).
- b) MIDDLE: *though I know to deuide him inuentorially, would dosie th'arithmaticke of memory,* (Add.Pass.N.8-9,<sup>2</sup> Q2), *as to make true dixion of him, his semblable is his mirroure,* (Add.Pass.N.12-13, Q2), *I will my Lord; I pray you pardon me.* (5.2.244).
- c) END: *and must the Inheritor himselfe haue no more? ha?* (5.1.108-9 <E>), *And smelt so? Pub.* (5.1.196 <E>), *It is indifferent cold my Lord indeed.* (5.2.98 <E>), *you will too't sir really.* (Add.Pass.N.20 <E>, Q2).

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<sup>2</sup> References introduced by 'Add.Pass.' and with a letter and number are to the Additional Passages in Wells & Taylor 1988; the text is from Q2.



Markers most often consist of a single word or short phrase, but they can on occasion be lengthy phrases. I chose *to make true dixon of him* as an example to illustrate that Shakespeare understood what a discourse marker was and, in this case, lengthened it to poke fun at the elaborate and often meaningless style found among some speakers at this time, of whom Osric acts as a stereotype.

Naturally it is possible to have examples with multiple markers and a few of these are now included; multiple markers are more common than lengthy single markers. Some multiple markers are possibly parodies of the abuse of markers, as is true to this snatch sung by Ophelia, where the markers begin the sentence:

(4)  
 By gis, and by S. Charity,  
 Alacke, and fie for shame:  
 Yong men wil doo't, if they come too't,  
 By Cocke they are too blame. (4.5.58-61).

The first two lines consist solely of markers and the fourth line starts with one as well. I take the three phrases (the first two and the last one) which have the form of oaths as markers, partly because they are paralleled by the other markers (*Alacke, fie* and *for shame*) and partly because their choice of words, *gis, Charity* and *Cocke*, suggests they have ceased to be real oaths and are no more than markers. Another possible playing with markers at the beginning of an utterance occurs when Ophelia says: *Say you? Nay pray you marke.* (4.5.27), where all the phrases except the final *marke* could be interpreted as markers, and they set up a jingle of the words: *say - Nay - pray*. Phrasal markers may occur at the beginning of a speech and help to create the sense of pompousness when they are rather longer than usual, as in this example with two markers: *Truly to speake, and with no addition, We goe to gaine a little patch of ground* (Add.Pass.J.8, Q2 <B>). Other introductory markers containing more than one element include: *but soft, what noyse*, (4.2.3, Q2 <B>, F omits *but soft*); *Why then* (Add.Pass.J.14, Q2 <B>), *Indeed la?* (4.5.56 <B>, Q2 omits *la*).

It is perhaps not unexpected that markers which occur in the middle of a clause or sentence are more likely to consist of single elements, because too many elements might lead to loss of control of the meaning of the context as a whole. It is not uncommon for these to be short clauses, like *I pray (thee/you)*, often marked off in F by brackets or at least by commas. Thus we find *Speake the Speech I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you trippingly on the Tongue*: (3.2.1-2), or slightly more elaborately: *Away I do beseech you, both away*, (2.2.171). An example with brackets is *give vs leaue (I pray) a while*, (*Two Gentlemen* 3.1.1). But examples can occur without any punctuation to mark them off, as *Which dreames indeed are Ambition*: (2.2.259). A rather longer example, in this case marked with commas, is *And so, without more circumstance at all, I hold it fit that we shake hands, and part*: (1.5.131-2), which reminds one of the elaboration of a marker by Hamlet when he mocked Osric, and here he may exploit the same method of speaking pompously to pull rank on Horatio and the soldiers to encourage them to leave. One common type of marker is the use of *I*

(i.e. *ay*) and *nay* to heighten the emotion of a statement which needs emphasising in some way: *I will weare him In my hearts Core: I, in my Heart of heart*, (3.2.70-1).

The use of markers at the end of a sentence or clause may be problematic as explained above, and these too are more likely to be single and relatively short. Examples of this sort include: *Not I, my Lord, by Heauen*. (1.5.124, <E>); *Nor I my Lord: in faith*. (1.5.149, <E>), but there are examples where two markers occur, sometimes involving repetition: *I'm sorry they offend you heartily: Yes faith heartily*. (1.5.138-9, <E>), where both *faith* and *heartily* may be taken as markers, and the second is in fact repeating the word used already at the end of what appeared to be the complete sentence until Hamlet decided to emphasise his apology even further. Repetition also occurs when Polonius castigates his daughter with *I, fashion you may call it, go too, go too*. (1.3.112, <E>), in which some editors take the last four words to constitute a separate sentence. To get longer and varied markers at the end of a sentence, one has to go to the lower-class characters, of whom there are few in *Hamlet*. Thus Costard can say: *The thickest, & the tallest: it is so, truth is truth*. (*Love's Labour's Lost* 4.1.48), where both *it is so* and *truth is truth* are simply used to emphasise the previous point and they mean little more than 'indeed, truly'. However, it should be noted that these two markers do not come at the end of his speech, though it is unlikely they go with what follows. In *Merry Wives* Mrs Quickly can say *surely I thinke you haue charmes, la: yes in truth*. (2.2.102, <E>), where *surely* at the beginning and *la* and *yes* and *in truth* can be taken as markers with the last three in a sequence at the end of the speech. Some speeches by Mrs Quickly end with several markers, but are punctuated in such a way as to suggest they are more in the nature of delaying tactics and so it is impossible to tell whether they are really going to be the conclusion of her speech. Thus in *Merry Wives* she ends one speech to Fenton with *but for you-well-goe too-* (1.4.149).

Earlier I suggested that discourse markers had much in common with oaths, exclamations and forms of address. I shall touch on this relationship more fully in the next section, but a few words need to be said about forms of address. It would seem as though the use of a discourse marker or a form of address may be somewhat arbitrary. It has been shown that forms of address are used in passages of increased emotion, which is where one finds most discourse markers (Blake 2002). In a play like *Hamlet* which exists in quartos and First Folio, it is notable that in some passages where one text has a form of address, the other may have a discourse marker. The following list contains examples where Q2 and F have different readings:

(5)

Reference	Q2	F
1.5.22	list, list, ô list:	list <i>Hamlet</i> , oh list,
1.5.91	Adiew, adiew, adiew,	Adue, adue, <i>Hamlet</i> :
4.7.134	but stay, what noyse?	how sweet Queene.
5.2.106	Nay good my Lord	Nay, in good faith,

These examples suggest that forms of address and discourse markers were very close, because they served much the same function. In various plays whenever

they are found together, their order may be changed between one text and another. In *King Lear* in F Cornwall says *Fye sir, fie.* (*Tragedy of King Lear* 2.2.338), but the quarto has *Fie fie sir.* (*History of King Lear*, scene 7.322). Both discourse markers and forms of address may be enclosed by brackets in F which helps to give both a similar feel.

### 3. PUNCTUATING DISCOURSE MARKERS

In matters of punctuation one needs to be clear what message one is trying to send to the reader or the performer of the text. Various principles need to be kept in mind. Discourse markers are part of the spoken language and therefore the punctuated text should do nothing which hinders the reader from understanding this relationship. Given that many readers may not be familiar with the concept of discourse marker, editors should be careful not to build upon this lack of familiarity by suggesting that discourse markers are exclamations, oaths, forms of address or some other part of speech. In many cases discourse markers are left high and dry or are treated as exclamations or some kind of sentence adverbial by the punctuation, and this can only encourage the reader to see them as bits of pseudo-language suggesting that Shakespeare did not really know much about ordinary speech. An obvious example of this is where a marker such as *la* comes at the end of a speech and is punctuated with a capital letter and followed by a full-stop. This isolates it from the rest of the text and suggests it is some vague exclamation, which can seem merely artificial to the average reader today. This is particularly the case as editors never comment on these words or use them as guides to the character of the individual or the emotional tone of the scene. Let us look at some examples quoted under 3 c) above. What we need to focus on is whether the forms are discourse markers and to what extent it is feasible to indicate that through the punctuation.

The examples in 3 c) were as follows: *and must the Inheritor himselfe haue no more? ha?* (5.1.108-9 <E>), *And smelt so? Puh.* (5.1.196 <E>), *It is indifferent cold my Lord indeed.* (5.2.98 <E>), *you will too't sir really.* (Add.Pass.N.20 <E>, Q2). They fall into two separate categories, for the first two are questions and contain some kind of evocative, but relatively empty, word which some might regard as an exclamation. Each discourse marker in this group is separated by the punctuation in F from the sentence to which it relates. The second two have as discourse markers lexical items attached to declarative clauses, which in other contexts might be regarded as semantically meaningful, and these lexical items follow forms of address. These two discourse markers are incorporated into the main sentence by the punctuation in F. In all cases the resulting utterances might be considered somewhat unusual by modern standards.

The first two examples are treated differently by most editors. Despite the punctuation found in F, editors place *ha?* within the main sentence; it is incorporated into the question and separated from it by a comma. Wells & Taylor (1988:683) have “and must th'inheritor himself have no more, ha?”, which is a standard editorial modernisation, also found in Jenkins (1982:383), Edwards (1985:217) and



Hibbard (1987:326). This diminishes its role as a possible exclamation and pushes it more towards the discourse marker status. But the comma before *ha?* makes it seem like a possible sentence adverbial, which gives it rather more emphasis than it merits. Most discourse markers add tone, but do not necessarily have great emphatic force. To leave the comma out would make *ha?* less noticeable and would perhaps be the better solution here. The only possible difficulty in omitting the comma might be that some readers could be misled into thinking that the clause has as its object “no more ha”, but since that makes no sense it is not a problem. And if we get used to seeing more discourse markers without heavy punctuation, we would become more accustomed to forms like this.

For the second example, *And smelt so? Puh.* (5.1.196), many editors might assume that *Puh* was Hamlet’s exclamation at the smell given off by the skull, and perhaps for this reason they modernise it as “Pah.” The punctuation in F is repeated in most modern editions with an exclamation mark after “Pah”, as for example in Jenkins (1982:387), Edwards (1985:220), Hibbard (1987:329) and Wells & Taylor (1988: 684). But the main sentence is a question, which evokes the reply by the Gravedigger *E’ene so, my Lord.* To take *Puh* as a free-standing exclamation, as editors do, rather breaks up that natural sequence. It is better to understand *Puh* to be a discourse marker, which emphasises the message of the question, which in Modern English might be represented by “And did it really stink?” In that case it would be possible to bring *Puh* into the main sentence, as was done with *ha* in the previous case. In this example it would also be necessary to edit it in a modernised form without a comma as “And smelt so puh?”, where “puh” emphasises the question without being a rather self-conscious expression of disgust at the smell. It needs to be remembered that *Puh* is used elsewhere in *Hamlet* without reference to smell, when Polonius responds to Ophelia’s comment about Hamlet’s tenders of affection with *Affection, puh.* (1.3.101), which is the start of his contribution to the dialogue and where the sense must be “affection rubbish.” Although editors modernise this example of *puh* differently, as “pooh”, they do include it in the same sentence with “Affection”, though separated by a comma, as in Hibbard (1987:177) and Wells & Taylor (1988:660). Others treat it differently. Jenkins (1982:204) associates it with the following clause and has “Pooh, you speak like a green girl,” which may have been suggested by Q2 which has *Affection, puh, you speake like a green girle*, where *puh* could be related to either what precedes or what follows. Edwards (1985:99) has “Affection? Puh! You speak like a green girl,” which leaves his “Puh!” up in the air and not closely related to either the preceding or following words.

The remaining two examples of discourse markers at the end of a sentence listed above occur both in declarative sentences and at the end of a character’s speech so there can be no doubt that these markers must refer forward in some way. The first, *It is indifferent cold my Lord indeed.*, is spoken by Osric and the *indeed* may be part of his flowery style. It presumably emphasises his comment about the *indifferent cold*, as though he were saying “It is indeed indifferent cold, my lord.” The problem of punctuating this sentence is the presence of the form of address, which in Modern English would normally be marked off by commas both before and after it. That is how modern editors usually punctuate it, as in Jenkins



(1982:399), Hibbard (1987:340) and Wells & Taylor (1988:685); but Edwards (1985:229) omits the first comma before the form of address. This raises the question as to how far, in Osric's language at least, forms of address are equivalent to empty formulae resembling discourse markers, a possibility which is strengthened by the fact that he uses so many of them. That seems to be how the compositor of F took it and thus he dispensed with commas altogether in this sentence. A solution along these lines has much to recommend it, but it might be thought too drastic for a modern edition. If so, an alternative solution is to leave out the second comma so that "my lord indeed" comes out in a rush, as it were, to imitate Osric's performance so that these two elements act together as a discourse marker to the rest of the sentence.

The second example, *you will too't sir really*, is found only in Q2 and so is not found in all modern editions. The conditions here are similar to those found in the previous case and Jenkins (1982:402), Hibbard (1987:368) and Wells & Taylor (1988:690) respond in the same way by marking off the form of address with commas; once again Edwards (1985:230) is the exception for he omits the first comma before *sir*. Wells & Taylor (1988:690) find this sentence problematic and emend *really* to *rarely*. But *really* adds tone to the declarative sentence which can be understood as "You mean you'll do it, sir", and putting it at the end is a stylistic trick which adds extra emphasis. *Sir* is such a common and over-used form of address that it is almost meaningless in many contexts and the ideal solution is to follow F by having no punctuation within this sentence and merely the full-stop at the end.

The general principle suggested above for discourse markers when final is that they should not be separated from the rest of the sentence by commas or any other form of punctuation. Let us now consider markers which come at the beginning of a sentence. The examples quoted above may be used as the basis for the discussion. It was noted that they consisted of two kinds, single markers and multiple markers. The single markers are *Marry, now I can tell*. (5.1.33 <B>), *Faith en'e with loosing his wits*. (5.1.155 <B>), *Why heere in Denmarke*: (5.1.157 <B>), *Oh terrible woer*, (5.1.242 <B>), Q2 *O treble woe*). As can be seen F and, in the last example also, Q2 do not usually separate the marker from the rest of the sentence by a punctuation mark. It is only in the first example that a comma marking off the marker is found, which may be because the compositor thought of it as an oath rather than as a marker. In all these cases the marker acts rather like an intensifier and this is one reason why it is more appropriate not to separate it from what follows with a comma. The discourse markers increase, and should be seen to increase, the emotion of the sentence as a whole. To mark them off with commas turns them into exclamations, for which there may sometimes be justification, but hardly in these examples. In the first example the second gravedigger thinks he knows what the answer to the riddle posed by the first gravedigger is, and the emphasis is on the *now*, which *Marry* helps to point. In the second example the first gravedigger is poking fun at Hamlet, who has asked how the dead person came to be mad, to which the reply is *Faith en'e with loosing his wits*. In this case *Faith* emphasises *en'e*. Hamlet responds by asking *Vpon what ground?*, i.e. for what cause, the person had died, which the gravedigger pretends to misunderstand as "In what

country?”, and says *Why heere in Denmarke*. The gravedigger wants to highlight his witty retorts by using discourse markers, though other less pointed remarks are without them. When the dead Ophelia is brought on stage and she is lamented before being buried, Laertes is quick to blame Hamlet for her death. The reading in Q2 is no doubt the correct one, for that in F makes little sense. He prays for vengeance to light on Hamlet and says in Q2:

O treble woe  
Fall tenne times double on that cursed head,  
Whose wicked deede thy most ingenious sence  
Depruiued thee of, (5.1.242-5, Q2)

The passage is hyperbolic, and the use of a discourse marker at the beginning adds to the cumulative nature of the curse, and it is more effective in this role if it is not separated from the following words. But in these four examples it is common for editors to mark off the markers with commas and thus turn them into exclamations or oaths. All four are treated in this way by Jenkins (1982:379-90), Hibbard (1987:323-32) and Wells and Taylor (1988:682-4), but Edwards (1985:214-22) has no comma after the final example.

The multiple markers made up of either single words or phrases noted above are, with the exception of Ophelia's song, as follows: *Truly to speake, and with no addition, We goe to gaine a little patch of ground* (Add.Pass.J.8, Q2); *but soft, what noyse*, (4.2.3, Q2, F omits *but soft*); *Why then* (Add.Pass.J.14, Q2); *Indeed la?* (4.5.56 Q2 omits *la*). The first one, *Truly to speake, and with no addition*, consists of two phrases joined by *and*, a relatively uncommon phenomenon. Here the Captain is addressing Hamlet about Fortinbras's expedition, which he regards as little less than stupid. He makes this point by using a laboured discourse marker, where the two phrases convey the same tone, namely that he disagrees with the expedition's purpose though he does not say so directly. He could as easily have said "Truly and briefly." Shakespearian texts tend to include a comma before *and*, and many do so after a phrase, so the punctuation in Q2 is not significant for our purposes. The elaboration of a discourse marker for stylistic effect need not nullify the concept suggested for other markers that, even when they are found at the beginning of a sentence, they need not be separated from the clause to which they refer by punctuation. To gain maximum impact they need to be more closely related to the clause to which they add tone. Nevertheless, Jenkins (1982:344), Edwards (1985:191), Hibbard (1987:362) and Wells & Taylor (1988:689) retain both commas, after "speak" and "addition", which seems both fussy and wrong.

The second discourse marker *but soft*, is marked off by a comma in Q2 from the rest of the sentence and, as a result, one might argue that this phrase consists in part of an exclamation *soft* "listen, pay attention." This is a possible interpretation, though the omission of these two words in F suggests they have little semantic input and are better understood as markers. *But* is often a marker when it starts a sentence as here and in this cases adds extra urgency to *soft*, which in its turn adds colour to *what noyse*, to create a more hurried and anxious utterance,



for Hamlet has only just finished disposing of Polonius's body and is in a state of some excitement. Nevertheless, Jenkins (1982:337) and Edwards (1985:186) retain the comma from Q2, but Hibbard (1987:290) and Wells & Taylor (1988:677) omit the phrase *but soft*, altogether, as it is not in F.

The last two examples, *Why then* (Add.Pass.J.14, Q2); *Indeed la?* (4.5.56), are more straightforward. The first introduces Hamlet's amazement that anyone will defend something not worth defending: *Why then the Pollacke neuer will defend it*. The absence of any comma allows the sentence to race forward to express this amazement. Modern editors respond in various ways: Edwards (1985:191) has no comma, Wells & Taylor (1988:689) have a comma after *then*, but Jenkins (1982:344) and Hibbard (1987:362) have a comma after *Why*, but none after *then*. The comma after *Why then* suggests that the editors understand these two words to go together as an exclamation, whereas a comma after *Why* makes that an exclamation, but rather leaves *then* up in the air which has to be understood as an adverbial meaning something like "under those circumstances." But, as we have seen, multiple discourse markers are common enough and the appropriate solution here is to have no commas so that the discourse markers are clearly such and make the maximum impact.

*Indeed la?* occurs in the sentence *Indeed la? without an oath Ile make an end ont.*, spoken by Ophelia in her madness. The utterance is difficult to interpret within its context, for it follows Claudius's comment *Pretty Ophelia* and precedes Ophelia's song quoted as (4). Editors respond in this way: Edwards (1985:195) has no comma after *Indeed* and an exclamation mark after *la*; Wells & Taylor (1988:679) have a comma after *Indeed* and a question mark after *la*; Jenkins (1982:351) has a comma after *Indeed* and omits *la*; and Hibbard (1994:300) has a comma after *Indeed* and another after *la*. This variety suggests confusion among editors as to how to treat this example. Edwards sees *Indeed la?* as an exclamation in response to what Claudius had said, as much as to say it means "Pretty Ophelia indeed." But Ophelia pays little attention to what the others on stage say to her or among themselves, for she is encapsulated in her own world, and this seems not an ideal solution. All the editions tend to separate *Indeed la?* to a greater or lesser extent from what follows. This tends to turn it into some vague exclamation, though precisely what it means is not explained. But Ophelia is emphasising that she is not going to bother with an oath, though the song that follows is full of what could be oaths which I understand as so weakened that they have become markers. She may take more sense than we realise. It is simpler to take *Indeed la?* as introducing *without an oath* and not to separate them by putting any punctuation after either *Indeed* or *la*. This makes her rush of mad language more emotionally charged which is preferable to the somewhat weak exclamation which she is given by editors

Discourse markers inside a clause or sentence may need a different system of punctuation, depending on whether they are single words or short clauses. These markers are less likely to be confused with exclamations and their range is more limited. When there is a single word then no punctuation is probably the right solution, as may be observed in modern editions. This is shown in *Which dreames indeed are Ambition:* (2.2.259), and in Bottom's comment *and there indeed let him name his name,* (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.1.40-1), which Schmidt (1902:582)

understands as a marker for he adds the gloss “his real name.” In this latter example, some editors (Wells & Taylor 1988:320) do put commas around *indeed*, but others do not (Foakes 1984:80). In the example from *Hamlet*, Jenkins (1982:251), Edwards (1985:129), Hibbard (1987:216) and Wells & Taylor (1988:666) all have no commas around “indeed”, suggesting that here they recognise the concept of a discourse marker. However, examples of a single word in this position are less common than phrases or short clauses. Where there is a short clause, this as noted above sometimes appears in brackets and in a modernised texts may appear with commas so that its status as a discourse marker is clear to the reader. This would mean that some forms of address and oaths which may also appear internally in the sentence in brackets could also be interpreted as markers, which in many cases could well be true. But there may be times when attention should be given to including short phrases and clauses without commas. In *The Tempest* when Miranda says *The skye it seemes would powre down stinking pitch*, (*Tempest* 1.2.3) and later (*Who had no doubt some noble creature in her*) (*Tempest* 1.2.7), it is probable that *it seemes* and *no doubt* are no different from *indeed* or many other discourse markers, other than possibly rather stronger in their emotional impact. With the short phrase *no doubt* there is no reason to separate it from its surrounding words by commas, and with *it seemes* it is only necessary if an editor assumes that its status as a discourse marker would be compromised by not having commas around it.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It is clear that editors do not give much serious thought to the question of how to punctuate discourse markers to separate them from the related categories of exclamations, oaths and forms of address. It is important for any reader or actor that these categories be kept apart, and this can effectively be done only through the punctuation. In this paper I recommend that discourse markers at the beginning or end of a clause or sentence should not be marked off by commas, even in those situations where there is a sequence of more than one marker. This enables the markers to achieve a cumulative effect on the tone of the clause or sentence they are in. In many respects this is no different from a string of adjectives which may be found in forms of address when they are derogatory or just amusing. In such cases editors are happy to have no commas even though adjectives in modern punctuation are usually separated by commas. Thus when Falstaff calls Hal *the most comparatiue rascaldest sweet yong Prince*. (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.80-1), many editors such as Humphreys (1960:16) and Weil & Weil (1997:76) have no commas, though a few like Wells & Taylor (1988:456) have a single one after *comparatiue*. That crescendo of emotional tone is something which needs to be found in the editing of discourse markers. When a marker occurs within a clause, commas are best omitted when the marker is a single word. When the marker consists of a short clause or phrase, then it may be necessary to surround the marker with commas if its status as a marker might be compromised without them; but otherwise there is every reason not to provide commas for markers in this position.



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