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Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds. 2006: *Hamlet, The Texts of 1603 and 1623. The Arden Shakespeare. 3rd Series*. London: Thomson Learning. 368 + xv pp. ISBN 1-904271-55-3

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Editing Shakespeare being a national pastime, the publication of any new critical edition of Shakespeare arouses great expectations. Curiosity impels scholars and connoisseurs alike to thumb the newly printed pages in order to verify how the editor solved this or that textual crux, opted for this or that modernization of a character's name, or whether she or he offered a new-fangled emendation no one had hit upon before. If the new critical edition is *Hamlet*, the expectations are peculiar since the play has a singular and complex textual situation and a shifting editorial tradition, as is summarized in the next two paragraphs.

*Hamlet* is unique in Shakespeare for having three substantive early texts: the First Quarto of 1603 (Q1), the Second Quarto of 1604/5 (Q2) and the First Folio of 1623 (F). The two latter texts are the basis of the received version of *Hamlet* but are different in over 1000 substantive variants (most of them single words or phrases in the dialogue), with 7% of F being absent from Q2, and 10% of Q2 absent in F.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally defined as a 'bad' quarto memorially reconstructed by actor(s), Q1 is a notably different and shorter version, with discrepancies in structure, names of characters and a stylistically uneven dialogue fluctuating from identical to null correspondence with Q2 and F. If one takes the modern editorial tradition to begin with Nicholas Rowe (1709),<sup>2</sup> F became the basis of critical editions but was complemented with Q2-only phrases, lines and passages neatly inserted in the text, thus creating the so-called 'conflated' *Hamlet*. Wilson's New Shakespeare Cambridge edition (1934) turned Q2 into the standard copy-text, a move culminating in Jenkins's edition for The Arden Shakespeare in its second series (1982), although he excluded those F-only words and phrases believed to be actoral interpolations. Spencer's New Penguin text reached the height of conflation by inserting a Q1-unique speech into Hamlet's advice to the players (1980: 129-30). As the notion of Shakespeare as a reviser was reinstated in the 1980s, Edwards based his

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<sup>1</sup> Proportions given by Thompson and Taylor, based on the number of words (2006a: 80). Scholars will welcome the fact that they have counted the number of words in Q2 (28,628), F (27,602) and Q1 (15,983), so that, for the first time, statistical information can be based on more reliable data than the fluctuating and misrepresenting system of the number of lines.

<sup>2</sup> Mowat (1988) offers a detailed narrative of the conflationist tradition. Jackson (1989) discusses Jenkins's, Edwards's, Hibbard's and Taylor and Wells's editions. That the modern editorial tradition begins with Rowe is questioned by Massai (2007).

New Cambridge Shakespeare edition on both Q2 and F but printed Q2-only passages between square brackets to indicate that they were authorially intended for omission (1985). Removing these passages from their F-based critical text to an appendix, Taylor and Wells, *Hamlet* editors for the Oxford *Complete Works* (1986), produced the first ‘non-conflated’ *Hamlet*, as did Hibbard for the Oxford Shakespeare series (1987).

Later editorial series also offer a variety of practices: Benvington’s Bantam *Hamlet* (1988)<sup>3</sup> continued the eclectic conflated text as did Hoy’s Norton (1992) and Evans’s Riverside (1997) in their second editions; although revisionism favoured the Folio text, Q2 was used as copy-text by Mowat and Werstine’s 1992 New Folger Library (yet they signalled both Q2-only and F-only elements with different brackets), by Andrews’ more editorially conservative but still conflating Everyman edition (1993), and by Braunmuller’s 2001 Pelican edition (absent in Thompson and Taylor 2006a), which reflected the recent trend towards conservative and version-centred editing (Proudfoot 2002; Werstine 2004: 58-59). Q1 was edited in old spelling and with minimum emendation in punctuation by Holderness and Loughrey in their Shakespearean Originals series (1992), and in a modernized critical text by Irace (1998) in The Early Quarto series of The New Shakespeare, Cambridge.

In this context, any new critical edition of *Hamlet* generates expectations concerning the choice of copy-text, of a conflated or non-conflated version, the editor’s account of the origins and relationship among the three substantive texts, with keen interest in whether she or he endorses the late revisionist stance, apart from the solution to difficult passages, such as the “dram of eale . . . of a doubt” in Q2 (1.4.36-8).<sup>4</sup> But if the new critical edition is The Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet* in its third series, whose editors had announced that they would edit the *three* textual witnesses *separately*, further questions accumulate: How will they present the three texts? Will they privilege any of them, or any of the two ‘good’ texts? Will they be revisionist too? Will they consider, for instance, Hamlet’s “is’t not perfect conscience?” in Q2 (5.2.67) –where F reads “is’t not perfect conscience, To quit him with this arme?” and adds thirteen more lines (TLN 3571-2)– the result of an accidental omission or of authorial revision? And if the latter is the case, how will they edit the line in their Q2 edition? And what editorial approach will they follow, the traditionally-sanctioned eclecticism or the lately-endorsed conservatism? How will they edit Q1’s ‘bad’ text?

In seeking to satisfy curiosity about these and related issues, I will focus more on the textual novelty of the edition(s) under review, without forgetting the rest of the critical material therein contained.

If, as Thompson and Taylor acknowledge, any new critical edition is under the strain that it must have “something genuinely new and indeed ‘original’ to offer” (2006a: 9), theirs is certainly original in that they have edited *Hamlet* by editing three

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of economy, some *Hamlet* editions mentioned only once are not included in the Works Cited list.

<sup>4</sup> Act.scene.line references are keyed to the editions under review (Thompson and Taylor 2006a for Q2; and 2006b for F). If referring to a prose scene or a passage unique to F, I will also add the more universal TLN, the Through Line Number established by Charlton Hinman (1968) in his Norton facsimile edition of the First Folio.

*Hamlets*, by offering a multiple-text edition with *three* separate, modernized and critical texts, each of Q1, Q2 and F, more so in a series traditionally associated with single-text editions. This trinitarian conception, simple as it is but never before materialized by any publisher, is also unprecedented in its granting equal textual status to the *three* early texts, each with “sufficient merit to be read and studied on its own” (Thompson and Taylor 2006a: 11). It had already been argued that each early text constitutes a discrete version of *Hamlet*, and separate, non-conflated editions of each had only partly been produced in individual editions based on one or two of them, but not in the sense of editing the three of them in order to edit the play. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor envisaged non-conflated editions of Q2 and F when they reviewed their own groundbreaking Oxford *Complete Works* edition (1990: 16), but they were thinking of Q2 and F only, and not of the ‘bad’ quarto; in contrast, Thompson and Taylor now offer an edited Q1, not in a companion series of Early Quartos, but in the second Arden volume that also incorporates the edition of the ‘good’ Folio text.

That this three-in-one edition appears in two volumes is a concession to the physical and commercial constraints of the printed book format, which forced the editors to decide on the key issue of which early text to include in which volume. This issue was especially acute since volume 1 was to be the standard ‘Arden *Hamlet*’ volume, a “self-contained free standing” edition, wealthier in information in the commentary notes and the introduction (Thompson and Taylor 2006a: xxii), and was expected to be the only one many readers will buy. Thompson and Taylor gave that privilege to Q2 (with F-only passages in an appendix), but in line with their equalitarian spirit, they stress that it is not because of “any conviction that Q2 is the one authoritative text” (11). Their Q2 option is first based on the unpolemical grounds that Q2 is the longest text – and that “allows the two volumes to be not dissimilar in size” (11). Yet later they recognize that “if one were forced to choose just one . . . there is general agreement among scholars that, Q2 derives from an authorial manuscript” (11-2), while Q1’s and F’s claims to authority do not gather such consensus. Thus their half-hearted and forced decision has partly inclined to a sure-footed authorial endorsement rather than to mere chronological precedence or to a more socio-historical view that would privilege F as the version –if not authorially revised– chosen by the author’s friends and fellow actors to be ‘canonized’ in the first complete works (the First Folio). It should also be recalled that F is the text on which the rival Oxford editions are based.

Yet given the edition’s respect for the integrity of each early version, one wonders why the Q2-only standard volume is advertised in its title simply as *Hamlet*, and not as *Hamlet, the Second Quarto* (as appears on page 139), thus leaving readers with the immediate first impression that the editors have sought to undermine: that an edition of *Hamlet* cannot be equated with a single-text edition based on any of the early texts or a conflation of them.

In Thompson and Taylor’s history of the texts, it is somewhat odd to observe that their conclusions are apparently based more on the relative agreement of previous textual critics than on their own judgement of the analysed evidence. Two qualities stand out in their rigorous analysis: skepticism and honesty. A skeptical stance –an “agnostic” disposition as they call it (2006a: 507)– is evident in their statement that they “do not feel that there is any clinching evidence to render definitive any of the

competing theories” of the texts’ transmission (507). And an honest attitude is clear when, as a result of their textual agnosticism, they recognize that they do not have “a strong theory” and adopt a “default position arrived at by eliminating . . . the less likely options” (509). But their agnosticism is not unwisely taken to the extreme of denying any possibility of assuming a conjectural history of the texts that may provide a rationale for their editing. Envisaging two authorial versions of *Hamlet* –with “Q2’s copy . . . largely based on Shakespeare’s foul papers, . . . F’s copy [being] no more than one step away from a manuscript containing some significant authorial revisions to the text in the foul papers” (509)– and Q1 as derived from “an anonymous reconstruction of a performance based on the text behind F” (509), their textual history is akin to that of the Oxford editors (Taylor and Wells 1987) and also of Hibbard; however the editorial consequences are different. While the latter chooses F as copy-text, Thompson and Taylor see no reason to prefer one text over the other and decide to produce three single edited texts because they find it “a simpler explanation of the facts” that “each of Q1, Q2 and F records a distinct *Hamlet*” (509). As if anticipating any critique, Thompson and Taylor soon acknowledge that even a traditional conflated Q2-based *Hamlet* could be defended, but that they decided against it because, in another sign of their honesty, they believe they cannot prepare a better conflated edition than that of their predecessor, Harold Jenkins (509).

In their principles and procedures –thoroughly explained in the introduction (2006a: 87-92) and in Appendix 2 (510-22)–, Thompson and Taylor unhesitatingly state that they produce a conservative edition, that is, “one that keeps to the copy-text wherever possible to do so without involving a degree of ingenuity which renders the refusal to emend implausible” (510). This position denotes a commendable boldness given that eclecticism has characterized not only the long tradition of Shakespearean editing, but also Arden editions. Though editorial conservatism has been denounced as logically flawed (Housman 1903: xxxi; Greg 1942: xxvi-xxvii; Tanselle 1995: 17), Thompson and Taylor’s arguments are consistent with their skepticism about the validity of assumptions or explanations based on textual evidence that they find as insufficiently “overwhelming or widespread to oblige” them to be eclectic (2006a: 92). Only trusting editors who believe they can identify the source of errors in a conjectural history of the texts can proceed eclectically. However, another of their arguments for conservatism leaves me puzzled: they begin with the “working assumption” that each of their copy-texts (Q2, F and Q1) “reflects pretty accurately the manuscript that served as its compositor’s copy”, and then they state that they “attribute authority to the compositor’s copy on the basis that, for all we know to the contrary (their being no hard evidence to go on), it is a pretty accurate record of what the author wrote and intended to write” (510); but on what basis do they assume that each copy-text “reflects pretty accurately” the printer’s copy? This hypothesized accuracy cannot be checked nor proven and Thompson and Taylor’s anticipation that there is “no hard evidence to go on” does not resolve the problem. However, it should be added that only *assumptions* are also at the foundation of eclectic editors’ principles.

Once a conservative approach is adopted, they have elaborated a consistent emendatory rationale by which they correct each text by first resorting to the collateral text that has likelier authority according to their “general, impossibly precise, and

‘default position’ view of the history of the text(s)” (2006a: 517): they emend Q1 with reference to F, Q2 with reference to F, and F with reference to Q2. Although they use their hypothetical history of the texts to support their emendatory rules, they do not posit, as is lately common, “any particular lost text, be it holograph, promptbook or performance” behind their copy-text when they emend it, only the recognition that “somewhere behind each text lies an authorial manuscript” (510).<sup>5</sup> Consistent with their disregard for any kind of lost text underlying the witnesses, Thompson and Taylor keep Q2’s readings in instances such as the apparently incomplete sentence “is’t not perfect conscience?” (5.2.66),<sup>6</sup> or “some dozen lines, or sixteen lines” (2.2.477), which Jenkins and Edwards judged as an authorial false start wrongly preserved in Q2’s copy.

Their editorial conservatism does not rule out editing the copy-text without comparison with the collateral witness: they do not blindly accept any Q2 or F reading whenever they make sense, but weigh the probabilities of the collateral variants. For instance, in their F edition, they compare F’s “heauenly” with Q2’s “heauily” (2.2.296/TLN 1344), observe that keeping “heavenly” would imply a strained sense of sarcasm, judge it as “more likely an error” (2006b: 240), and emend to Q2. And they do not always emend to the collateral witness as a matter of fact but resort to modern emendations when they find that both Q2 and F are likely errors: for instance, for Q2’s “fret me not” and F’s “can fret me” they adopt “fret me, you” (3.2.363) proposed by Teresa Fanego (1982) and by Jenkins (1982) independently (though, as usual, only Jenkins gets the credit). Other modern emendations are not finally adopted, as in the case of Wilson’s proposal in his revised edition of 1954 “Thus diest thou” (4.7.55) for Q2 “didst” and F “diddest”, which Thompson and Taylor deem “attractive but not strictly necessary” (398).

As Shakespeare editing has such a long tradition, new editors hardly have opportunities to offer emendations of their own, but Thompson and Taylor have their share of originality. In their Q2 edition, they provide a number of new line divisions (e.g. 2.1.48-50) and two new stage directions: they make the accompanying mute lords leave the stage with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at 3.1.28 rather than with the Queen at 3.1.42, and at 5.1.247 (TLN 3454) they make Laertes leap out of the grave and grapple with Hamlet. In their F edition (2006b: 309), they emend F’s “Battaliaes” not as “battalions” (usually adopted from Q2’s “battalians”) but as “battalia” (4.1.77 /TLN 2816);<sup>7</sup> and, more conspicuously, they have reorganized the act and scene division, making the traditional 4.1 part of the closet scene 3.4 (and then traditional 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 become 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 respectively), with traditional 4.5 starting the Fourth Act. Many critics have observed the inadequacy of the traditional scene division because the

<sup>5</sup> Note, for instance, how they emend F’s “breath” to Q2’s “brother” (3.4.65) not only because it “makes better sense (and metre)” but also because “F’s reading would be an easy misreading of a manuscript ‘brother’ with final ‘er’ suspended” (2006b: 291).

<sup>6</sup> Yet in the corresponding commentary footnote I miss a comment on the significance of the subsequent Folio-only lines, which, as Edwards (1985: 85) and Werstine (1988: 20-21) observed, provides a different justification for Hamlet’s revenge.

<sup>7</sup> Considering that they posited emending F with reference to Q2, this is an instance of the fact that Thompson and Taylor do not blindly follow their own emendatory rules. In their Q2 edition, they retain Q2’s “battalians” modernized as “battalions” (4.5.79).

Queen remains onstage after the end of 3.4. Thompson and Taylor could have applied the same re-arrangement to their Q2 edition, but, quite understandably, they have done so only in the text that is not in the 'Arden *Hamlet*' volume.

There are few places in which their copy-text made plausible sense but was emended. In their F edition, they emend F's "Froward" (1.2.8) to Q2's "Forward" because they find it "more appropriate to the context" (2006b: 199), but "Froward" is acceptable and is retained in Bate and Rasmussen's recent F-based edition (2007); similarly, while the original F punctuation at 1.2.157 allows "break my heart" (as Bate and Rasmussen edit), Thompson and Taylor emend to Q2's "break, my heart". In their Q2 edition, they emend Q2's speech heading "*Doct.*" to "PRIEST" 5.1.215 (TLN 3415) because it "might be misleading in a modern text, suggesting a medical practitioner" (2006a: 426). I find this justification odd because that is the problem with any word in the dialogue whose meaning has changed since then: if one were to apply the same principle to these words, one would 'emend' them to synonyms in present-day English. Another interesting oddity is their different treatment of the invariant "indeed" in Q2's "indeede your fathers sonne" and F "your Fathers sonne indeed" (TLN 3114): it appears as two separate words "in deed" in their edited Q2 (4.7.123), because of the "contrast with *in words*" in the next line, but not in the F edition (4.3.98).

Nor is their conservative approach blindly applied to modernization. For instance, Q2's original reading "coted" (2.1.109) in the sense of "outstripped", i.e. outmanoeuvred" is judged by Thompson and Taylor as "just about acceptable", but they adopt the F variant in their Q2 edition because "coted" is a "frequent Shakespearean spelling of 'quoted' . . . which means 'observed' or 'judged' [and] makes better sense in the context" (2006a: 236).

Nonetheless, their conservatism seems sometimes excessive as they retain readings that one may feel more inclined to judge as probable errors. After examining their conservative practice in the first two scenes of their Q2 and F editions, I allowed myself the game of editing some scenes to see how many of my decisions would coincide with theirs. The comparison revealed that they were more conservative, retaining two or more readings per scene that I had thought of as errors. For instance, F reads "Gives the tongue" instead of Q2's "Lends the tongue" (1.3.117), where one may easily suspect an erroneous substitution prompted by the proximity of "Giving" at the beginning of the next line, but Thompson and Taylor keep F even though they acknowledge that "*Gives* might be an error" (2006b: 204). Similarly with F's "spirit / weal" (3.3.14; F variant first), "an idle / a wicked" (3.4.13), "makes / sets" (3.4.44), "rank / ranker" (3.4.143), "might / would" (4.1.12 / TLN 2757).<sup>8</sup> Yet they use the criterion of proximity for emendations: for instance, F's "Why" to Q2's "What" (4.3.89/ 3104), because the F reading "could result from eyeskip forward" to three lines later (2006b: 323). They invoke the paleographical criterion of "h/th misreading" to retain F's "his money" (2.1.1) instead of emending to Q2 "this money" (unlike Taylor and Wells, Hibbard and recently Bate and Rasmussen) because such "misreading would be an easy error" (2006b: 219), whereas they emend F's "her drinke" to Q2 "their drink" (4.3.153/ TLN

<sup>8</sup> In all these cases, Bate and Rasmussen emend F to Q2. Thompson and Taylor acknowledge that the repetition "may be an error by a scribe or compositor" (2006b: 288).

3173) because F “must be wrong and is an easy *h-/th-* misreading” (326). Sometimes one suspects error through inadequate metre, as in “you bend / you do bend” (3.4.106), but Thompson and Taylor keep the unmetrical F reading. In the variation “that calms / that’s calm” (4.1.116 / TLN 2860) one would suspect an error of metathesis, but they retain F. In most cases, Thompson and Taylor make explicit their awareness that their retained readings may be errors –another sign of their honesty.

All in all, their conservative *Hamlets* make available to modern readers a number of readings which eclectic editing had deprived them of. One of the most interesting is Hamlet’s description of his flesh in his first soliloquy: “O that this too too sallied [F reads ‘solid’] flesh would melt” (1.2.129). Since Wilson’s edition in 1934, Q2’s “sallied” has been ‘modernized’ by most editors as “sullied” (meaning “soiled, defiled”), but in their Q2 edition Thompson and Taylor keep “sallied” in the sense of “assailed, besieged” (2006a: 175).<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, they also keep Q2’s “sallies” (glossed as “attacks, criticisms”) in “You laying these slight sallies on my son” (2.1.39), even though most editors interpreted it as a variant spelling of F’s “sullies” (=“blemishes”). Thompson and Taylor acknowledge that “either seems acceptable” (2006a: 231).

Little space is left in the present review for Q1, but it should be mentioned that also in their Q1 edition, Thompson and Taylor are more conservative than previous editors, not only Irace, as they acknowledge (511), but also Hubbard (1920) and Weiner (1962). For instance, where editors and textual critics find errors arising from illegible handwriting –such as “total guise” for “total gules”, “Back’t and imparched” for “Baked and impasted”, and “Rifted” for “Roasted” (7.347-50)– Thompson and Taylor find plausible readings in all except “Back’t” (2006b: 108).

Arden editions are reputed for their wealth of information in generous introductions and commentary footnotes. Thompson and Taylor’s ‘Arden *Hamlet*’ lives up to this expectation, especially in filling the twenty-five-year gap since Jenkins’s 1982 edition in which much scholarship on critical interpretations and stage productions needed to be covered. They have achieved an effective and well-balanced synthesis through eight sections: ‘*Hamlet* in our time’ (17-36), selecting and summarizing recent critical interpretations; ‘*Hamlet* in Shakespeare’s time’ (36-59), including information on the so-called ur-*Hamlet* and on the early performances of the play; ‘The story of Hamlet’ (59-74), dealing with sources and influences; ‘The composition of *Hamlet*’ (74-94), providing a general account of the early textual and publishing history, and of the editorial options (including the one they have materialized); ‘*Hamlet* on stage and screen’ (95-122); a brief and very interesting section on ‘Novel Hamlets’ (122-32), discussing how the play’s characters have been treated in narrative; and finally ‘The continuing mystery of *Hamlet*’ (132-37). In yet another sign of their honesty, Thompson and Taylor confess that they do not, “after working on the play for about ten years, have a new sensational ‘theory of *Hamlet*’ to offer our readers” (2006a: 137).

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<sup>9</sup> Also defended by Furnivall and Tennyson, as Jenkins points out in his longer note (1982: 436-38). I missed this information in Thompson and Taylor’s commentary note, as well as information, in the corresponding textual note, about the “sullied” option first adopted by Wilson (1934) from an anonymous conjecture.

Commentary footnotes respond to the new reader's need for more linguistic clarification and interest in performance issues. They also make constant references to the editorial decisions by Jenkins, Edward, Hibbard and Taylor and Wells. This is with a view to providing "readers with the material to read a *Hamlet* within" the tradition of the single-text, eclectic edition Arden is associated with (2006a: 11). In a way, Thompson and Taylor are positioning themselves against their predecessors (perhaps with more references to the F-based editions by Hibbard and by Taylor and Wells).

More information is given in six appendices containing: four Folio-only passages of three lines or more with their textual notes and commentary –briefer ones are shown in the commentary and textual notes of the Q2 edition– (465-72); the detailed account of 'The Nature of the Texts', which also includes a list of Jenkins's emendations from F (474-532); an explanation of editorial conventions exemplified in a passage contrasted with facsimiles of the early texts (533-43); a discussion of the problematic act division at 3.4/4.1 (543-52); a note and charts on casting (553-65); and a note on the use of music (566-68).

To conclude, in this new edition of *Hamlet* (or *Hamlets*) readers have an innovative, bold, consistent, informative editorial work in a major series, a work worth taking into serious consideration, which does not disqualify, nor do Thompson and Taylor claim to do so, previous eclectic and conflated editions. This unconfated three-text *Hamlet* has appeared (and it was high time) when our mindsets influenced by more relativist, poststructuralist times are readier to accept it. With a few exceptions, I usually substitute a new Arden 3rd series edition for its corresponding 2nd series titles on my bookshelf. One of these exceptions is Jenkins's exemplary edition, next to which stand now Thompson and Taylor's excellent and also exemplary volumes.

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