ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

SHAKESPEARE IN REWRITE

After four hundred years, scholars want to change the way we read "Hamlet."

BY RON ROSENBAUM

In 1997, when Harold Jenkins, the editor of the Arden "Hamlet," a leading scholarly edition of Shakespeare's play, went to see Kenneth Branagh's film version of "Hamlet," he was both excited and nervous. Sitting in his home two years later, Jenkins, who was then nearing ninety years old, grew animated as he described the suspense he felt as the film reached the moment, in the fourth act, when Laertes, huddling with Claudius, reacts to the news that Hamlet has returned to Denmark.

It's a speech in which Jenkins had made a crucial single-word change in his influential, encyclopedic edition of the play, and he wondered whether Branagh would adopt his emendation. "I listened to see what was coming," Jenkins told me. "What would Laertes *say*?"

Onscreen, Laertes, whose father, Polonius, has been killed by Hamlet, says:

> It warms the very sickness in my heart
> That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
> "Thus diest thou."

" 'Thus *diest* thou'! Yes!" Jenkins exclaimed with all the fervor of a soccer fan. "He got it right. And, of course, it is so much more effective."

Laertes doesn't say "Thus diest thou" in either of the two most substantial early printed texts of "Hamlet"—the 1604 "Good Quarto" and the 1623 Folio version. He says "Thus *didst* thou" in one and "Thus *diddest* thou" in the other.

But Jenkins believes that his Arden "Hamlet" recovers the word that Shakespeare originally wrote with his own hand—before it was "corrupted" through carelessness in the printing house or the playhouse. Jenkins claims that he has given us the word—"diest"—that Shakespeare intended.

It's not an inconsequential decision. "Hamlet" is, on one level, a drama about the ethics of revenge. "Thus didst thou" is merely an indictment; "Thus diest thou" is a vow of summary execution. And this is just one of hundreds of unresolved enigmas created by what has come to be known as the "textual problem" of "Hamlet."

Many people who have read "Hamlet" are not aware that the version they've read is a blended text, an artificial conflation of the differing printed texts from Shakespeare's time and immediately afterward. (There is also a third, less reputable version, known as the "Bad Quarto," but no extant manuscript in Shakespeare's hand.) Editors like Jenkins patch the play together from elements of the competing versions, threading them with conjectures and alterations of their own. This practice can obscure marked differences in the texts, and the result is a Hamlet who sometimes speaks in a blurred or bifurcated voice.

The uncertainties that "Hamlet" editors grapple with are critical to any experience of the play. Philip Edwards, who edited the New Cambridge "Hamlet," has written, "Everyone who wants to understand 'Hamlet' as reader, as actor, or director needs to understand the nature of the play's textual problems and needs to have his or her own view of them, however tentative."

Consider the famous phrase, as Jenkins renders it in his "Hamlet":

> O that this too too sullied flesh would
> melt,
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew.

It's the initial line of Hamlet's first soliloquy, his first attempt to define his despair. Here, again, Jenkins diverges from both the 1604 Quarto's "too too sallied flesh" and the 1623 Folio's "too too solid flesh," following instead a conjecture, first advanced in the nineteenth century, that "sullied" is what Shakespeare intended.

The single vowel at issue makes a difference in how we see Hamlet. "Too too sullied flesh" suggests that Hamlet's disgust is directed inward, at the ineradicable stain of his own sinful human nature. "Too too sallied" suggests a Hamlet who is overwhelmed and terrified by assaults from without. "Too too solid" is too obvious to some, and may carry an unfortunate suggestion that Hamlet has a body-image problem. Which Hamlet did Shakespeare intend to give us? Or did he revise his intentions?

The Arden Shakespeare, which is based in Britain, has long been regarded as the publisher of the most thorough scholarly editions of the plays, although it has serious rivals in the Oxford, Cambridge, and Norton editions. Arden editions attempt to be definitive, and the Arden editor is expected to make lasting judgments about the innumerable conjectures that surround virtually each line and phrase of each play.

The first Arden "Hamlet," edited by Edward Dowden, a Victorian scholar, was published in 1899 and was a standard reference for more than half a century. The second Arden version, the one edited by Jenkins, came out in 1982, and might be called the last Grand Unification "Hamlet"—the last attempt to integrate the conflicting texts. Considered old-fashioned by some, to others it is traditional in the best sense. The co-editor of the *Shakespeare Newsletter*, Thomas Pendleton, believes that it will remain a classic work, "an astonishing achievement that will serve readers for years to come."

Jenkins's nearly six-hundred-page compendium of "Hamlet" commentary, lore, and disputation is more seductive than forbidding. The text of "Hamlet" is sandwiched between about a hundred and fifty pages of erudite introductory commentary and a hundred and fifty pages of "Longer Notes," which are too voluminous to fit into even the footnote-stuffed pages of the text section. Jenkins's edition offers the delights of "Hamlet" and the delights of a "Pale Fire"-like

The conflicts are not just about the text of the play but about who Hamlet is—and what kind of artist Shakespeare was.

DAVID HUGHES

novel about "Hamlet" scholars. It reads like an epic novel, a narrative odyssey in which the main character is not Hamlet but "Hamlet"—the centuries-long voyage of the play through the mind of the West.

But a new Arden edition, which will replace Harold Jenkins's "Hamlet," is now approaching completion. The new edition promises to be controversial, because it will attempt to disentangle the conflated "Hamlet" texts. In doing so, it will give us a "Hamlet" that, for better or worse, speaks to us with three distinct voices, in three separate texts. The preëminent drama of the divided soul in Western civilization is about to be subdivided.

Among literary scholars, those—like Jenkins—who devote their lives to the intricacies of Shakespearean textual editing are accorded a mixture of awe and pity. This is especially true of "Hamlet" editors, who are responsible for the transmission of the closest thing there is to a sacred text in a secular culture. For centuries, editors of "Hamlet" have entered a garden of forking paths; some have sacrificed much of their lives to scrutinizing endlessly elusive enigmas. (Jenkins spent twenty-eight years constructing his Arden edition.) The fierce vexation at the heart of the "Hamlet" editors' calling has sometimes driven them to despair, self-destructive obsession, and early death.

But, for the past century, despite battles over which path to take, there has been a consensus on the goal: to reconstruct a Lost Archetype, the "Hamlet" closest to Shakespeare's "original in-

tentions." Fredson Bowers, one of the leading American figures in twentieth-century Shakespearean textual editing, coined a lovely, haunting phrase: "the veil of print." Bowers belonged to the school of the "new" or "scientific" bibliography, whose adherents believed that editors should attempt to discern, beneath that error-riddled veil, the true face of Shakespeare—to divine, from the fragmentary evidence, traces of the one true text.

That consensus has now been shattered. An influential faction of scholars has been arguing since the nineteen-eighties that the differing early editions of some of Shakespeare's major works—there are earlier and later versions of "King Lear," "Othello," and "Richard III," among others—represent not corruptions of a Lost Archetype but, rather, earlier and later drafts, reflecting Shakespeare's revisions and second thoughts as he prepared the plays for the stage. The Revisers, as they're sometimes called, argue that the drafts that have been mixed together need to be pulled apart, so that we can recover Shakespeare's "final intentions."

The Revisers have been winning converts. In 1986, the Oxford Complete Works edition of Shakespeare printed two versions of "King Lear" in a single volume—one faithful to the 1608 Quarto, and the other to the 1623 Folio. The Oxford version was highly controversial. "The Oxford editors should be *hanged*," Harold Bloom, the author of the best-selling book "Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human," exclaimed in a debate at the 92nd Street Y. But eleven years later the Norton Shakespeare, the leading American complete-works edition, produced under the supervision of Harvard's Stephen Greenblatt, published not two but three "Lear"s—two versions adopted from the Oxford edition as well as a third, conflated version.

The new Arden will present three versions of "Hamlet" printed back to back. It will not endorse the Reviser hypothesis; it will, instead, suggest that Shakespeare's intentions, original or final, are probably beyond recovery, so the texts should be treated as separate works of art, each with its own integrity. This radical step will, without a doubt, provoke renewed debate over what kind of play "Hamlet" is and what kind of artist Shakespeare was.

The Arden editors' approach is the product of scrupulous historical scholarship—and not a deconstructionist, literary theorist's conceit about textuality. But that will not diminish its impact on readers, who will no longer be certain which is the true "Hamlet." After four hundred years, some scholars are abandoning the effort to judge what belongs in "Hamlet" and what doesn't.

"Nice to meet you, Ted, and thanks for coming by on such short notice."

"Hamlet" seems to have been written sometime around 1599 or 1600, but it's not even clear whether Shakespeare was the first to write a play with that title. (There are reports of a lost predecessor play performed a decade earlier, called the "Ur-Hamlet" by scholars.) Of the two main versions, the 1604 Good Quarto, published a few years after the play was first staged (with Shakespeare playing the Ghost, according to legend), is the version that Harold Jenkins believes is closest to Shakespeare's lost handwritten manuscript. The First Folio version was published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, in a compendium of thirty-six of his plays assembled by his theatrical collaborators. This is the "Hamlet" that the Revisers believed was Shakespeare's version for the stage. ("Quarto" and "Folio" refer imprecisely to the size of the paper that plays were printed on. The smaller Quartos were usually one-play, paperback-like affairs; the Folio was about the size of an encyclopedia volume.)

Some of the differences between these two "Hamlet"s are dramatic. In the fourth act, the Quarto gives Hamlet a final, thirty-five-line soliloquy that begins:

> How all occasions do inform against me
> And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed?

The embittered meditation is spoken as he watches the armies of Fortinbras prepare to slaughter thousands "for an egg shell." The soliloquy is absent from the 1623 Folio.

To lose (or add) thirty-five of Hamlet's most self-lacerating lines—about "thinking too precisely," a kind of groundbreaking introspection, a self-consciousness about self-consciousness—can make a critical difference in our understanding of his evolution. In all, there are some two hundred and thirty lines in the Quarto that are absent from the Folio, including eighteen sustained passages, and some seventy lines in the Folio that are absent from the Quarto. Some of the

play's most famous phrases—"A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye," "the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets," "stars with trains of fire and dews of blood," "some vicious mole of nature," "that monster, custom," "the engineer hoist with his own petard," and "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"—are in one version but not the other. To choose the Quarto, for instance, is to gain "the pales and forts of reason" but to lose "Denmark's a prison."

But this does not begin to capture the subtle and distinctive effect of the hundreds of one- and two-word changes made within lines in the two versions. For instance, does Hamlet describe the skull of Yorick as "grinning" (Quarto) or "jeering" (Folio)? Does he cry out "O, Vengeance!" in the middle of his "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy, as he does in the Folio but not in the Quarto?

Further complicating matters is the third "Hamlet" text, the Bad Quarto, which was published in 1603 but was lost to scholars until 1823. (There are now only two known copies.) It's been called bad because it appears to be a truncated, unauthorized version of the play—a sort of seventeenth-century bootleg. The Good Quarto, published a year later, has about thirty-seven hundred lines and advertises itself on the title page as "Newly imprinted and enlarged to as much again as it was," only a slight exaggeration, since the Bad Quarto has some twenty-two hundred lines. Many of them sound like bad imitations of Shakespeare. The "To be or not to be" soliloquy, for instance, begins:

> To be or not to be; ay, there's the point.
> To die, to sleep: is that all? Ay all.
> No, to sleep, to dream; ay marry, there it goes.

Reviser partisans such as Eric Sams, the author of "The Real Shakespeare," and Steven Urkowitz, a professor at the City College of New York and one of the first to call for dividing "Lear," have argued that the Bad Quarto was not so much bad as very early—Shakespeare's youthful first draft. Sams believes it might be a version of the lost "Ur-Hamlet" itself. Nevertheless, many scholars, including Harold Jenkins, believe that the Bad Quarto is a "memorial reconstruction," composed not from any Shakespearean manuscript but from a recollection of a performance of "Hamlet," perhaps with the help of players on the road without a script, or reporters in the audience.

Nonetheless, Jenkins found the Bad Quarto helpful in resolving contradictions in the two more reputable texts. He used it, for instance, when he substituted "diest thou" for "didst thou" and "diddest thou." The Bad Quarto has it "thus he dies," and Jenkins reasoned that if this was a record of the play as it was heard onstage, or slightly misheard, the original verb was more likely to be "die" than "did." Jenkins also sees this as evidence that Shakespeare did not go through the Quarto with a revising hand. He told me that Shakespeare would never have changed the Quarto's "didst," which doesn't scan properly in iambic pentameter, to "diddest" merely to fix the metre: "Shakespeare would have *known* that 'didst' was a mistake for 'diest.' " Jenkins, I realized, had inhabited Shakespeare long enough to believe that he could, in effect, know his thoughts.

Harold Jenkins was a bit frail when I met with him in Finchley, a quiet old section of North London. He lived alone in a meticulous little cottage; his wife of forty-five years, Gladys, was killed in a car accident in 1984, two years after Jenkins's "Hamlet" finally appeared.

Jenkins told me that he attributed his sense of kinship to Shakespeare at least in part to his rural roots in the Midlands not far from Warwickshire, where Shakespeare grew up. Jenkins's father was a dairy farmer; Shakespeare's father, according to one local tradition, butchered calves to make gloves.

"I'm a country boy, and it was an essential part of my education in Shakespeare," Jenkins told me, as he prepared tea for us in the late-January London gloom. "When I think of his language—the buttercups and the lady-smocks and the marsh marigolds—these are things I was very familiar with as a child. I never see them now in London," he said. "I don't know when I've last seen the stars, whereas if you lived in the country you were terribly aware of the stars."

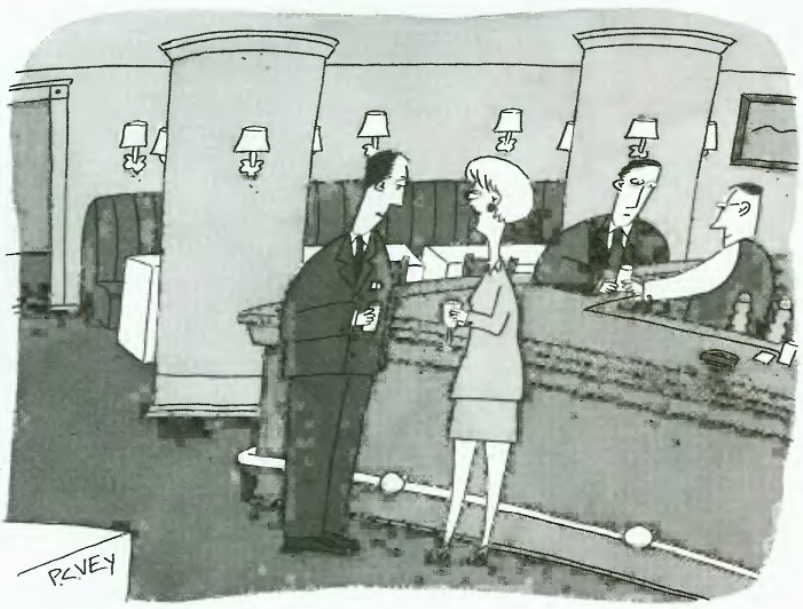
Jenkins began his academic career at University College London and rose to become Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. The chair had previously been held by a famous Shakespearean textual scholar, J. Dover Wilson, whose 1935 book, with the tongue-in-cheek title "What Happens in 'Hamlet,' " captures the persistence of controversy over the most basic questions about the play. Jenkins is considered one of the last great scientific bibliographers, scholars who painstakingly tried to reconstruct how Shakespeare's manuscripts were turned into printed texts. In doing so, they introduced a new cast of Shakespearean characters, the type-shop compositors, whose quirks they studied to determine whether a variant was the responsibility of erratic "Compositor E," for instance, or of Shakespeare himself.

Jenkins received the commission to produce a new Arden "Hamlet" in 1954. It brought him acclaim when it was finally published, then criticism, and now the threat of obsolescence. Just as his "Hamlet" was published, the Revisers were staging their coup in Shakespeare studies. "If Jenkins's edition had come out in the seventies, its reception would have been very different," Gary Taylor, the Oxford editor who divided "King Lear" in the eighties, told me. Taylor described the behind-the-scenes victory of his Reviser faction: "It's like there's been a revolution, but the rest of the country hasn't found out about it yet. And I think that maybe the new Arden edition, the three-text 'Hamlet,' will have the effect of making the rest of the world awake to the fact that the coup has happened."

At the time of my visit, Jenkins was not yet aware of the radical surgery that Arden was about to perform on his "Hamlet." A few days later, when I spoke to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, the editors of the new edition of "Hamlet," they told me that they had only recently made the decision themselves.

Still, Jenkins could summon vigor, passion, and a touch of bitterness when it came to defending the integrity of his work. He took much pleasure in pointing out to me that Harold Bloom, in his book on Shakespeare, had conspicuously chosen the Jenkins Arden for his citations from "Hamlet."

"Of course, all of the latest people think, Poor Jenkins, he's passé," Jenkins told me. "But I'm very skeptical. I'm quite sure the idea of Shakespeare as reviser has been much too readily accepted. They say, 'Well, if it was prepared for performance, Shakespeare was a member of the company, and he was there, so of



"They say I'm practical in bed."

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course he must have done it!' Well, it seems to be just as likely that Shakespeare, at the height of his inspiration, writes the play and writes too much, and in the end it's too long, and he knows it's too long, and he says, 'It's too long, just cut it.' And even if he did do the cutting it doesn't follow that therefore Shakespeare preferred it. There are plenty of instances of dramatists who are forced to cut, but it doesn't follow that this is how he would have wanted it."

When I asked Jenkins what he expected from the forthcoming Arden "Hamlet," he replied with characteristic elegiac gentility. "I suspect I won't like it," he said, sighing. "I suspect it will take an anti-Jenkins position." He said that he thought the new Arden co-editor, Ann Thompson, had it in for him on feminist grounds. She'd once criticized a note about Ophelia in his edition, in which he said that part of her tragedy was that she died a virgin. Thompson cited this as an example of how the male perspective dominated the editing of Shakespeare. But it didn't matter, Jenkins said: "I'm very old. I'm in my ninetieth year. I hope not to live to see it."

Toward the close of our conversation, I asked Jenkins what the editor who had given so much of his life to seeking the truths hidden beneath "Hamlet" 's "veil of print" would ask Shakespeare if he met him in the afterlife. "Well, I think I would ask him one or two things about the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy. I think it's all a little *wrong*. It doesn't seem to relate to the immediate context. I'd quite like to hear his view on it," Jenkins told me with a mischievous look. "And, yes, I'd like to ask him if he revised."

Jenkins died on January 4, 2000, less than a year after I spoke with him and well before the new Arden replaced his.

Did Shakespeare revise? The most obvious difference between the Good Quarto and the Folio is that two hundred and thirty or so lines in the Quarto appear to have been cut from the Folio. The Revisers argue that the more problematic difference is that seventy lines appear to have been added to the Folio. Cuts are far easier to explain away than additions that sound like Shakespeare.

One apparent addition to the Folio comes in Act IV, when Laertes, who has just arrived at Elsinore, demands from Claudius an explanation for his father's death. Ophelia enters, and Laertes glimpses for the first time his sister's grief-addled madness. He reacts with a speech that starts out as angry posturing:

> O heat, dry up my brains. Tears seven
> times salt
> Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye.

Ophelia then sings a gentle mad song. But, before she does, in the Folio edition, Laertes continues:

> Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine
> It sends some precious instance of itself
> After the thing it loves.

It is a passage whose tonal shift has puzzled commentators for centuries; its ethereal delicacy represents an abrupt change from the bloody-mindedness with which Laertes began. It's almost as if the passage opened with rhetoric from Shakespeare's earliest tragedy, "Titus Andronicus" ("O heat, dry up my brains" recalls Titus's "Sorrow . . . doth turn the heart to cinders"), and then shifted with almost no transition to the reconciliatory mode of "The Winter's Tale," one of his last plays, with its evocation of "great creating Nature." The addition of those lines about Nature sending a "precious instance" allows us to see a Laertes transported by his sister's grief to a register of speech that is rich and strange in that wistful, almost musical manner of the Late Romances, plays that Shakespeare wrote nearly a decade after "Hamlet." One could extrapolate a change not just in Laertes but in Shakespeare himself.

Jenkins found beauty in the "precious instance" passage, but not revision. Even though it seems to have been added to the Folio, he argued that many lines in Shakespeare's original lost manuscript for the Quarto were mistakenly omitted by the transcriber or the printing-shop compositor who set the Quarto into type. Perhaps an incidental line on the manuscript was mistaken for a deletion mark, and someone who caught the mistake later restored the "precious instance" passage in the Folio version. Thus the apparent addition of the passage wasn't a revision at all.

It sounds far-fetched, a justification for including lines that he happened to like. But Jenkins's affection has rescued a passage that for centuries suffered from the scorn of Samuel Johnson, one of Shakespeare's first and most opinion-

ated editors, whose lofty disdain for Shakespeare's occasional opacity and puns is still felt today. The "precious instance" passage could be omitted "without great loss," Johnson declared, because the lines "are obscure and affected."

Jenkins, on the contrary, took the passage to mean that "human nature, when in love, is exquisitely sensitive, and being so, it sends a precious part of itself as a token to follow the object of its love. Thus, the fineness of Ophelia's love is demonstrated when, after the loved one has gone, her mind goes too." Jenkins read into the lines a quiet tragedy of love, grief, and madness.

Different theories of the variations in the "Hamlet" texts also envision different Shakespeares—in particular, differences in the way he worked. There was the Shakespeare characterized by his contemporary admirer and rival Ben Jonson as a playwright who "never blotted a line"—who raced through manuscripts for theatrical production without looking back or revising. (This is the Shakespeare of "Shakespeare in Love.") Jonson, however, cattily added, "Would he had blotted a thousand."

Jenkins had a more reverential view. Commenting on the "irresponsible conjecture about Shakespeare's supposed revisions," he described him as "a supremely inventive poet who had no call to rework his previous plays when he could always move on to a new one."

Then there are the Shakespeares of the Revisers. Some of them see him as a deeply engaged "man of the stage"—a dramatist, primarily, rather than a poet, who was willing to cut and rewrite for purely theatrical effect. Others see him as revising for literary, linguistic, and stylistic reasons.

These alternative Shakespeare personae might reflect not so much conflicting as successive Shakespeares—a Shakespeare who revised *himself*. But Ann Thompson argues that, in any case, the different Shakespeares are blurred and lost in the conflated version of "Hamlet." She believes that by disentangling the linguistic DNA of the three texts the reader of her new edition will experience not just different versions of "Hamlet" but the different Shakespeares as well.

Barbara Mowat, the executive editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly* (who co-edited the New Folger Library "Hamlet" with Paul Werstine), calls the forthcoming divided Arden "Hamlet" the latest in a series of "paradigm shifts" in the approach to the variant versions of several of Shakespeare's plays. In the first centuries after Shakespeare, Mowat notes, scholars generally preferred the Folio versions. (The first conflated "Hamlet," published in 1709, was biased toward the Folio.) But by the late eighteenth century their favor had begun to shift to the earlier Quartos, and by the nineteen-thirties editors had come to believe that they represented Shakespeare's "original intentions." Then a new paradigm—the Revisers' search for Shakespeare's "final intentions"—led to a shift back to the Folio versions.

The new Arden, she told me, represents the emergence of "a new-new paradigm." It's a very "Hamlet"-like paradigm in its deliberate indecision—its refusal to choose or decide among alternatives.

When I spoke to Mowat at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C.—where she took me into the vaults that hold the world's largest collection of Quartos and Folios—I mentioned that I thought the best case for Shakespeare as a conscientious, even obsessive reviser of "Hamlet" was probably the one made by the Oxford poetry don John Jones. In his 1995 book "Shakespeare at Work," Jones does smart, subtle readings of the way the 1623 Folio evolved from the 1604 Quarto. "Then he must be very sure that the Quarto was written before the Folio," Mowat remarked acerbically. She cited a 1992 paper in *Shakespeare Quarterly* which argued that the Folio version was written first, though published later. In which case the Reviser partisans were reading the "revisions" backward.

All these uncertainties pose real difficulties for actors and directors. Consider the question of Hamlet's last words. As the play comes to an end, Hamlet has been wounded by a poisoned sword in his duel with Laertes. As he

"Look, I'm the bobblehead of this team."

dies, he tells Horatio that he has had a terrifying vision of the afterlife. "O, I could tell you," he begins. But there's no time, and it's too awful.

Then come Hamlet's last words: "The rest is silence."

And so it is—at least, in the 1604 Quarto. But in the 1623 Folio the line is written thus:

> The rest is silence. O, o, o, o.

We don't know whether Shakespeare added these hammy-looking "O-groans" (as they're known among scholars) or, as Harold Jenkins argues, they were the interpolation of some actor playing Hamlet who wanted to prolong his dying scene. How do we decide? The stakes are high; these are the last words of the most famous (and influential) character in Western literature.

The editor of the Oxford single-volume "Hamlet," G. R. Hibbard, who chose the Folio text as the basis of his edition for the sake of its "revisions," nevertheless balked at including the unsophisticated-looking O-groans that appear in the Folio. Implicitly condemning them as unworthy of the Bard, he cut them and substituted a stage direction, "*He gives a long sigh and dies*," words that Shakespeare never wrote.

Nonetheless, it is possible to imagine that Shakespeare wanted Hamlet to utter those final four "O"s. After all, he gives four O-groans to King Lear in the 1608 Quarto version of that play. Why deny them to Hamlet?

It's also true that actors have played the O-groans beautifully in the past. They can be transmuted from hollow-looking "O"s on the page to a tragic aria onstage, each note registering a deeper apprehension of pity and terror—Hamlet's final, wordless, four-syllable soliloquy of grief. (In the summer of 2000, at the reconstructed Globe in London, Mark Rylance played them that way.) Scholars such as Rutgers's Maurice Charney have suggested that the addition of O-groans could reflect the way Shakespeare changed as a dramatist, becoming more melodramatic, perhaps, even if there are some who do not approve of the change.

The O-groans can also be seen as a final embodiment of the play's tragic irony. Hamlet decrees, "The rest is silence," but instead of silence those final four "O"s are torn from him by a sorrow and pain beyond his conscious command. The O-groans (like the other thematic variants) are a kind of blank screen: theories projected on those hollow "O"s reflect the theorists' vision of who they think Hamlet (and Shakespeare) ought to be.

Ann Thompson, Harold Jenkins's successor, has a haunting memory of her first transformative experience of Shakespeare. She was a Bristol-born teen-ager growing up in Devon. "We had been taken as part of a school trip to an outdoor performance of 'Lear,' " she recalled when we met one recent afternoon in her office at King's College London. The performance took place on the Cornish coast, a site that evoked "Lear" 's Dover cliffs.

What struck Thompson most powerfully about the performance, she told me, was the disappearance of Cordelia: "I was fascinated to see the actress playing Cordelia, after she came offstage in the first act; it was in the round, so you could observe the actors before and after their entrances and exits. Cordelia has nothing to do between that exit in the first act and her reappearance as Queen of France an hour and a half later, at the end of the fourth act. And so I watched her emerge from backstage in a bathing suit, go down to the shore, and plunge into the water for a swim before returning to put on Cordelia's royal robes for her entry in Act IV. That fascinated me. I don't know why, but it did."

Tall and composed, Thompson, who is fifty-four years old, seems remarkably shy, punctuating many of her remarks with a self-effacing laugh. But, however soft-spoken she is, she has emerged with a powerful voice in her profession.

At first, she told me, she resisted being drawn into the textual-editing labyrinth. "I did my Ph.D. with Richard Proudfoot," she said. (Proudfoot, a specialist in apocryphal Shakespearean texts, is one of the three Arden general editors.) "He encouraged me to edit a relatively obscure apocryphal text, which I refused to do, working instead on Shakespeare's use of Chaucer. Several years later, I got into editing when I was invited to do 'The Taming of the Shrew' for the New Cambridge Shakespeare. I discovered I enjoyed editing." She had begun editing the Arden "Cymbeline" when Arden invited her to become a general editor, along with Proudfoot and Columbia's David Scott Kastan—a position of considerable influence in the world of Shakespeare studies.

Her rapid ascent, she told me, may in part have been a response to her critique of the male-dominated textual-editing establishment. "I had noticed how few women were involved in editing, and how they always did the same 'easy' Folio-only comedies," she said. "And I'd given a couple of conference papers on the topic, pointing out the absence of female editors of the major 'difficult' tragedies, so I more or less talked myself into editing 'Hamlet'—'Othello' and 'Lear' having already been assigned to senior male editors."

Thompson's assertiveness has caused grumbling among some "senior male editors." But the groundbreaking step she's taking in deconflating "Hamlet" should not be interpreted as an outgrowth of the gender wars. She has worked closely with male Shakespeare scholars; she made her "Hamlet"-text decision in collaboration with a colleague, Neil Taylor, whom she brought in as her co-editor on "Hamlet." (She has also co-edited a book, "Shakespeare: Meaning & Metaphor," with her husband, John O. Thompson, a film scholar.)

For two years after receiving her "Hamlet" assignment, in 1993, Thompson immersed herself in the play's textual problem. She came to the conclusion—as she told her fellow-editors at Arden in a heated confrontation—that it would be a mistake to do another conflated version of "Hamlet." "Harold Jenkins had already done that very well," she said. "I would not have wanted to edit 'Hamlet' if I had to do that. I would not have felt it was worth doing."

Her colleagues—and executives at Routledge, the publishing house that owned the Arden imprint at the time—had some practical concerns: the three-text version would be at least a thousand pages long, making it hard to sell to the college market as a single volume. Thompson proposed that it be packaged in two volumes, one with the Quarto and the introduction, and the other with the Folio and the Bad Quarto. After a struggle, she persuaded Arden to go ahead with the two-volume, three-text version. But some rival scholars have expressed dissent. Gary Taylor, the edi-

tor of the Oxford Complete Works "Hamlet," argues that including the Bad Quarto, whatever the rationale, gives unjustified prominence to what he is unafraid to call "a bad text." Including it, he says, amounts to "unediting."

Oxford's Stanley Wells once called for editors of courage to "take the risk" and divide "Hamlet" the way he and Gary Taylor had divided "Lear"—something they had avoided in their "Hamlet." Such multi-text editions, Wells said, had the potential to "open up the most illuminating discussion of Shakespeare's creative processes since the plays were first printed." But when I told him about the Arden decision, over tea in Mayfair recently, Wells sounded uneasy. He told me that a proliferation of "Hamlet"s might be "confusing to the general reader." And Frank Kermode, one of the most influential literary figures among Shakespeareans in the United Kingdom, staunchly defends the Lost Archetype theory, calling editors who seek to divide the plays the "new disintegrators."

Thompson's equanimity throughout these scholarly tempests is impressive. When I spoke with her, I felt there was something that set her apart from many of the adamant male partisans I'd spoken with: her remarkably open-minded and inclusive approach to the contentious "Hamlet" factions.

When I asked Thompson what she thought of Hamlet's final O-groans in the Folio, for instance, she cited Jenkins's conjecture that they may have been "playhouse interpolations" by an actor, but then added that this didn't necessarily (as Jenkins believed) disqualify them from consideration.

"Perhaps one can imagine Shakespeare having gone through a period of rehearsal, or having seen the thing performed and then tinkering with it afterward and thinking, Burbage did rather a good dying groan—I'll put that down to remind me," she said.

"But it's not always true that a revision is going to be for the better," she added. "Once the Oxford editors decided they wanted to base their 'Hamlet' on the Folio rather than the Quarto, on the theory that the Folio is Shakespeare's revision, you see them arguing, 'Of *course* Shakespeare made the correct decision to cut the "How all occasions do inform

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against me" soliloquy.' They find all sorts of reasons why it doesn't belong, why the play is better without it. Recent editors have become obsessed with the idea 'I have to have a theory of the text, and everything else follows from my theory.' "

Her stance defines the radical agnosticism of the new-new paradigm. "Publishing all three texts allows us to display the possibilities," she continued. "If you're going to publish one text, you're driven to exclude things."

This willingness to entertain conflicting theories was notable in several of the women I spoke with who were working on textual questions. I asked Thompson if her reluctance to try to prove that any one text was better than the others came from a feminist perspective.

"It's kind of nice to think so" was all she said.

Thompson told me about a paper she had recently published in *Shakespeare Quarterly* on the first "Hamlet" editor who counterposed all three texts of the play—Teena Rochfort-Smith, a Victorian prodigy. The daughter of an indigo planter and landowner, born in Calcutta in 1861, Rochfort-Smith was also one of the first women to enter the field.

At twenty-one, Rochfort-Smith took up professionally and romantically with Frederick James Furnivall, then fifty-seven, an original sponsor of the Oxford English Dictionary who had a penchant as well for sponsoring "young ladies' rowing clubs." Furnivall was a director of the "New Shakspere Society," a group dedicated to restoring Shakespeare's texts to what Furnivall considered to be their original purity. The Bad Quarto had come to light only about sixty years earlier, so Furnivall encouraged Rochfort-Smith to produce "a four-text edition of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' in Parallel Columns"—a comparative display of the three early-seventeenth-century "Hamlet" texts and a fourth, conflated one in four parallel columns on facing pages.

Thompson described the design Rochfort-Smith dreamed up as "a wonderfully complicated manuscript page that used four different colors of ink, three different forms of underlining, six varieties of type, and a formidable battery of asterisks, daggers, and other indicators to signal the variations in the four parallel texts." She looked through her files and retrieved photocopies of a few pages from Rochfort-Smith's four-text "Hamlet." The instructions for reading the Folio column's typographical signals are alone dizzying:

BLACK LETTER, where F1 differs from Q2. When this difference (if of word, and not of letter only) agrees with Q1, a dagger (†) is added. Differently spelt sounds are shown thus: F1 do, Q2 doE. (Thus F1 is collated with Q2, but not with Q1, except where F1 differs from Q2 and agrees with Q1.)

After working on her "Hamlet" for a year, and completing some three scenes, Rochfort-Smith was burned to death when her petticoats caught on fire, apparently while she was setting fire to some letters—Thompson suspects they were from Furnivall—with a candle. It was a "Hamlet" editor's death: consumed by letters (and, like Ophelia, Rochfort-Smith was killed by her clothes).

It is perhaps no accident that Thompson took time out from a pressing deadline for her own "Hamlet" to write an appreciative profile that helped rescue Rochfort-Smith from obscurity. Both were pioneering women in a male-dominated field, and both had the notion that the individual texts of "Hamlet" should be allowed to speak with their own voices. In a sense, Thompson's Arden is completing the work that Teena Rochfort-Smith began.

I asked Thompson if she identified in some way with her doomed predecessor. She just laughed softly and said, "It's a very sad story."

Once the decision has been made to allow the "Hamlet" texts to speak with their own voices, the question remains: How do these voices differ? Is the Hamlet who appears on the pages of the Quarto different in character—different, at least, in important degrees—from the Hamlet we find in the Folio?

Paul Werstine, co-editor of the New Folger Library and one of the most highly respected analysts of recent textual controversies, wrote that, with regard to "Lear," opponents of the Revisers "wondered, with some justification, why Shakespeare would undertake revision merely to adjust the roles of so many secondary characters," such as Albany and Edgar. When it came to the two main "Hamlets," however, "the same objection does not apply. No role varies so much between these two texts as does Hamlet's."

How are the Hamlets different? Scholars have argued that the Quarto's prince is everything from more stoic to more brutal to more tender than the Folio's. It is here that the textual designs of the sort that scholars like Rochfort-Smith have de-

vised can draw attention to thematic differences one might not otherwise notice.

In the Oxford single-volume edition of "Hamlet," for instance, G. R. Hibbard, who uses the Folio version as the main text, does something striking with the eighteen long and medium-length passages that appear in the Quarto but are absent from the Folio. He groups them together in an appendix, and, reading it, one can find a common theme: that of madness, or, at least, a higher degree of madness than in the Folio. In the Quarto, we find a level of madness "breaking down the pales and forts of reason," that "puts toys of desperation . . . into every brain," that will "dozy the arithmetic of memory." Hamlet tells Gertrude that, when she chose Claudius over Hamlet's father:

> Madness would not err
> Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd.

In other words, this level of madness goes beyond any ever witnessed. Or it did until for some reason it was lost in, or deliberately cut from, the Folio. In a play that is in some sense about the varieties and degrees of madness—the madness Hamlet feigned, the madness Hamlet felt, the madness that destroyed Ophelia, the madness Hamlet accuses his mother of—the absence or presence of these passages makes the two "Hamlet"s subtly different works of art.

Another provocative way of arraying the texts, one that dramatizes word-to-word differences, was devised by Bernice Kliman, the editor of the new variorum "Hamlet." A variorum is an edition of a classic work that attempts to record not just all the variations in the play but also the significant scholarly and literary commentary. The last "Hamlet" variorum was published in 1877, and illuminates the text with a penumbra of conjectures from three centuries of poets, scholars, and madmen. In 1987, the Modern Language Association gave Kliman the assignment to produce a new variorum. Kliman, who was at work on a three-text parallel-column version of "Hamlet," was a relative outsider; she had edited the *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter* and taught at Nassau Community College. But what she lacked in powerful institutional affiliations she made up for in textual ingenuity. Fifteen years later, she and her team, including co-editor Eric Rasmussen, are still years away from completing their work. But, meanwhile, Kliman has already found a solution to the problem of reading the two main texts together, which she calls "The Enfolded Hamlet."

I visited Kliman in her sunlit home office on Long Island's North Shore. She is an energetic woman in her sixties, with long, curly, graying black hair. We looked at an early version of "The Enfolded Hamlet," which was published as a special issue of the *Shakespeare Newsletter* in 1996 (and online at www.global-language.com/enfolded.html), and she showed me how she enfolds the texts, using some lines in which Hamlet speaks of the Ghost:

> There are more things in heaven and earth
> Horatio
> Than are dream't of in {your} <our>
> philosophie.

Here is how Kliman explains the initially confusing markings: "To unfold the Good Quarto, read all the words with no brackets and the words with curly brackets. To unfold the Folio version, read all the words with no brackets and the words in pointed brackets." (Other editions have used brackets on selected passages, but Kliman's version makes it possible to read all the differences this way.) The Quarto's "your philosophie" becomes the Folio's "our philosophie." Hamlet is now telling Horatio not only that he is in the dark but that all of us are in the dark.

Once you get used to enfoldment, it takes on the minimalist elegance of the solution to a complex chess problem. You catch things like Hamlet's change in tone when he speaks to Gertrude: "you question with {a wicked} <an idle> tongue." It's one of several instances in which the Folio softens Hamlet's attitude toward his mother—a change that even careful readers might gloss over but that Shakespeare, "The Enfolded Hamlet" suggests, seemed to worry over.

Kliman said that she did not intend to prove or disprove the Shakespeare-as-reviser hypothesis, or any of the other arguments that rage around the texts. She is one of those rare academics who have not lost a kind of celebratory joy in the literature they study. Her love for "Hamlet" is generous rather than jealous. "I love the infighting and the backbiting and the multiplicity of possibilities you find over the centuries," she told me. She plans to publish an online version of the entire "Hamlet" variorum, which, theoretically, could be expanded indefinitely. If Ann Thompson's Arden edition will be the "Hamlet" of the near future, Bernice Kliman's will be the "Hamlet" of the infinitely receding future.

Reading "The Enfolded Hamlet" is almost like attending a "Hamlet" rehearsal; one can imagine Shakespeare trying out alternative readings in the theatre of his mind. And it makes a more persuasive case than any academic treatise that, when we read the alternate versions of "Hamlet," we are catching glimpses of Shakespeare at work, Shakespeare hovering over the text and fine-tuning: Shakespeare in rewrite.

The Arden declaration that all "Hamlet" must be divided into three parts is likely to set off a new round of "Hamlet" wars. But the upheaval will produce more than scholarly fratricide; it will give all of us a new lens with which to look at the play. The conflicts are not just about the texts but about what "Hamlet" means and who Hamlet is.

The advent of the edition will make it dramatically clear that to read "Hamlet" is to make a choice between "Hamlet"s. There is, so to speak, no longer a default "Hamlet." Readers must decide which fork in the textual maze to take, becoming, in effect, their own directors. The new "Hamlet" is likely to introduce an era in which the mysteries of "Hamlet" are renewed—in which the play is experienced again, not as an ossified cultural monument, a compendium of famous quotations, but as a drama that must be constructed by the reader.

It may inspire some readers to go deeper into the play. It is likely to excite echoes and ripples in the expanding cosmos of the "Hamlet" variorum, that record of the love and madness of "Hamlet" scholars. Indeed, it may be no accident that so many of the variant "Hamlet" passages that offer traces suggestive of Shakespeare's revising hand involve meditations on the extremities of love and madness. The inspired obsessiveness of "Hamlet" scholars has deepened our sense of the play's inexhaustible mysteries. Hamlet's last words may be "The rest is silence." But "Hamlet" continues to speak. ♦