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Bad Quartos revisited

Brian Vickers reports “an important discovery” by Akihiro Yamada that “the phrase ‘maimed, and deformed’ was first used by Thomas Walkley in the preface to his 1622 edition of *Beaumont and Fletcher’s Philaster, or Love lies a-bleeding*” (Letters, March 24). The same phrase “maimed, and deformed”, Vickers notes, was used in the preliminaries to the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare to describe previous quarto editions of his plays. In both cases existing play texts are imagined as damaged bodies, and Walkley provides a significant link, since he also published Shakespeare’s *Othello* in 1622 and must have been known to the writers of the Shakespeare Folio preliminaries. On the assumption that Walkley was referring to the previous edition of *Philaster* being based on a text that was in part corrupted by someone’s faulty memory of the script, Vickers suggests that the Folio preliminaries “quoted his complaint because Shakespeare’s unauthorized quartos had suffered the same process of memorial corruption”.

There is nothing new in Vickers’s claim. Suzanne Gossett’s splendid Arden edition of *Philaster* (2009) has an extensive discussion of the phrase “maimed, and deformed” occurring in Walkley’s preface to *Philaster* and the preliminaries to the Shakespeare Folio, and of the *Othello* connection via Walkley (pp76-102).

If the claimed discovery is that “the phrase ‘maimed, and deformed’ was first used by Thomas Walkley” in

his preface to *Philaster*, then it is simply mistaken. The phrase was common, especially in religious texts. A Martin Marprelate pamphlet of 1589 used it three times (*Short Title Catalogue 17456*, sig. D4r, E1r, E1v). Richard Bancroft used it in his *Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline* of 1593 (STC 1352, sig. Ee3v). Richard Hooker used it in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 1604 (STC 13713, sig. H6r). Nicholas Byfield used it in his *Cure of the Fear of Death*, 1618 (STC 4213, sig. D12r). And John Heigham used it in his *Treatise of Auricular Confession*, 1622 (STC 13036, sig. N12r).

Anyone with an internet connection can verify these occurrences using Washington University in St Louis’s [EarlyPrint.org website](http://EarlyPrint.org), based on transcriptions of about 25,000 books from this period. Anyone lucky enough to have a subscription to Early English Books Online can see pictures of the pages on which these books use this phrase. Since the books from this period that have been transcribed are only a fraction of those that survive, the true number of surviving occurrences of “maimed, and deformed” before Walkley’s is probably even higher. Perhaps the Folio preliminaries used this phrase because Walkley used it, but there are no new reasons to think so, and the matter offers no new evidence about the Shakespearean bad quartos.

■ Gabriel Egan

Centre for Textual Studies, De Montfort University, Leicester