

‘While memory holds a seat in this distracted globe’:

A Look Back at the Arden Shakespeare Third Series

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The Arden Shakespeare third series began publication in 1995 with editions of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Henry V*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Thanks to the sustained commitment of a generation of scholars and other professionals, it was completed with the publication of *Measure for Measure* in 2020. Over those twenty-five years, the series navigated mergers and restructuring in the publishing industry, persisting through four changes in publishing house with the support of multiple publishing editors.² It realised the vision of four General Editors who set more ambitious parameters and supported more variety in editorial practices than any of their predecessors. The efforts of fifty volume editors produced forty-four new editions that also added four new plays to the series and editions dedicated to the Sonnets and the Poems. These editions addressed some of the most significant changes to Shakespeare studies in this century and in the process, helped define editorial practice and shape the modern scholarly series. Now complete, the Arden 3 stands as a book of memory and of aspiration, a

¹ I wish to thank the General Editors and the many volume editors who graciously shared their time and knowledge with me during this project, especially Ann Thompson, Richard Proudfoot, Suzanne Gossett and Valerie Wayne who also offered valuable feedback on this essay. Many thanks also to Margaret Bartley whose support made this essay possible.

² Arden was originally launched by Methuen in 1899. In 1996, Thomson International transferred the series to Thomas Nelson, who in turn transferred it to Thomson Learning (later Cengage); it was finally acquired by Bloomsbury in 2008 (Ann Thompson, ‘Arden Completed’, paper for Shakespeare Association of America Conference, 2019). See also Richard Wray, ‘Bloomsbury Buys Arden Shakespeare’, *The Guardian*, 6 Jan 2009.

record of our progress as a field and a profession and a reminder of how much further we have to go.

This review of the Arden Shakespeare third series examines significant moments of its development and publication in order to highlight its contributions to scholarly editing and the study of Shakespeare over its tenure. It considers how the series and its editors responded to major shifts in Shakespeare studies concerning issues of performance, critical theory, textual agency and authorship. It also recognises important firsts and innovations introduced in the third series, including efforts to diversify scholarly editing by recruiting Arden's first class of women editors. The third series is by no means perfect, but as we will see it takes notable first steps on a number of issues. This review also acknowledges the people behind the practice. In January 2020, I attended 'The End Crowns All' an event hosted by Bloomsbury to celebrate the completion of the third series. The evening featured a discussion with three of the series' General Editors: Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and H. R. Woudhuysen. After seeing the audience riveted to stories of the day-to-day work of editing, I realised that this retrospective would not be complete without insights from those who edited the series. Many Arden 3 editors generously shared their experiences (so many and so generous, there was not enough space to include them all).³ As a result, this essay is a narrative of texts and of people, not with any intention of being comprehensive, but with the wish that it serve as a starting point for further study of the editorial and scholarly practices used in this distinctive series and of the contributions of the agents that made it possible.

³ Editors responded to short surveys cited throughout as General Editor Response (GER) and Volume Editor Response (VER).

‘What’s past is prologue’: Arden 2 to Arden 3

Comparing volumes across the Arden Shakespeare, the third series stands apart from its predecessors. The cover art for Arden 2’s paperback editions evolved through a series of traditional looks from eighteenth century illustrations to the nature-inspired art of the Brotherhood of Ruralists. In contrast, the concept for the Arden 3 covers was commissioned by the General Editors at an early stage of planning to ensure a unified look over the course of the series.⁴ These modern, misty collages gesture, some more obscurely than others, towards the darker drama of the plays. This is most striking in the comedies: the twins sharing an eye on the cover of *Twelfth Night* and the sober face almost overtaken by the forest of Arden on the cover of *As You Like It*.

Such cosmetic changes, however, belie a re-envisioning of the third series by its initial General Editors: Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan. ‘I wanted it to be a new series not just an update’ Thompson recalled, ‘[...] and we wanted to maintain Arden’s position as the first choice of scholarly edition’.⁵ Key to this objective was eliminating the practice where some Arden 2 editions used the edited text, notes and commentary of their predecessors as a basis for their new editions. As was becoming the practice in other modern series, Arden 3 editors would ‘begin with the earliest printed texts and not be influenced by their predecessors’ work’.⁶ This approach required that ‘the variety of textual sources be appraised in relation to individual histories, not a single imposed

⁴ Richard Proudfoot, GER.

⁵ Ann Thompson, GER.

⁶ Thompson, GER.

model'.⁷ Described by Proudfoot as an 'essential' element of editing Shakespeare, each play would be unified by the Arden editorial guidelines, but also individual in its response to the issues and conditions of its text(s).⁸ This bespoke approach gave editors the chance to develop and use a range of editorial techniques.

Editors of the third series were also tasked with making their work accessible to a wider readership. The General Editor's Preface identifies 'scholars, students, actors and "the great variety of readers"' as the series' target audience, an ambitious goal for a series promising the comprehensive approach of the Arden Shakespeare. In order to compete with the many editions of Shakespeare on the market, most modern series now focus on a particular niche market with editions geared to students (New Cambridge, Norton) or to performers and performance (Penguin). The New Oxford Shakespeare produces *The Complete Works* for classroom use while publishing increasingly technical debates of authorship in companion texts for researchers. Every approach requires compromises: a focus on performance and stage history means less space for critical theory, introductions focused the complexities of textual transmission leave less room for global performance and burgeoning fields of theory. In its mission to remain 'the first choice of scholarly edition', the third series expanded its introductions to cover more diverse topics including sections on performance history and emerging areas of critical theory such as gender and race studies.

The needs and interests of a broader readership also prompted changes in tone and in how information was presented. Introductions that in Arden 2 began with a review of early textual

⁷ Proudfoot, GER.

⁸ Proudfoot, GER.

history, in Arden 3 begin with an essay-style ‘hook’ meant to engage non-specialist readers. The adjustment is perhaps most visible in commentary notes. In Arden 2 it is not unusual to encounter a note that could look a bit like calculus to the uninitiated: ‘41-3. *double business ... both neglect*] *Bound* is usually interpreted as the adj. from M.E. *boun* < O.N. *búinn* (*OED bound ppl. a.*¹⁾’.⁹ ‘Aiming for a wider readership including for example, people who had not studied Latin or Greek’, Arden 3 editors are aware that they may not be speaking exclusively to other seasoned scholars.¹⁰ In a necessary response to changes in modern education, Latin and other non-English languages are now translated, allusions to classical and religious texts and rhetorical figures are explained. The overall result is clear, for example, when comparing how Claudius’s reference to the ‘primal eldest curse’ in *Hamlet* is presented in Harold Jenkins’s seminal Arden 2 edition and Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor’s Arden 3 edition:

Arden 2: ‘Genesis iv. 11-12. This reference to Cain is ironically anticipated at I.ii.105 and echoed at v.i.75-6’

Arden 3: ‘The first murder in Judeo-Christian tradition is Cain’s killing of his brother Abel; see Genesis, 4.11-12, and 1.2.105 and n.’.¹¹

Both note the Biblical allusion, but in citing the Bible chapter and verse first, the Arden 2 note presumes familiarity with texts of Western Christianity and the story of Cain and Abel.

⁹ Harold Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet*, Arden Shakespeare 2nd Ser. (Methuen, 1982), p. 314, nt. 41-3.

¹⁰ Thompson GER.

¹¹ Jenkins, *Hamlet*, p. 314, nt. 37. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds., *Hamlet*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser., rev. ed. (Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 359, nt. 37.

It is a note for a well-versed reader who is already familiar with the story's significance to this moment in the play and who will largely refer to Jenkins's notes for supplemental information like the cross references to lines in 1.2 and 5.1. The Arden 3 note offers similar information, but first contextualises 'primal eldest curse' in the religious tradition, enabling the reader to deduce why Claudius references this story. The notes in Thompson and Taylor's edition remain a place for advanced readers to find supplemental insights, but they are first a place to gain knowledge and guidance for developing an informed reading. As such, the subsequent references to Genesis and the 'first corpse' at 1.2.105, now positioned at the end of the Arden 3 note, are no longer obscure references but opportunities for further discovery.

With this wider readership in mind, the General Editors also aimed to demystify the editorial process. 'We wanted to make our editorial practices more transparent', Ann Thompson explained 'by ... for example, introducing a sample passage with a discussion of the editor's interventions'.¹² Thus, readers of the third series benefit from concise introductions to a variety of editorial practices and issues. For example, Lois Potter uses pages from the 1634 quarto of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* to explain how an editor decides when and how much of a text to edit.¹³ In *Pericles*, Suzanne Gossett demonstrates the broader impact of editorial choice by removing a phrase from 1.2 of *Pericles* and then tracking the changes to scansion and character interpretation that result.¹⁴ These tutorials are also a place for some delightfully nerdy details like how Hamlet's first soliloquy in Q2 'uses thirty-five commas, a couple of semicolons, one question mark and one full stop; [and] F's almost identical soliloquy uses ...

¹² Thompson GER.

¹³ Lois Potter, ed., *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser., rev. ed. (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 124-29.

¹⁴ Suzanne Gossett, ed., *Pericles*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser., (Thomson, 2004), pp. 43-44.

twenty-six commas, two semicolons, nine colons, a pair of brackets, four questions marks, two exclamation marks and ten full stops'.¹⁵

Peter Holland's 'A Note on the Text' from his edition of *Coriolanus* exemplifies the potential of this feature. 'In the hope that readers ... might crack the code' and 'enjoy following the process of creating a modern Shakespeare edition', Holland connects the editorial conventions used in commentary notes directly to reader experience.¹⁶ His candid discussion of editorial intervention in stage directions is an important lesson in critical reading that, delivered in just one paragraph, also provides an example of this 'rarely appreciate[d]' element of editing in a form ideal for class discussion.¹⁷ Another strength of these sections is when editors disclose the limits of editorial practice. Holland's observation that 'modernizing is a difficult process and a complex art' gives readers insight into the balancing of procedure, skill and subjectivity that is modern editing.¹⁸ Suzanne Gossett's observation that 'it is not always possible to distinguish interpretative from textual problems' in *Pericles* presents ambiguity not as a failure of reading or editorial practice but as a condition of the early modern playtext.¹⁹

With editing and bibliography taught less frequently in classrooms, sections like these offer vital instruction that students need to attempt their first collation or editing assignment, making these sample passages one of the hidden gems of the third series. Sadly, their

¹⁵ Thompson, *Hamlet*, p. 552.

¹⁶ Peter Holland, ed., *Coriolanus*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. xxiv-xxv.

¹⁷ Holland, *Coriolanus*, p. xxvii.

¹⁸ Holland, *Coriolanus*, p. xxiii.

¹⁹ Gossett, *Pericles*, p. 43.

presence is inconsistent across the series. They are highlighted in sections like ‘editorial procedures’ or ‘editing and interpretation’ in some editions but are relegated to the appendix or simply absorbed into broader textual discussions in others. This was a missed opportunity to use the expertise of a generation of editors to transform textual editing from an exclusive mystery of the academe into a set of skills appreciated by all readers. I hope to see more such moments of deliberate editing pedagogy in future series as it is a vital part of Shakespeare studies and of training the next generations of critical thinkers.

The General Editors’ ambitious agenda set expectations high for Arden 3, and striking a balance between comprehensive scholarship and the needs of a wider readership would remain a challenge throughout the series. Reviewers looking for scholarly editions would mistake elements aimed at student readers as unnecessary, while some were frustrated when new research areas replaced topics required by first time readers.²⁰ In spite of the expectations of readers and the marketing campaigns of publishing houses, no edition or series can be everything to everyone. Arden 3’s efforts to bring newer readers into the advanced scholarly discourses that are central to its identity is a compelling approach that, because it is a *via media*, will always leave some dissatisfied, but I believe any work that makes the study of Shakespeare more accessible and welcoming to new scholars is worth the effort.

A Scholarly Community

²⁰ See for instance, Brian Vickers, ‘The Two Noble Kinsmen’, *The Review of English Studies*, 50 (1999), 79-84 and Leah Scragg, ‘Review *King Lear* by William Shakespeare and R. A. Foakes’, *The Review of English Studies*, 49 (1998), 510-2.

Arden editors are very individual when it comes to describing their practice. For some, the appeal lies in unravelling the analytical complexity of textual variation. For others editing is a chance to revel in language ‘line-by-line, word-for-word, to observe at close quarters how the play works to express feelings and generate its own rhetorical music’.²¹ Some highlight the chance to further refine their skills at this level and the opportunity to participate in this tradition of Shakespeare scholarship as their motivation. However, as David Scott Kastan observed, ‘No form of scholarly work more obviously reveals itself less as an individual labour and more as a collective activity than an edition of a Shakespeare play’.²² The ‘collective activity’ Kastan mentions is revealed in the extended network of expertise that made the Arden 3 possible.

The series’ aspirations for high-quality scholarship and editorial practice originated with its General Editors. Richard Proudfoot, who first read Shakespeare in his family’s copy of the original Arden series, led the series as one of the foremost textual scholars and editors in the field.²³ Ann Thompson, one of the first wave of Shakespeare feminist scholars and editors to shatter the glass ceiling and advocate for the benefits of feminist editing was also central to the series early development. They were joined by David Scott Kastan whose synthesis of literature and book history inspired scholars to reconsider the relationship between Shakespeare, his plays and agents of the book trade, and finally by H. R. Woudhuysen whose expertise in poetics and manuscript circulation changed discussions of textual transmission and reception. George Walton Williams, described by René Weis as ‘to editing what Bobby

²¹ René Weis, VER.

²² David Scott Kastan, ed., *King Henry IV Part 1*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Thomson, 2002), p. xv.

²³ Proudfoot, Email, 14 August 2020.

Fischer was to chess', accepted the honorary title of Associate General Editor and assisted editors of the Histories and early plays.²⁴ The General Editors were described by their grateful volume editors as: inscrutable critics, wells of knowledge, correctors, guides, mentors, teachers, collaborators, morale officers and friends.

The General Editors were above all a source of rigorous critical feedback. Their relentless attention to detail was unanimously welcomed by editors who expressed gratitude for Thompson's 'penetrating questions and comments' and Proudfoot's 'thoroughness and eye for detail'.²⁵ Richard Proudfoot's lengthy and detailed notes were received with pleasure and deep appreciation and even kept as cherished items. A good copy, as Peter Holland observed would be returned with 'warm praise for how good it was and only ten pages of single-spaced suggestions'.²⁶ Underlying such generosity was a commitment to elevating the work of others. Thompson and Proudfoot graciously recount how they 'enjoy working with volume editors' and 'working out how best to realise their aims for their editions'.²⁷ Much of this work was done behind the scenes, so some editors made a point of crediting their general editor in commentary notes. Peter Holland, for example, retained the '(RP)' alongside many of Proudfoot's suggestions 'so that readers can see a great textual scholar at work'.²⁸ The General Editors also knew when to step back. Proudfoot's reminder that 'this is your edition'

²⁴ Weis, VER.

²⁵ Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, eds., *Macbeth*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. xvii.
Brean Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Methuen, 2010), p. xvii.

²⁶ Holland, *Coriolanus*, p. xxi.

²⁷ Thompson, GER. Proudfoot, GER.

²⁸ Holland, *Coriolanus*, p. xxi.

was a vivid memory from Suzanne Gossett's experience editing *Pericles*.²⁹ As we will see, encouraging editors to pursue innovative editorial approaches was a hallmark of their approach.

General editors and volume editors are only the most visible collaborators. A range of other professionals helped maintain the quality of the Arden 3. The series persisted through multiple publishing houses with the support of a series of dedicated publishing editors. Jane Armstrong, Jessica Hodge and most recently Margaret Bartley, who saw the edition to its conclusion, were regularly thanked by editors for their support and for even applying a bit of motivational pressure when required. Copy editors were also vital contributors. Tasked with the job of 'editing the editor' Jane Armstrong, Jessica Hodge, Hannah Hyam, Alison Kelly and others were praised as 'heroic' for their 'exemplary' copy editing, 'efficiency and critical acumen' and 'unflagging devotion to clarity, order and accuracy'.³⁰

Support stretched beyond those working under the Arden label. While editing *Richard III*, James Siemon remarked how 'old friends rose to the occasion, and new friends appeared wherever I went'.³¹ Help was found in the support of co-editors, a multitude of librarians from around the world and a global department of academic colleagues who shared ideas at seminars, conferences and in chance meetings in reading rooms. There are stories of exceptional generosity: works-in-progress shared by so many scholars it is impossible to

²⁹ Gossett, Interview, 28 July 2020.

³⁰ James R. Siemon, ed., *Richard III*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Methuen, 2009), p. xvii. Potter, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. xviii. Juliet Dusinberre, ed., *As You Like It*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Thomson, 2006), p. xviii.

³¹ Siemon, *Richard III*, p. xvi.

name them all and a single question about pronunciation answered with a full recording of *Romeo and Juliet* read in Original Pronunciation by David Crystal.³² Add to this the many ‘Arden families’ who lived with the highs and lows of the process alongside their editors and the completion of the third series becomes the story of all textual productions: a network of diverse agents collectively contributing tremendous amounts of visible and invisible labour.

Responding to Change

When asked about the biggest challenges of producing the Arden 3, Proudfoot and Thompson both mentioned creating a series that effectively engaged with the unprecedented amount of research published since the release of the last Arden 2 edition in 1982. This section considers the series’ response to several of these changes: performance history, multi-text editing, collaboration and authorship, and diversity of critical theory through the inclusion of the first group of women editors. Examining how editors engaged with these issues in their respective plays while negotiating the traditional parameters of editorial practice in an Arden Shakespeare, reveals the tension between innovation and discipline as a key element of the successes and struggles of Arden 3’s response to this dynamic time in Shakespeare studies.

Performance History

³² Weis, VER.

Performance history was undergoing significant change and growth as new understandings of historical theatre spaces and stage craft combined with unprecedented access to global productions. As Ann Thompson observed, the third series accordingly expanded its focus: ‘there had to be more attention to the plays in performance ... film and television versions and all kinds of adaptations’ and ‘the focus here needed to be international: a scattering of references to productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company would not be sufficient’.³³ Whereas stage histories were an optional component of Arden 2, comprehensive performance histories would be a required feature of Arden 3.³⁴ Promising ‘full’ introductions that would not only educate students in each play’s ‘performance contexts’ but support the development of future productions, the third series emphasised the plays as ‘texts for performance’.³⁵ This enhanced connection between editors and performance is reflected in the numerous theatre practitioners thanked by Arden editors for their valuable advice and contributions to their editions. Acknowledgments range from actors and directors from well-known institutions like the Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare’s Globe and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival to a student production of *Edward III* in Toronto.³⁶

Editors developed a variety of techniques for engaging readers with ‘the conditions and possibilities’ of Shakespeare in performance.³⁷ In his edition of *The Comedy of Errors*, Kent Cartwright skips the traditional stage chronology, beginning instead with short case-studies

³³ Thompson, GER.

³⁴ Thank you to Ann Thompson for bringing this to my attention.

³⁵ 3rd Series back cover.

³⁶ Richard Proudfoot and Nicola Bennett, eds., *Edward III*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Bloomsbury, 2017), p. xvii.

³⁷ General Editors’ Preface.

on ‘stage houses’ and off-stage voices that ground readers in the basics of early modern stage practices. Dissatisfied with how performance histories were typically ‘cloistered away in a chronological account in the intro’, Peter Holland provided readers of *Coriolanus* with commentary notes rich in details of individual performance choices, allowing readers to walk in the footsteps of great actors and major productions as they constructed their own interpretations.³⁸ I found both of these approaches more functional and enjoyable than reading traditional performance overviews, and hope that such practices will become standard practice in more editions interested in being texts for professional and classroom performance.

Performance histories now often take pride of place at the beginning of Arden 3 introductions, usurping the role of the textual narratives that began most volumes of Arden 2. This change is not always embraced by reviewers and readers. Moreover, the promise of a ‘full’ performance history for each play is a bit uneven across the series. However, the decision to devote the expertise and rigour of the Arden Shakespeare to performance has produced some valuable results. The third series, for example, has produced some of the most comprehensive stage histories of Shakespeare’s plays, and in the cases of *Edward III*, *Double Falsehood*, *Sir Thomas More* and *The Two Noble Kinsman*, the first such studies of performance for these plays ever published in a scholarly series.

Aiming to be a reliable source for performance history also comes with the challenge of keeping up with the continuous launching of new productions, a situation at odds with the slow pace of producing a scholarly edition. A number of editions including *Much Ado* and

³⁸ Peter Holland, VER.

Hamlet have accounted for this by publishing revised editions that aim to keep the performance histories, if not up-to-date, at least current enough to remain viable for classroom use. These editions now smartly give particular attention to recorded performances that will be widely accessible to students.

Arden 3 stage histories record an expanding scholarly understanding of 'performance', incorporating a range of styles and mediums into their narratives from early staging practices to adaptations including opera and ballet, however, North American and European productions continue to dominate these narratives. The rising interest in global Shakespeares is an opportunity for future editors to engage a wider readership with a broader range of Shakespeare performance in their editions. The potential for fascinating research through such exposure is realised in Sukanta Chaudhuri's edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2017). The first non-North American /Anglo-European Arden editor, Chaudhuri's participation is an important first step towards creating a truly global roster of Arden editors. In his edition, Chaudhuri gives extended attention to the play's production history beyond North America and Europe, including a staging in Australia that explored colonial and Aboriginal connections, anti-apartheid era productions of mixed-race casting in South Africa, multi-lingual productions in India, and a Japanese production set in a Buddhist stone garden that brought together Western elements with sumo wrestling and Japanese Noh play. By offering performances that dramatically challenge and reshape conventional impressions of the intergroup dynamics of the play, Chaudhuri's examples give readers a valuable glimpse into the rich world of global Shakespeare that is not only refreshing but also vital to maintaining the relevance of Shakespeare's works to a modern, global audience and to securing the Arden Shakespeare's place in a wider theatrical world.

‘What is your text?’: Revision & Multi-text editing

Harold Jenkins’s suggestion that ‘every variant imposes upon [the editor] the inescapable responsibility of choice’ was probably never more relevant than for editors of multi-text plays in the third series.³⁹ Recent changes to scholarly understandings of early modern playwriting would have significant consequences for editorial practice in the Arden 3. In particular, the idea that playwrights, including Shakespeare, revised their plays as part of theatrical production re-presented multiple texts of the same play as distinct stages of the creative process, making each version a valuable textual artifact in its own right. The most visible example of this revisionist theory in practice was The Oxford Shakespeare’s publication of both the Quarto and Folio texts of *King Lear* in their *Complete Works* in 1986. Supported by the controversial collection *The Division of the Kingdoms*, the Oxford editors grounded their two-text theory in narratives of authorial intention. The 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio *Lears*, they proposed, denoted two distinct conceptions of the play: the Quarto representing *Lear* ‘as Shakespeare first conceived it,’ and the Folio as a later revision ‘that represented changes from performance’ or ‘Shakespeare’s own dissatisfaction with what he had first written’.⁴⁰ Whether one accepted the author-centred argument for the two-text *Lear* or not, most scholars agreed that the integrity of variant texts needed additional consideration. In editorial practice, this included ‘abandoning the notion... that by comparing texts we can arrive at a single, authentic original’.⁴¹ Thus, an argument for revision or for preserving the unique

³⁹ Jenkins, *Hamlet*, p. 76.

⁴⁰ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, (Oxford, 1986), p. 909, 1153.

⁴¹ Stephen Orgel, ‘What is an Editor?’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), 23-30; p. 23.

qualities of each text, also became a challenge to the traditional practice of conflating multiple versions of a play into a single edited text. However, the impracticalities of editing, publishing and teaching multiple edited texts of a single play made a complete change to variant text editions unlikely. Thus, the ‘inescapable responsibility of choice’ Jenkins had warned of now included balancing the integrity of multiple authorised texts with the practical limitations of a modern scholarly series.

Third series editions of *Othello* edited by E. A. J. Honigmann, *King Lear* edited by R. A. Foakes and *Hamlet* edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor demonstrate a range of approaches to this dilemma. On first encounter, E. A. J. Honigmann’s edition of *Othello* looks like a standard conflated text that, like most modern editions at the time, used the First Folio text as its copy. Within this traditional format, however, Honigmann used revision theory to challenge the restrictive binary of good/bad texts. ‘We are not entitled to assume that, when Q and F disagree, one or the other must be corrupt’ he argued. Instead, in the case of variant readings, editors should consider that ‘Shakespeare could have written both’.⁴² Focusing on the extensive collection of Shakespearean variants to choose from in the 1623 Folio and 1622 Quarto, the job of the editor was then to accept this ‘authorial instability’ and choose the ‘better text’ for their edition.⁴³ The concept of ‘better’ in this instance equals the most correct variant by rules of meter, punctuation, etc.; suggesting a false alignment of early modern play texts with modern standards of correctness. However, Honigmann’s thinking proposed a useful adjustment to conflation practice. Rather than ‘slavishly’ following F

⁴² E. A. J. Honigmann, ed. *Othello*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser., rev. ed. (Bloomsbury, 2106), p. 365. For Honigmann’s comprehensive discussion of the texts and his theory, see *The Texts of Othello and Shakespeare Revision* (1996).

⁴³ Honigmann, *Othello*, p. 365.

except in cases where its readings were problematic, Honigmann argued that editors ‘should lean towards whichever text seems better at lineation when we consider lineation, whichever seems better at punctuation when we consider punctuation, and so on’.⁴⁴ Avoiding revision theory’s preference for multiple edited versions while keeping focus on the substantive qualities of each text, Honigmann rationalises using a variety of elements from the two texts in his edition: stage directions from Q and F, punctuation and profanity from Q, verse lineation from F except in instances when it was better in Q.

To scholars for whom editing was a determinate act of textual construction, the idea of ‘lean[ing]’ towards texts must have felt akin to rejecting one of the most fundamental of Jenkins’s editorial choices. Far from a resistance to editing, however, Honigmann’s approach actually advocated choice on potentially every variant, making his edition, as Virginia Mason Vaughan suggests: ‘the most thoroughly conflated version ever published’.⁴⁵ In addition to reconfiguring conflation to accommodate the optimal evidence from multiple texts, Honigmann’s ‘full-texts’ approach had implications for thinking about agency in early modern play texts. In identifying examples of ‘better’ variants for his conflation, Honigmann demonstrated that within their general instability, play texts also recorded agents’ varying proficiencies. Now, not only were quartos neither strictly good nor bad, the contributions of the agents who produced them were similarly variable throughout a text. Moreover, this focus on the ‘better’ parts of texts, as opposed to the most Shakespearean parts, authorised ‘perhaps hundreds - of F variants that are scribal or compositorial substitutions’ in Honigmann’s

⁴⁴ Honigmann, *Othello*, p. 365-6.

⁴⁵ Virginia Mason Vaughan, ‘The Arden Shakespeare *Othello*. Edited by E.A.J. Honigmann’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 478-80; p. 478.

edition.⁴⁶ Drawing attention to the beneficial contributions of non-authorial agents in these texts, Honigmann avoided narratives in which Shakespearean intention lay behind every substantive variant, offering in its place a more diverse narrative of play text revision.

Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor's *Hamlet* (2006, revised 2016) on the other hand, combined revision theory and multi-text editing to refine our knowledge of playwright practice.

Thompson and Taylor argued that since the Q1 (1603), Q2 (1604-5) and F texts were not only all published either during or shortly after Shakespeare's lifetime but were also different enough to be considered 'remarkably distinct entities', each text 'ha[d] a case to be considered authentic'.⁴⁷ The Arden 3 would therefore include three texts of *Hamlet*: a fully annotated edition of the Q2 and an additional volume with edited Q1 and F texts. Thompson and Taylor decided on a 'conservative' approach to editing, emending only when the copy was so unintelligible it obstructed reader access.⁴⁸ In this way, the editors avoided letting what Speed Hill described as 'the underlying idealism of authorial intention' govern their editorial practice.⁴⁹ Instead, Thompson and Taylor let the character of each version with its varying moments of confusion and clarity stand as an historical record of the play in that moment of transmission. Presenting the imperfections in each version, Thompson and Taylor's edition challenged textual narratives in which revision implied continuous aesthetic improvement to a play. This approach also questioned perceptions that Shakespeare's own revisions always improved a text; undermining theories that markers of so-called

⁴⁶ Honigmann, *Othello*, p. 366.

⁴⁷ Thompson, *Hamlet*, p. 94, 92.

⁴⁸ Thompson, *Hamlet*, p. 541.

⁴⁹ Speed Hill, 'Where We Are and How We Got Here: Editing After Post-Structuralism', *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), 38-46; p. 41.

improvement were necessarily a means to determining the order in which versions were produced.

With its interest in revision and the textual instability it revealed in both the early modern and the modern edited text, the Arden 3 *Hamlet* was lauded by some as ‘attuned to the relativism, pluralism, and skepticism of our time’.⁵⁰ Others viewed the three texts as the product of an unfortunate trend of unediting, reflecting a practice ‘more in line with copy editing ... than scholarly editing’.⁵¹ Notably, scholars who saw editing as text creation or who admired editions like Jenkins’s Arden 2 *Hamlet* for their pursuit of ‘certainties ... and conclusions’ were generally critical of the edition, using phrases such as ‘refuse to repair’ and ‘versioning’ to condemn what they saw as a rejection of the editor’s duty to produce a definitive text.⁵² In spite of the divergent opinions, Thompson and Taylor’s *Hamlet* affirmed the fundamental premise of revision: that plays existing in multiple versions have valuable literary and historical stories to tell in their own right. They also created a landmark edition that will stand as the definitive collection of *Hamlet* for years to come.

Positioned between Honigmann’s conflation of *Othello* and the three-text *Hamlet* in terms of editorial intervention is R. A. Foakes’s *King Lear* (1997). Foakes accepted that both Q and F texts contained useful variants, but because he believed that ‘none of the differences between Q and F radically affects the plot of the play, or its general structure’, he was less convinced

⁵⁰ MacDonald P. Jackson, ‘The Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*, and The Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*: The Texts of 1603 and 1632’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58 (2007), 388-91; p. 389.

⁵¹ William Proctor Williams, ‘William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Hamlet the Texts of 1603 and 1623*’, *Notes and Queries*, 59 (2012), 263-6; p. 264.

⁵² Jackson, ‘*Hamlet*’, p. 390. Williams, ‘*Hamlet*’, p. 264.

by the narrative of authorial intention that justified Oxford's two-play conclusion.⁵³ He instead decided that, rather than two different plays, 'we have two versions of the same play'.⁵⁴ Translating his position into editorial practice, Foakes followed D. F. McKenzie's idea that the dramatic text 'may be conceived of as always potential': the idea being that if the text is inherently unstable, there is no one correct *Lear*, only a concept that contains recognisable elements of the play.⁵⁵ In this light, the question was no longer which text of *Lear* to edit, but 'how best to make available to readers the *play* of *King Lear*'.⁵⁶ In order to feature the conceptual 'play' rather than the various texts in which it originated, Foakes devised an editorial apparatus in which substantive textual variants from both F and Q would appear in the body of the text marked off by superscript Fs and Qs. The 'jigsaw-puzzle effect' produced by this technique was questioned by reviewers who were sceptical that the superscripts actually enabled the reader 'to grasp the differences between Quarto and Folio versions'.⁵⁷ However, Foakes's goal for this edition was not to solidify distinctions between Q and F, but 'to make available the text(s) in a form that enable[d] readers to understand the relation between them and to appreciate the problems caused by textual differences'.⁵⁸ In other words, the superscript additions were meant to blur the boundaries of the single text so as to remind readers that both Q and F were always present in *Lear*. Whether they wished to consider the variants or not, anyone who has read the edition would be hard-pressed to deny

⁵³ R. A. Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Thomson, 1997), pp. 118-19.

⁵⁴ Foakes, *Lear*, p. 119.

⁵⁵ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, (Cambridge, 1999), p. 37.

⁵⁶ Foakes, *Lear*, p. 119. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷ Scragg, 'Lear', p. 512.

⁵⁸ Foakes, *Lear*, p. 4.

that their eye is inevitably drawn to the superscripts; they make it impossible to ignore how the play known as *King Lear* is comprised of choices.

By highlighting the ‘relation’ between texts as well as their differences, Foakes invites readers into the textual challenges of *King Lear* but does not offer answers. Rather, he leaves them with the same ‘inexhaustible possibilities for shaping and interpreting’ faced by scholars and editors of the play.⁵⁹ Looking back at Foakes’s edition from a present where we are more conditioned to expect cultural experiences in books, theatre and television to leave us off balance or uncertain of the conclusion, we are now perhaps better prepared to appreciate the dissonance produced by Foakes’s edition. The disruption caused by having the variants inside the text and the experience of trying to make choices between them while reading destabilizes the reader, preventing them from constructing a distinct impression of either the Q or F texts. ‘Highlighting problems’ was Foakes’s goal, and the inability to track one ‘version’ while trying to follow the ‘play’ of *Lear* is a readerly experience of his textual theory. As an attempt to translate the fragmented textual agency of a playtext into experience, Foakes’s *King Lear* was perhaps ahead of its time. It may be, as digital editions continue to push the capabilities of reader experience, that future editors will reconsider its efforts. For now, one of its greatest contributions may be the reminder of how much we as modern readers are still conditioned to expect ‘definitive’ texts.

In trying to integrate revision theory into the practical and textual considerations of modern scholarly editing, the editors above show there is still much room for creativity and interpretation. While each edition incorporated the theory’s fundamental interest in attending

⁵⁹ Foakes, *Lear*, p. 4.

more closely to variant texts, they largely avoided narratives of authorial intention and aesthetic in favour of the collective agency of play production. In hindsight, this choice has helped the editions retain their relevance for the duration of the series. The editors had considerable freedom to develop these editorial techniques, and this is not the only instance where innovative moments of scholarly practice can be traced back to the General Editors' belief that editing should follow the text. In the case of editing these multi-text plays, it produced provocative responses to one of the most heated debates of modern Shakespearean scholarship.

'What is your text?': New Plays, Collaboration & Authorship

Revision was not the only opportunity for editors of Arden 3 to creatively integrate scholarship into editorial technique. The idea that 'dramatists collaborated in various ways and degrees' had become a widely accepted feature of playhouse practice, shifting perceptions of early modern authorship from Romantic ideas of isolated genius to writers co-operating in a shared process.⁶⁰ The idea that as part of this community Shakespeare also participated in collaborative writing likewise changed impressions of his co-authorship from 'an unfortunate aberration...likely to produce inferior art' to an opportunity to learn more about the character of his writing.⁶¹ Across the series, editors of plays such as *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* included detailed narratives of collaborative writing in their editions. The change was most notable in the case of *Titus Andronicus* (1995). Another instance where editions

⁶⁰ Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority and the Playhouse*, (Routledge, 2006), p. 1.

⁶¹ Gordon McMullan, ed., *King Henry VIII*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Thomson, 2000), p. 181.

must fight to keep pace with scholarship, Jonathan Bate originally argued for Shakespeare's single authorship of the play but later released a revised edition (2018) in which he acknowledged that new evidence confirmed *Titus* as a co-authored work between Shakespeare and George Peele. To build on the interest in Shakespeare's collaborations, the series also brought in plays in which 'a scholarly consensus exists for regarding portions ... as being the work of Shakespeare'.⁶² The addition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1997), for example, confirmed the series' position that all plays with significant evidence of Shakespeare's co-authorship should be considered within the canon regardless of their inclusion in the First Folio. The General Editors extended this thinking by commissioning editions of *Edward III*, *Double Falsehood* and *Sir Thomas More*: three plays historically associated with Shakespeare but previously considered too peripheral to be included in the series.

Richard Proudfoot and Nicola Bennett's edition of *Edward III* (2017) examined the play's authorship and in particular Shakespeare's participation in its writing by highlighting the broader interconnectedness of artists, creative trends and sources in the play's collaborative practice. Identifying 'verbal connection[s]' in meter and phrasing between *Edward III*, other surviving plays from commercial theatres at the time, and other plays from Shakespeare's canon, the editors concluded that 'the language of *Edward III* is firmly located in the norms of professional playwriting between 1587 and 1595'.⁶³ Additional similarities between the play and Shakespeare's canon 'demonstrate[d] his intimacy with and depth of knowledge of the play', affirming a Shakespearean connection.⁶⁴ In addition, where most attribution studies

⁶² Proudfoot, Email, 14 August 2020.

⁶³ Proudfoot, *Edward III*, p. 50.

⁶⁴ Proudfoot, *Edward III*, p. 51.

distinguished co-authorship by acts and scenes, Proudfoot and Bennett offered evidence of ‘division of authorship within scenes’, a finding that challenged how ‘conclusive lines of demarcation between sharply defined areas of the text’ were used by such studies.⁶⁵ Co-authorship in Proudfoot and Bennett’s model became a variable practice, more human than algorithm, with Shakespeare the starting point for a more complex portrait of shared writing.

Where revisionist theory could prompt pessimistic accusations of non-editing, theories of collaborative authorship produced a belief that even the most challenging textual puzzles could be solved with rigorous scrutiny of the text. Brean Hammond’s edition of *Double Falsehood* or *The Distressed Lovers*, Lewis Theobald’s eighteenth century play best known as the only surviving text that may bear any relation to Shakespeare’s lost play *Cardenio*, is perhaps the best example of this optimism in the Arden 3. A ‘radical adaptation of a Shakespeare-Fletcher collaboration probably already subjected to a layer of adaptive revision in the Restoration period’, *Double Falsehood* would stretch collaboration across centuries, testing scholarly editing’s capacity to reveal even remote traces of authorial agency.⁶⁶ The edition was the inspiration of Proudfoot, whose earlier work on the Shakespeare apocrypha convinced him that Theobald’s play required a scholarly edition with a modern, annotated text.⁶⁷ The prospect of recovering even a glimpse of *Cardenio* raised expectations for the edition. Reviewers anticipated how ‘it should be able to put us in the position of being able to identify genuine Shakespeare and genuine Fletcher’.⁶⁸ However, Hammond was aware that

⁶⁵ Proudfoot, *Edward III*, pp. 62, 49.

⁶⁶ Hammond, *Double Falsehood*, p. 159.

⁶⁷ Proudfoot, Email, 28 August 2020.

⁶⁸ Bernard Richards, ‘Now I am in Arden: *Double Falsehood, or The Distressed Lovers*’, *Essays in Criticism*, 61 (2011), 79-88; pp. 80-1.

‘the main challenge...was to produce an edition capable of persuading the scholarly community that *DF* deserved at least a marginal place in the Shakespeare canon’.⁶⁹ Careful to note that without the lost manuscript, it was only possible to ‘reinforc(e) the accumulating consensus that the lost play has a continuing presence’ in Theobald’s text, Hammond combined a base of stylometric analysis not previously seen in an Arden edition with textual analysis to confirm that there was ‘some relationship between the lost play performed in 1613 and the play printed in 1728’.⁷⁰

Beyond affirming the Shakespearean connections to Theobald’s play, Hammond’s edition should be noted for its skilful editing. Annotating an 18th century text so that it also provided access to ‘the range and scale of Shakespearean and Fletcherian allusion’ required Hammond to attend to two plays in two very different eras of theatre.⁷¹ The scope of this challenge is visible where reviewers who admired the edition as ‘magisterial’ still could not resist citing instances where Hammond annotates with a medieval or early modern interpretation when they believed the Restoration or Augustan reading was more relevant (and vice versa).⁷²

By publishing a play where Shakespeare’s contributions are not only fragmented but hidden under layers of time and the agency of other authors, Arden 3 sent a clear message that if scholars were going to claim to accept and investigate early modern collaboration in relation to Shakespeare, then the entire range of such interventions should be included in the canon for study. Not everyone supported this position. Some reviewers found *Double Falsehood*’s

⁶⁹ Brean Hammond, VER.

⁷⁰ Hammond, *Double Falsehood*, pp. 3,8.

⁷¹ Hammond, *Double Falsehood*, p. 148.

⁷² Richards, ‘*Double*’, p. 88.

presence in the series ‘tendentious’ while others saw the publication as not only the end of the series, but also a serious threat to the literary status of Shakespeare himself.⁷³ Including *Double Falsehood* in a Shakespeare series does create openings for biased interpretations. For instance, the title page of the edition lists Shakespeare before Fletcher in spite of the evidence for Shakespeare’s agency being ‘much scantier’.⁷⁴ *Double Falsehood* remains the most controversial edition of Arden 3 and is in some ways still looking for its audience. However, its general editor Proudfoot was satisfied that the edition ‘brought the play, and its enigma, back into focus as a Shakespearean topic’, suggesting that an edition that generates more discussion than conclusion can still be considered a success.⁷⁵

The benefits of Arden 3’s approach to collaboration, however, are most fully realised in the edition of *Sir Thomas More* (2011) edited by John Jowett. The reader confronts the intensely collaborative environment of Jowett’s *More* from the title page: an extensive list of all its textual agents including Jowett as editor. A key moment in this memorable paratext is the appearance of Shakespeare’s name at the very bottom, situating the author of the series in an unusual minor role. An inevitable shortcoming of the two-dimensional printed page, the title page’s single-column layout gives the false impression that the collaboration depicted is linear in progression. It also privileges the primary authors, in this case Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle, even though Jowett convincingly argues that the revisor (traditionally known as Hand C) is the central figure in this textual production. Such misconceptions, however,

⁷³ Robert Folkenflik, “‘Shakespeare’: The Arden Double Falsehood”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75 (2012), 131-43; p. 133. See, for instance, Ron Rosenbaum, ‘The Double Falsehood of *Double Falsehood*’, *Slate*, May, 2010.

⁷⁴ Hammond, *Double Falsehood*, p. 160.

⁷⁵ Proudfoot, Email, 28 August 2020.

are quickly clarified in Jowett's meticulous analysis. Noting how '*More* lacks fixity and completion, whilst bearing more witness to process than one could possibly expect of a single document', Jowett's edition focused not on reproducing a finished text but on presenting the continuous process of its development.⁷⁶ Special attention was given to the agency of the revisor who Jowett credits with 'bringing [the manuscript] into a state as near completion as it was to reach'.⁷⁷ At times updating authorial contributions while leaving other elements unfinished for writers to complete, the revisor is revealed as the hub of the project, grounding *More* in a narrative of circulation that affirmed the 'incomplete' and the 'varied' as regular conditions of play production.

Rightly praised as 'textually perfect', the edition achieves two equally challenging and potentially opposing outcomes.⁷⁸ First, there is hardly space to do it justice here, but the detailed yet disciplined interventions of Jowett's editorial apparatus are exceptional. For anyone who daydreamed about poring over the manuscript but lacked the credentials to study it in person, Jowett's system provided an unprecedented account of the shifting collaborations and varied textual interventions that make the manuscript so fascinating. Second, for all the evidence it conveys, the editorial interventions sustain a surprisingly light touch that keeps the play accessible to the general reader. Readers new to the textual features of *More* were further supported by a Reader's Guide that introduced the different collaborative relationships through discussion of the various markings used in the edited text. This

⁷⁶ John Jowett, ed., *Sir Thomas More*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser. (Methuen, 2011), p. 129.

⁷⁷ Jowett, *More*, p. 128.

⁷⁸ Eric Rasmussen, 'The Year's Contribution to Shakespeare Studies: Editions and Textual Studies', *Shakespeare Survey* 65 (Cambridge, 2012), p. 524.

informative, concisely written section combined with Jowett's remarkable editorial apparatus will remain an example for new textual scholars and editors for years to come.

In its study of collaboration, Jowett's edition highlights the inherent link between agent collaboration and textual instability. Art is messy, but Jowett's edition proves that editing can go some way towards representing the variable process of play text production contained in even the most complex manuscripts. In terms of Shakespeare's portrait as a collaborator, *More* is also an important edition in the series for the unique image it offers of Shakespeare as a minor collaborator, a necessary part of replacing the literary icon's dominance in cultural and scholarly discourses with the more accessible efforts of the writer.

With their collective focus on the relationships inherent in the play-making process, Arden 3's editions of *Edward III*, *Double Falsehood* and *Sir Thomas More* complicate the range and character of known collaborative interactions between textual agents. As a result, they also extend the definition of collaboration beyond co-authorship to include a variety of agents involved in play production. Their collective contributions also convincingly argue that if we truly value Shakespeare's work, we should attend to all of his artistic contributions with similar scholarly rigour. The varied approach to collaboration in these editions is supported by the innovative editorial practices developed to accommodate these complex textual narratives. On this point, Jowett credits the 'intellectual generosity' of the General Editors, who encouraged volume editors to pursue solutions that elevated the unique features of their texts and advanced the knowledge of Arden readers.⁷⁹ Their efforts fostered some of the most challenging and innovative editorial projects in the series' history.

⁷⁹ John Jowett, VER.

Look to the Lady - Women Editors and Editing in Arden 3

With the exception of *As You Like It* edited by Agnes Latham (1975), the most likely place to find evidence of women's editorial intervention in the Arden 2 series was in an editor's preface. Combining statements of editorial rationale with personal acknowledgements, the prefaces are an accidental record of women's hidden contributions to the editing of Shakespeare at a time when, as Valerie Wayne puts it, 'few endeavours in the humanities [had] been so consistently exercised by men to the exclusion of women'.⁸⁰ The prefaces note the intellectual contributions of women like the wife of J.M. Nosworthy who 'shed light on many of [*Cymbeline*'s] dark places' for her husband.⁸¹ They also document the editorial work of women such as Mrs. P.A. Burnett, whose edition of Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* became a valuable resource for Latham's *As You Like It*. Mrs. F. M. H. Bone not only shared her notes on *King John* with E. A. J. Honigmann but 'generously allowed [him] to print some of her discoveries for the first time'.⁸² The prefaces also record the expertise of Una Ellis-Fermor who served as Arden's first female General Editor from 1946-58. Nosworthy described her as 'the wisest of *Cymbeline* scholars' and Kenneth Muir praised her efforts as 'all that a General Editor should be'.⁸³

⁸⁰ Valerie Wayne, 'Remaking the Texts: Women Editors of Shakespeare, Past and Present', *Women Making Shakespeare: Text, Reception, Performance*, (Bloomsbury, 2014), 57-67; p. 57.

⁸¹ J. M. Nosworthy, ed., *Cymbeline*, Arden Shakespeare 2nd Ser. (Thomson, 2004), p. ix.

⁸² E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *King John*, Arden Shakespeare 2nd Ser. (Thomson, 2006), p. vii.

⁸³ Nosworthy, *Cymbeline*, p. x. Kenneth Muir, ed., *Macbeth*, (Thomson, 2006), p. x.

The examples above remind us that for the majority of its tenure, the Arden Shakespeare, by following the broader practices of Shakespeare scholarship and editing at the time, was the employ of (white) men only. For scholars trained over the twenty-five years of the Arden 3, who have benefited from the work of women as instructors, PhD supervisors and scholarly role models, it is surprising to realize that women's contributions to the Arden Shakespeare only became a prominent fixture in the third series and that this was far from inevitable. The fourteen women who edited plays and poems for Arden 3 were part of a significant first wave of women editors and feminist textual scholars of Shakespeare and early modern drama. They asserted their ideas amidst suggestions that 'women may read Shakespeare, but men edit him' and navigated resistance ranging from 'mindless misogyny' to outright 'hostility to women editing Shakespeare at all'.⁸⁴ They wielded the knowledge and authority of precedent-changing editors amidst requests to make tea and take the minutes of meetings. As with any new endeavour, successes and shortfalls were part of the process, but their collective efforts made a significant contribution to the broad appeal of the Arden 3 and a lasting contribution towards more diversity in the editing of Shakespeare.

By the time work began on Arden 3, feminist textual scholars were already arguing for the benefits of a feminist approach to scholarly editing. Ann Thompson's assertion that 'feminist theory challenges patriarchal ideology and questions how "ideas" themselves are produced, assessed and distributed in our society' aligned feminist criticism with scholarly editing's

⁸⁴ Gary Taylor, 'Textual and Sexual Criticism: A Crux in *The Comedy of Errors*', *Renaissance Drama*, 19 (1988) 195-225; p. 195. Thompson, VER.

interest in deconstructing processes of production, interpretation and dissemination.⁸⁵ At the same time, Suzanne Gossett argued that the feminist editor ‘can do a great deal to affect what we think we know about the literature(s) of our tradition(s)’.⁸⁶ While an ‘awareness of gender issues’ was becoming more widely viewed as a way to enrich editorial practice and enhance editions, integrating this approach into the Arden, which had achieved much success on a foundation of traditional scholarly practice, would require doing things differently.⁸⁷ A significant move in this direction was commissioning Ann Thompson as a General Editor. General editors, as Valerie Wayne notes, are pivotal ‘first readers of an edition’, and now a woman would be ‘in the best possible position to encourage or redirect an editor’s perceptions and can also recruit others’.⁸⁸ To this end, one of Thompson’s most important contributions was to advocate for a more diverse group of editors for the Arden 3, including more opportunities for women. In order to maintain the high standards of scholarship expected of the Arden Shakespeare, general editors traditionally recruited scholars with previous experience editing Shakespeare either for Arden or another series.⁸⁹ Because up to this point established Shakespeare editors were generally all men, the system offered few opportunities for women, or indeed, any other newer scholars to qualify. The General Editors responded by broadening the criteria, reaching out to scholars like Potter and Gossett who already had reputations for editing early modern texts. They also sought scholars with less editorial experience, but who had made significant contributions to feminist Shakespeare

⁸⁵ Ann Thompson, ‘Feminist Theory and the Editing of Shakespeare: *The Taming of the Shrew* Revisited’, *The Margins of the Text*, (University of Michigan, 1997) p. 84.

⁸⁶ Suzanne Gossett, ‘Why Should a Woman Edit a Man?’, *Text*, 9 (1996), 111-18; p. 115.

⁸⁷ Thompson, ‘Feminist Theory’, p. 84.

⁸⁸ Wayne, ‘Remaking’, p. 63.

⁸⁹ Thompson, GER.

criticism and textual scholarship. Bringing in new Arden editors, men or women, could be a risky proposition: at the minimum it required extra work as the General Editors guided new editors through the process, but taking this chance helped the Arden move towards becoming a series that more represents the scholarly field.

Assigning plays to this first class of Arden women editors was of particular significance. Earlier series followed a gendered tradition in which men overwhelmingly edited the ‘masculine’ tragedies and histories, while women would edit the comedies and romances. In the first Arden series, Grace Trener editing *Much Ado About Nothing* (1924) and in the second series Latham editing *As You Like It* followed this trend. Preparing to edit *Cymbeline* for the third series, Ann Thompson was also set to follow this precedent. However, on becoming ‘aware of how few women edited Shakespeare and how almost none had edited tragedies or more textually challenging plays’, Thompson shifted her focus ... ‘[and] more or less talked myself into editing *Hamlet*’.⁹⁰ The tradition was disrupted further as Lois Potter created the first edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in an Arden series, Suzanne Gossett edited the textually complex *Pericles*, Gretchen Minton co-edited *Timon of Athens*, and Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason took on *Macbeth*. On balance, the Arden 3 includes women editors across the canon: alongside the three tragedies, three women edited comedies (*As You Like It*, *Shrew*, *Much Ado*), five edited late plays/romances (*All’s Well*, *Cymbeline*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Tempest*, *Pericles*), and Katherine Duncan-Jones edited volumes of the Poems and the Sonnets. However, Nicola Bennett’s contribution to *Edward III* is the only example of a woman editing an English history play. We will have to look to Arden 4 to

⁹⁰ Thompson, VER.

hopefully see the results of women editing the lines of Queen Margaret, Joan La Pucelle, Prince Hal and Richard III.

It hardly needs stating that editing is a demanding task that becomes more challenging due to the scrutiny editions will face as a part of the Arden Shakespeare. Women editors were also forging new paths as they made their way through this challenging process. Even an experienced textual editor like Valerie Wayne noted how ‘very few women editors preceded me on [*Cymbeline*], especially of full scholarly editions’.⁹¹ No doubt many of these editors were well aware of their unique position and, along with it, the importance of securing through their success the place of women editors in future Arden series. In the end, the contributions of the women editors of Arden 3 are enlightening, informative and, in light of their position as first role models, inspiring. Commentary such as Clark and Mason’s annotations for Lady Macbeth’s ‘Come you spirits | That tend on mortal thoughts’ speech (1.5.40-54) offer the important new perspectives that Gossett and Thompson promised.

Where the Arden 2 offers no note for ‘unsex me’, Clark and Mason ground their commentary in an emerging feminist tradition that engaged head on with the powerful, organic reality of Lady Macbeth’s ‘biological femininity’.⁹² Where the Arden 2 paraphrase of ‘take my milk for gall’ is a perfunctory ‘Nourish yourselves with my milk which...has turned to gall’, Arden 3 offers scholarship that engages with both the erotic and biological implications of breastfeeding.⁹³ By approaching Lady Macbeth as a woman who used the forms of power immediately available to her, Clark and Mason demonstrate the insights to be gained from including more cultural information and diverse perspectives in their edition. This

⁹¹ Valerie Wayne, VER.

⁹² Clark, *Macbeth*, p. 157, nt. 43.

⁹³ Muir, *Macbeth*, p. 30.

phenomenon is repeated across the series as issues that were previously given little to no attention in earlier series such as sisterhood/female friendship, virginity (as a state and a commodity), marriage, gender fluidity and misogyny are given serious consideration in Arden 3.

Commissioning women editors does not necessarily ensure a feminist editor or feminist editing.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, more prominent contributions by women in Arden 3 and an increased consideration of feminist elements and the presence of female characters in the series draws attention to other opportunities for more balanced representation. For example, while the majority of Arden 3 character lists reflect the relative importance of characters regardless of gender, the series' decision to draw on extant lists from the First Folio produces the occasional list where all male characters appear before female characters, placing roles like Miranda and Desdemona after nameless mariners and gentlemen.⁹⁵ Attention to historical texts is an important feature of the Arden 3's editorial practice, but the silent privileging of textual history over representation has the potential to unintentionally reinforce historical gender hierarchies, especially when encountered by newer readers who are likely unaware of how such editorial decisions can influence their interpretations.

The contributions of women editors to the Arden 3 have shaped every facet of the series, setting an important precedent for further efforts to diversify the field of Shakespeare editing. A downside to this current series of changes is that they may be easily missed by the general

⁹⁴ A point emphasized by both Thompson and Gossett in their VERs.

⁹⁵ The list for *Much Ado*, drawn from Rowe's 1709 edition, classifies characters by rank and gender, listing Beatrice below Leonato, his brother Antonio and Hero and above Margaret, Ursula and a nameless 'Boy' of the household.

reader. Recent feminist book history stresses the importance of ‘writing [women’s] labour back into our histories’ not only as a way to combat women’s continued marginalization but also as a means of alerting us to the progress yet to be made.⁹⁶ Changes that are silently assimilated into a series’ general practice can erase their impact as markers of progress for anyone not familiar with earlier editions, lulling us into a sense that bias is a non-issue when there is still more to be done to diversify Shakespeare studies and editorial practice.

An additional example of the inclusive work that will hopefully continue to inform the Arden Shakespeare’s critical practice is Ayanna Thompson’s new introduction to Honigmann’s edition of *Othello*, published in 2016. Appearing nearly twenty years after the first edition, Thompson’s introduction was a welcome and long overdue update that brought the edition into line with contemporary literary critical discourse and classroom discussions. Clear in her intention that she ‘did not want there to be a doubt that the play engages with race in complex ways, and the tools we use to analyse race must be as complex’, Thompson brought a needed introduction to the methodology and application of critical race studies to the edition and the series.⁹⁷ Setting a necessary example for future scholarly editions, Thompson’s approach is driven by a call for readers and audiences to recognise of how the stories we bring to plays like *Othello* ‘will impact the way the play will be understood and performed’.⁹⁸ Encouraging readers ‘to be sceptical of adhering to one frame or one story’, Thompson highlights how questioning what we ‘know’ creates space for new and potentially unsettling perspectives. Most important, in preparing the way for readers to step out of their comfort zone, Thompson

⁹⁶ Kate Ozment, ‘Rationale for Feminist Bibliography’, *Textual Cultures*, 13.1 (2020), 149-78; p. 172.

⁹⁷ Ayanna Thompson, VER.

⁹⁸ Ayanna Thompson, ‘Introduction’, *Othello*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd Ser., rev. ed. (Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 2.

actively encourages reading with empathy: ‘to imagine if, when and how different readers and audience members were affected by these histories, contexts and performances’.⁹⁹

New perspectives not only change our readings, they also teach us to consider and learn from the experiences of others. Thompson’s introduction combines history, critical race theory and performance history to examine Shakespeare’s *Othello* through stories of inequality that are so necessary to our present as a global society and to our future as a scholarly field. Equally important, Ayanna Thompson’s presence as the first black woman editor for Arden is a significant moment of representation that will inspire more students of Shakespeare, particularly women of colour and other marginalised groups, to see themselves as the next generation of editors; an essential step for further diversity in Arden and in Shakespeare studies.

Conclusion: ‘What’s Past is Prologue’ (Again)

The life expectancy of an Arden Shakespeare edition is about 20 years, not even the span of time it took to publish the entire third series. Perhaps for this reason, editors envision modest legacies for their editions, hoping they will be dependable and spark further discussion. We cannot predict which editions will still stand as cornerstones of scholarship and editorial practice twenty years from now, but the third series offers a valuable record of where we have been as a field and a potential glimpse of where we might, and in some instances should, go.

⁹⁹ Thompson ‘Introduction’, *Othello*, p. 5.

The third series charts a generation of scholars using Shakespeare to engage with the more varied topics and wider readership that is modern Shakespeare studies. As the field continues to evolve, it will be vital that the Arden continue bringing new perspectives into the discourse. The third series made notable strides in this area by expanding its editorial roster, but there is still more work to be done to make the series truly represent the global field.

While early modern contexts still loom large in Arden 3 editions, Shakespeare is now also a means for reflecting on the challenges and opportunities of our own time, and viable editions need to provide readers access to these current discussions. Arden 3 responded to these changes, expanding its content to engage with major areas of new scholarship. The publication of revised editions with updated introductions was another welcome innovation, but it reveals the difficulty of keeping a scholarly edition relevant even for the time it takes to plan and produce its replacement. So long as the hard copy textbook dominates classrooms and libraries, remaining comprehensive and up to date will remain a challenge for future series.

Navigating increasingly complex ideas of authorship and textual production, the series also tested the resilience of scholarly editing. Perhaps the most traditional area of academic practice, the third series demonstrated editing's capacity to continually renegotiate the relationship between text, knowledge and reader. Changes in scholarly thinking and technology will continue to demand editors rethink their approaches, but editorial practices developed in the third series established a precedent for innovation and discipline while producing texts that engaged readers with the most exciting advances of early modern textual studies.

The successes of the Arden 3 were the result of an extended commitment from all involved to pursue new paths of scholarship and to confront editorial challenges, none of which could have been achieved without that most valuable resource – time. Editors across the series acknowledged how sabbaticals and fellowships provided needed time to complete their editions. With competition for such awards reaching unprecedented levels and sabbaticals not guaranteed at many institutions, not to mention the scores of precariously employed scholars with no institutional research support, the time necessary to complete an edition is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for many academics to secure. It prompts the question of how the next generation of Arden editors will manage, particularly in light of the urgent need for further diversity in scholarly editing. If we are to truly expand the image of the Shakespeare editor, researchers from a variety of backgrounds must be provided with equal access to the necessary time and resources required to produce an Arden Shakespeare edition. Since general editors and scholarly series cannot rely on traditional lines of support from foundations and institutions to do the work of expanding access, they will have to look elsewhere, perhaps closer to home or to resources not yet tapped to identify and support these new editors. Such schemes are aspirational, but the efforts of those involved in Arden 3 have taught us to aim for more, and that is a lesson worth embracing.