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*Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2006. xxii, 613 S. – ISBN 1-904271-32-4 – £ 55.00 (hb.) – ISBN 1-904271-33-2 – £ 8.99 (pb.)

*Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2006. xv, 368 S. – ISBN 1-904271-55-3 – £ 55.00 (hb.)

*Hamlet*, ed. by Norbert Greiner and Wolfgang G. Müller. Englisch-deutsche Studienausgabe. Tübingen: Staufenburg Verlag, 2005. 560 S. – ISBN 3-86057-567-8 – EUR 29.80 (pb.)

There was a time when scholars thought they knew what *Hamlet* was. They may have endlessly disagreed about the play's meaning, but at least they agreed on the textual object under investigation, an object that seemed accessible in whatever modern edition was to hand. Revisionary thinking about the texts of *King Lear* in the 1980s thoroughly shook confidence in the assumption that modern editions give straightforward access to Shakespeare's play. Earlier editors had assumed that the variant early texts of *King Lear* reflected imperfectly the perfect text Shakespeare had intended, and they considered it their task to reconstruct that perfect but lost text by conflating and emending the imperfect but extant texts. When, in the 1980s, it was forcefully argued that Shakespeare revised *King Lear* (and possibly other plays) and that the early printed texts may give us access to different versions of a play in motion, editorial conflation came to be regarded with suspicion, and the Oxford *Complete Works* (1986) decided to include separate texts of the first quarto and the Folio versions of *King Lear*.

More than two decades after this textual revolution in Shakespeare studies, the results are visible everywhere. Textual studies are hot, and editing – once considered the province of harmless drudges – is practised by many of the leading scholars, Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Bate, Patricia Parker, and others. What the textual revolution has left us with is the awareness that the variant early texts of Shakespeare's plays need be made available to modern readers. Recent editions have addressed this aim in a variety of ways: several Arden editions provide photographic facsimiles of the lesser known text, while the Oxford Shakespeare *Romeo and Juliet* (2000) includes a modernized, lightly-edited text of the first quarto. The New Cambridge series even devotes an entire subseries to "The Early Quartos," with full editions of the first quartos of *Richard III* (1996), *King Lear* (1997), *Hamlet* (1998), *The Taming of a Shrew* (1999), *Henry V* (2000), *Othello* (2001), and, most recently, *Romeo and Juliet* (2007).

With regard to *Hamlet*, the last quarter century shows the full trajectory Shakespeare editing has been undergoing. In 1982, Harold Jenkins's second series Arden edition – a landmark of scholarship – formed the culmination of a long tradition of confluents. Jenkins's edition intended "to present the play as Shakespeare wrote it" (p. 75), was chiefly based on the second quarto of 1604/5 (Q2), but also liberally drew on the First Folio of 1623 (F). (Q2 is the longest of the three substantive texts; F is slightly shorter, contains fewer than 100 lines absent from Q2 but lacks over 200 present in Q2; and Q1 (1603) is only just over half the length of Q2.) Two years later, Philip Edwards's *Hamlet* in the New Cambridge series was similarly eclectic but took a first step in helping readers distinguish between the different texts by printing passages confined to Q2 between square brackets. This device was developed in Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine's Folger Shakespeare Library edition (1992), which marks between pointed brackets passages in F but not in Q2, and between square brackets passages in Q2 but not in F. In the Oxford *Complete Works*, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor based their edition on F and confined Q2-only passages to an appendix. They later regretted this decision, writing that "It now seems obvious that we should have included two versions of *Hamlet*, as we did of *King Lear*, a Folio-based version and one based on Q2" (quoted in *Hamlet*, ed. by Thompson and Taylor, p. 10), though they seem to have forgotten about their regrets by the time they prepared the second edition of the *Complete Works* (2005), to which they added editions of *Edward III* and *Sir Thomas More* but not of Q2 *Hamlet*. The inclusion of more than one version of *Hamlet* was put into practice in Paul Bertram and Bernice W. Kliman's *Three-Text Hamlet* (1990; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2003), which places next to each other the corresponding passages of Q1, Q2, and F. Kliman also developed *The Enfolded Hamlet* ([www.hamletworks.org](http://www.hamletworks.org)), an electronic edition which highlights Q2/F differences by inserting Q2-only elements between curly brackets and in green, and F-only elements between pointed brackets and in pink. Finally, Jesús Tronch-Pérez's *Synoptic Hamlet: A Critical-Synoptic Edition of the Second Quarto and First Folio Texts of Hamlet* (2002) also makes available Q2/F variants in the line itself but does so by placing Q2 readings slightly above and F readings slightly below the line.

Thus viewed in the context of editorial practice in the last quarter century, the new Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, may seem more like a culmination of an editorial tradition it inherits and espouses (like Jenkins's preceding Arden edition in 1982) than a radical innovation. Nevertheless, there is no question that this is a ground-breaking edition. What Thompson and Taylor have done, and are the first ever to have done, is to edit the three texts of *Hamlet* separately. The edition of Q2 occupies one volume,

whereas editions of Q1 and F are published jointly in a second volume. The former constitutes the core volume, free-standing and self-contained, published in an inexpensive paperback, whereas *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623* constitutes a companion volume, published in an expensive hardback (though there seem to be plans for a paperback after hardback sales have dropped). The main volume provides a full introduction and annotation similar to that in other recent Arden editions, while the companion volume confines itself to a textual introduction and annotation of words and passages that differ from Q2.

Editing the texts as distinct entities allows the editors to stress textual difference where conflating editors tended to efface it. As Thompson and Taylor point out, even Q2 and F, which are much closer to each other in length and language than either is to Q1, contain at least one substantive difference in more than a third of its lines (*Hamlet*, p. 92). Yet they have no desire to rule out all the arguments based on which the case for conflation has been made. On the contrary, they “acknowledge that there is a case for a conflated edition” but add: “we have no reason to believe that we can produce a better Q2-based conflated edition than that of our predecessor, Harold Jenkins” (*Hamlet*, p. 509). This is not only commendable modesty from scholars whose vast expertise is visible everywhere, but it also increases the value of their edition. Thompson and Taylor rightly reject the dream of the “definitive edition,” recognize that various editorial solutions are defensible, and opt for one that fills an important hole in the editorial history of the play.

As a result of their anti-conflationist policy, Thompson and Taylor “print the copy-text reading wherever [they] can reasonably defend it” (*Hamlet*, p. 510). What that means for the Q2-based core volume which most readers are likely to use is that a number of passages make for unusual readings, such as Polonius’s admonition to Laertes, “Neither a borrower nor a lender, boy” (1.3.74) rather than Folio’s more familiar “nor a lender be”. Similarly, Hamlet’s famous pun in his first conversation with Claudius is rendered as “I am too much in the ‘son’” (1.2.67), based on the Q2 spelling “in the sonne”, as opposed to F’s “i’th’ Sun”. On the other hand, Thompson and Taylor still call the Queen “Gertrude” – not “Gertrard”, as she is usually called in Q2 – on the grounds that “Gertrude” is “the most common modern form” (*Hamlet*, p. 141). Also, they do emend Q2 when a reading is “implausible” (*Hamlet*, p. 510), and so Hamlet concludes the second scene with the words “foul deeds will rise / Though all the earth o’erwhelm them to men’s eyes” (1.2.255-56), “foul deeds” corresponding to F (and Q1), whereas Q2 reads “fonde deedes”. Scholars may of course disagree about what constitutes defensible and implausible (or impractical) readings, but Thompson and Taylor seem to have drawn the borderline with considerable care.

While *Hamlet* editors have long subjected Q2 and F to intense scrutiny, they have mostly been content to ransack Q1 for some of its more interesting stage directions (such as “Enter Ofelia playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing”), otherwise leaving it in the editorial limbo to which the label “bad quarto” had confined it. Thanks to the recent re-evaluation of the “bad quartos” (better: short quartos), this has started to change, but serious editorial work on Q1 remains in short supply, which is why one of Thompson and Taylor’s most significant contributions to scholarship may be their edition of the earliest quarto, an edition that is more fully annotated and contains a more complete stage history than all its predecessors. While the editors of the 1986 Oxford *Complete Works* mistakenly believed that the overlong Folio text could represent the play as it was performed, Thompson and Taylor recognize the real importance of Q1 as “the only one of the three [texts] that could plausibly have been acted in its entirety” (*Hamlet*, p. 8). Contrary to the Greiner/Müller *Hamlet* reviewed below, according to which Q1 is “kaum ernst zu nehmen” (p. 26), hardly to be taken seriously, Thompson and Taylor show that “in almost all cases, Q1’s readings make sense” (*Hamlet*, p. 511), even though they admit that there is “something ‘rough and ready’” about the text (*Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, p. 16).

As is perhaps to be expected from editors who do not shy away from the Herculean labours of editing three *Hamlets*, Thompson and Taylor’s work is characterized by unusual thoroughness. The full introduction to the core volume (137 pages) not only addresses matters traditionally covered in introductions such as date, source, texts, and stage history, but also finds room for more adventurous topics, “Hamlet meets Fielding, Goethe, Dickens and others,” “*Hamlet* and women novelists,” and “Prequels and sequels,” as well as thought-provoking reflections upon “The continuing mystery of *Hamlet*”. Another hundred pages are taken up by appendices devoted to “Folio-only passages,” “The nature of the texts,” “Editorial conventions,” “The act division at 3.4/4.1,” “Casting,” and “Music.” The volume ends with a list of “Editions of Shakespeare collated” (I count exactly 100 editions), a twenty-two-page list of “Other works cited,” and a small-print index, fifteen pages long, giving full credit to previous editors (there are more than 180 references to “Jenkins, Harold”!). The introduction to the companion volume is naturally shorter (forty pages) and is devoted chiefly to Q1, but this volume too contains an index. All in all, the two volumes add up to roughly 1,000 pages, compared to fewer than 600 for Jenkins’s previous Arden edition and only just over 250 for Edwards’s in the New Cambridge series.

While textual issues are at the heart of Thompson and Taylor’s Arden edition, such is not the case for the new *Hamlet* in the “Englisch-deutsche Studienausgabe,” by Norbert Greiner

(translation and annotation) and Wolfgang G. Müller's (introduction and commentary). The introduction briefly surveys recent textual developments (pp. 23-28), highlights the problems attendant upon conflation, and rightly points out that the choice of copy-text has "tiefgreifende Implikationen für die Interpretation" (p. 23), profound implications for interpretation, but the text established for the edition seems to have been little affected by these insights. Preface and introduction mention that the English text – in keeping with other volumes in the series – is based on Alfred Harbage's *Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, published in 1969 (pp. 7, 28), which is the kind of conflation the introduction warns us against, incorporating Q2-only and F-only passages, and eclectically drawing on either in case of local differences. Even the mention of Harbage and the publication date are somewhat misleading: *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare* collects Penguin editions of individual plays published earlier, and *Hamlet* as it appears in this volume had been edited by Willard Farnham in 1957 (Farnham – though not the original publication date – is mentioned in the "Literaturverzeichnis," p. 541). The reader is told that the *Pelican* text has not been followed slavishly but is reproduced "mit zahlreichen erheblichen Abweichungen," with numerous significant departures, and that the Folio text is preferred in case of doubt (p. 10). Yet since the collation does not inform the reader of these departures, one is left guessing just how numerous they are. In fact, the collation records seventy-one readings where F has been preferred to Q2, but of these, fifty-eight are identical with Farnham, and only thirteen F-readings are adopted independently (at 1.2.38, 1.4.49, 2.2.5, 2.2.272, 2.2.573, 3.4.50, 4.4.3, 4.7.157, 4.7.189, 5.1.57, 5.1.204, 5.1.213, and 5.1.224). However, a reader has no way of knowing whether the Greiner/Müller edition does not adopt further Folio readings, for the collation is far from exhaustive: seventy-one F-readings are recorded, but many others are not, for instance Polonius' "fetch of warrant" (2.1.38), meaning a justifiable stratagem, which, following Farnham, is silently preferred to Q2's "fetch of wit," a witty stratagem. Whereas the recent tendency in Shakespeare editing has been to make visible the differences between the various versions of Shakespeare's plays, the present edition does its best to hide the origin of its readings in the conflation of various origins – Farnham, Q2, F, and occasionally others. The edition's textual shortcomings would be less regrettable if its other components were less successful. The introduction is made of sixty dense pages, provided with almost 200 footnotes packed with information and up-to-date bibliographical references. The various chapters incisively address the place of *Hamlet* in the Shakespeare canon, the question of the play's date, Shakespeare's treatment of his sources, various interpretative approaches (in particular plot and the revenge tragedy genre, personal identity, gender, and politics and New

Historicism), *Hamlet* and tragedy, and finally the play's reception in literature, on stage, and in film. The annotation is learned and full (usually taking up about a third of the page), indeed surprisingly full considering the reader is told in the preface that owing to pressure on space only about a third of the original annotation was preserved (p. 10). The translation, in line with series policy, does not strive for autonomy but is "so wörtlich, wie es die Verschiedenheit der beiden Sprachstrukturen erlaubt" (p. 7), as literal as the difference in structure of the two languages permits. It ably uses square brackets around words that render the translation more natural though less literal ("Auf zur dritten [Runde], Laertes" for Hamlet's "Come for the third, Laertes"), and forward slashes to highlight ambiguity ("die irdischen Fesseln/das irdische Chaos" for "this mortal coil"). The German and English parallel text is followed by a detailed, intelligent scene-by-scene commentary, totalling almost 120 pages, whose footnotes put to good use an impressive range of *Hamlet* criticism in English, German, and French. In sum, Greiner and Müller successfully explicate and contextualize *Hamlet* by means of their introduction, translation, annotation and scene-by-scene commentary, though the edition would have deserved greater textual sophistication and consistency in determining just what exactly their *Hamlet* is.

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