

Changes in OED methodology

It is no longer possible to use the *OED* to find FRUs, due to a policy change in the way Shakespearean dates are recorded in the dictionary. Until recently, a play was assigned a year-date: *Henry V*, for example, would be 1599. In the current revision, specific years are being replaced by a generic *a1616* (ante-1616 – ‘before he died’), making it necessary for readers to impose their own play chronology to decide whether a citation is an FRU or not.

In mid 2017, using Advanced Search, a total of 1,497 entries showed Shakespeare as the FRU, but there were a further 255 entries where he was a second or lower citation, even though scholarly opinion would concur that the Shakespeare text was earlier. For example, *enrank* (‘to set in a rank’) has an FRU from a source dated 1610, followed by a citation from 1H6, which is definitely from the early 1590s.

If we compare the current list of FRUs with those listed a decade ago, we will notice some other methodological differences. A few of the old entries have been omitted during revision. Some items have been excluded on the grounds that they are proper names, such as *Rialto* (MV). Some have gone because an emendation accepted by the first *OED* editors has been rejected, such as *pulpiter* (AY). But the general direction has been to add new entries which had previously been overlooked, such as *nonny*, *overmounting*, *Philippan*, and *pleading*. New phrasal items are included, such as *mountain wind*, *other place*, *paying back*. And there are more disputed or variant readings, such as *ribaudred* (AC); and *reposure* is included along with *reposal* (in the two texts of KL).