

NOTE

ON “REBELS” IN I. iii. TLN 195
OF *THE TRAGEDIE OF MACBETH**

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In the First Folio text of *Macbeth*¹, Macdonwald is referred to as “a Rebel” in ‘: The mercilesse *Macdonwald* / (Worthie to be a *Rebell*², for to that / The multiplying Villanies of Nature / Doe swarme vpon him)’ (I. ii. TLN 28-31) and in ‘And Fortune on his damned Quarry smiling, / Shew’d-like a *Rebells*³ Whore: but all’s too weake:’ (I. ii. TLN 33-4) in the bleeding captain’s report to the King, and also “the Rebel” in ‘Whether he was combin’d with those of Norway, / Or did lyne *the Rebell*⁴ with hidden helpe, / And vantage; or that with both he labour’d / In his Countreyes wracke, I know not:’ (I. iii. TLN 219-222) in Angus’s explanation to Macbeth. But there is a fourth. That is Rosse’s speech:

Rosse. The King hath happily receiu’d, *Macbeth*,
The newes of thy successe: and when he reades
Thy personall Venture in *the Rebels*⁵ fight,
His Wonders and his Prayses doe contend,
Which should be thine, or his: silenc’d with that,
In viewing o’re the rest o’th’selfe-same day,
He findes thee in the stout Norweyan Rankes,
Nothing afeard of what thy selfe didst make
Strange Images of death, as thick as Tale
Can post with post, and euery one did beare
Thy prayses in his Kingdomes great defence,
And powr’d them downe before him. (I. iii. TLN 193-204)

This “Rebels” remained as it was in the first four Folio editions, but since Lewis Theobald edited his second *Works of Shakespeare*⁶ in 1740 in which he emended the word to “Rebels”, all editors have been following Theobald’s emendation with the single exception of Samuel Johnson who emended it to “Rebel’s” in his *Plays of William Shakespeare*⁷ in 1765.

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¹ All quotations from the text of *Macbeth* are from *The Norton Facsimile* edition of *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2nd edn., prepared by Charlton Hinman. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996. Long s is modernised.

² Italics mine.

³ Italics mine.

⁴ Italics mine.

⁵ Italics mine.

⁶ *Macbeth* in *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Lewis Theobald, 8 vols., 1740, VI, 276. *Macbeth* in the first edition of *The Works of Shakespeare* published in 1733, 7 vols, still reads “rebels” as in the Folios. See V, 396.

⁷ *The Plays of William Shakespeare* ed. Samuel Johnson, 8 vols., 1765, VI, 384.

As Kenneth Muir comments in the notes of his Arden Shakespeare edition of *Macbeth*⁸, the first one third of Rosse's speech cited above refers to the phase of the fight against Macdonwald and the rest refers to that against Norway. Therefore, it seems reasonable that "Rebels", which, whether it is singular or plural, is evidently possessive like the second reference, should be emended to "Rebel's" rather than "Rebels'", but why "Rebels'"? The thane of Cawdor is referred to as "that most disloyall Traytor"⁹, but the king of Norway has no epithet for himself. In the First Folio text of *Macbeth*, there is no group of rebels gathering around Macdonwald, so that to have "the Rebel[s']" instead of "the Rebel['s]" after having "a Rebel" and "a Rebells" is quite abrupt and sudden. If this is "the Rebels'" here, the later "the Rebel" might have been "the Rebels", but again we have "the Rebel" referring to Macdonwald himself as I have already mentioned. In the notes of the Variorum Shakespeare edition of *Macbeth*, Furness cites Delius's opinion: "'Personal venture' evidently refers to Macbeth's duel with Macdonwald, and therefore *rebel's* is better than *rebels'* of other edd."¹⁰ though he himself chooses "rebels'" in his edition.

Before hurrying to surmise the reason, let me investigate Holinshed's description which as the main source¹¹ has provided the play with the narrative materials. Holinshed makes mention of Makdowald as a rebel three times¹²: 'Makdowald...tooke vpon him to be chiefe capteine of all such *rebels*¹³ as would stand against the king,...', 'Calling therefore his nobles to a councell, he [the king]¹⁴ asked of them their best aduise for the subduing of Makdowald & other the *rebels*.¹⁵' and 'he promised notwithstanding, if the charge were committed vnto him and vnto Banquho, so to order the matter, that the *rebels*¹⁶ should be shortly vanquished & quite put downe, and that not so much as one of them should be found to make resistance within the countrie.'¹⁷ So, it becomes evident that Makdowald in Holinshed is described as a chief of the rebels twice whereas the group including him is mentioned once. On the whole, he forms a group of rebels to stand against Duncane in Holinshed. Then, what happens in the First Folio text of *Macbeth*?

As already mentioned, such a group of rebels as Holinshed describes is nowhere to be

⁸ Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth*. The Arden Shakespeare. Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1999, p. 18.

⁹ The thane of Cawdor might have been intrigued with Macdonwald against the King because the possibility is suggested by Angus later as already cited, but here, Rosse is evidently referring to Macdonwald only.

¹⁰ Horace Howard Furness, ed. *Macbeth*. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1873, VOL. II, p.34.

¹¹ A short historical survey of source-study is made and the meaning of using the main source for the exploration of authorial intentions of dramatising is discussed by the present author in I, II, and III of 'Two Tragedies in Harmony in 'Julius Caesar' – Shakespeare's Reinterpretation of Plutarch –' (*Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 27, No. 1. Tokyo: The Hitotsubashi Academy, 1986, pp. 1-16.)

¹² *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1976, Vol. 5, Scotland, p. 265.

¹³ Italics mine.

¹⁴ Two words with the brackets mine.

¹⁵ Italics mine.

¹⁶ Italics mine.

¹⁷ In Holinshed, Makdowald gains an initial victory over "the kings people", takes "their capteine Malcolme" and slays him. The king is terrified at the news and holds a council in which Makbeth speaks "much against the kings softnes, and ouermuch slacknesse in punishing offenders." Therefore, in the Folio, the text is changed so that Macbeth fights against Macdonwald from the beginning when "Fortune... / Shew'd like a Rebells Whore", and Macdonwald is only supplied with "Kernes and Gallowgrosses" "from the Westerne Isles."

found except some hints in "The multiplying Villanies of Nature/Doe swarme vpon him" and only Macdonwald occupies a rebellious position against the King. And therefore it is clear that "the rebels" are reduced to one and their leader Makdowald is alone introduced as "The mercilesse *Macdonwald*" into the First Folio text of the play. And for that reason, "the Rebels" in *Macbeth* should presumably be considered "the Rebel's" and not "the Rebels'" because the single rebel of Macdonwald is produced from the consistent principle in the Folio of cutting Holinshed's factional "rebels". In truth, Samuel Johnson's emendation would have been followed more and more if Holinshed's related descriptions had been taken into account and his description of the rebels had been properly recognised by later editors.

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