

**Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott
Kastan, and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds. 2020.**
The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works.
London: Bloomsbury Publishing

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The book under review is not the first Arden Shakespeare “complete works” (similar volumes had been issued since 2001 with texts from the Second Series, which were being replaced as new Third Series editions came out), but it is certainly the first to bring together all the texts prepared by the Third Series editors, under the magisterial guidance of Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan, and H. R. Woudhuysen. Since it is a compilation of previously published texts, the present review will focus on the book as a single-volume “complete works” publication (specifically in its paperback format), comparing it to editions available on the market such as *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Wells et al. 1986; 2005, 2nd edition), *Riverside Shakespeare* (Evans 1997, 2nd edition), *Norton Shakespeare* (Greenblatt 1997), *Complete Pelican Shakespeare* (Orgel and Braunmuller 2002), *The RSC Shakespeare Complete Works* (Bate and Rasmussen 2007), *Bevington’s Complete Works of Shakespeare* (2014, 7th edition), and the recent *Norton Shakespeare Third Edition* (Greenblatt 2016), and *New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition* (Taylor et al. 2016).

This Arden *Complete Works* does not simply reproduce the text in the individual editions of the series: it incorporates corrections and revisions “since their first publication [...] in their most recent form” (vi). This reviewer has checked that this claim is true in a few plays in which meticulous reviews (such as those by Eric Rasmussen for *Shakespeare Survey*) had noticed errors. In addition, this reviewer has compared two pages (chosen at random) from each play and group of poems and has seen two minor differences in punctuation in two plays (apart from the understandable renumbering of lines in prose scenes),¹ but systematic and more serious discrepancies in the use of

¹ In one of them, in *Henry IV Part Two*, “general,” with a comma (4.1.27) is printed

square brackets and parentheses in stage directions and act and scene headings: square brackets within and surrounding stage directions in the individual editions are frequently omitted; a few are added (e.g. “*They stab Caesar*” in Daniell’s individual *Julius Caesar*, 3.1.76, is printed “[*They stab Caesar*]”, thus wrongly suggesting an editorial addition when the stage direction is present in the 1623 folio [TLN 1287]); sometimes stage directions enclosed by parentheses are printed within square brackets instead; and square brackets framing act and scene headings in the right margin of the text are omitted throughout, except in *Sir Thomas More*.² The typographical devices (superscript letters, braces, curly brackets, sans serif font, marginal lines, and underlining) to signal textual variance are generally replicated, except in two plays. In *Titus Andronicus*, the *Complete Works* deploys superscripts Fs instead of sans serif font to mark up the added line 1.1.404 and the interpolated second scene of act 3. *Henry IV Part Two* does not print superscript Fs to frame “all alternative readings of single words or phrases adopted from F” in Bulman’s quarto-based edition (2016, 147), and of the eight extended Folio-only passages Bulman discusses in Appendix I of his individual edition (2016, 448) only six are enclosed by superscript Fs,³ while the Introduction to the play announces that “seven” passages are marked with superscript Fs (511).

As a print artefact, its design is functional and attractive; its height, width, and thickness are in line with *Oxford* and *Pelican*; it weighs just under two kilos (also like RSC); its paper is thick enough to eschew the risks of “bible” paper (used in the two *Norton* editions and *New Oxford*); and, at 1,504 pages, it ranks second after *Oxford* as the most paper-saving editions, a distant cry from the Falstaffian volumes of *Norton* (3,456 pages), *New Oxford* (3,381 pages), and the *Norton Third Edition* (3,536 pages). These slim dimensions have been achieved by printing the text in two columns per page throughout (except in the final glossary), and by having the smallest typeface of

“general:” with a colon in the *Complete Works* (531), a change that James Bulman, editor of the individual edition, does not acknowledge as his correction (private communication).

² Square brackets are preserved in the parallel act/scene divisions printed in the left margin in *Edward III*, *Hamlet* (the First Quarto and First Folio versions), *King Lear*, and *Titus Andronicus*.

³ The two passages without superscript Fs are 1.3.21–24 and 4.1.103–179.

the mentioned “rival” editions — compromising readability. All in all, it is a manageable and approachable book, among the most portable of the collected Shakespeares.

An unusual feature is the fact that the plays are printed in alphabetical order, in contrast to the chronological sequence in the *Oxford*, *New Oxford*, and the two *Norton* editions, and the arrangement by genre in *Riverside*, *Bevington*, and *RSC*. This system is an advantage for those consulting references in several works. The non-dramatic poetry precedes the plays, grouped like in the two corresponding individual editions, but from *Shakespeare's Poems*, only *Venus and Adonis*, *Rape of Lucrece*, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, and “The Phoenix and the Turtle” are included, leaving out seventeen short poems attributed to Shakespeare.

The plays included correspond to the individual editions, so that the volume offers the three *Hamlets* and full texts (and not only the Shakespearean fragments) of *Edward III*, *Sir Thomas More*, and Theobald's *Double Falsehood* as outstanding additions to the family, while it leaves the 1602 additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* (added in the recent *Norton Third Edition* and *New Oxford*), and the partly Shakespearean *Arden of Faversham* (incorporated in full into *New Oxford*) out of the “canon.”⁴ Thus, at least in number, the book can boast offering more attributable plays than its rivals.

While the *Arden Third Series* contributed to expand the Shakespeare canon, their covers did not promote the idea of Shakespeare as a collaborative dramatist, and this apathy about co-authorship is reflected in this volume of *Complete Works*: no other playwright is named in the table of contents or in the titles to the introductions to each play; in the general Introduction readers only learn of three plays “written in collaboration” (*Henry VIII*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the lost *Cardenio*), and that Shakespeare “seems also to have revised *Sir Thomas More*” (6); and only if readers peruse each play's introduction will they realize that *Timon of Athens*, *Pericles*, *Edward III*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Henry VI Part One* are collaborative.

As for the critical scholarship that this edition provides (leaving aside the criticism implied in the edited texts), readers may feel

⁴ This play, *Arden of Faversham*, has been published in 2022 in the *Arden Early Modern Drama* series, edited by Catherine Richardson.

disappointed if they associate Arden Shakespeare with extensive and richly informative introductions and learned and illuminating commentary notes at the foot of the page: in total it amounts to a sixteen-page general Introduction, a brief single-page introduction for each play, a bibliography, and a final glossary (there is no index). The Introduction is organized into six sections. "Why Shakespeare?" explains the cultural meanings of "Shakespeare" and implicitly reveals the continuing need to justify a new edition of Shakespeare. The conventional biographical chapter follows, and then sections on the theatrical and print industry contexts. "Shakespeare's Reading and Reading Shakespeare" focuses on sources and the problems readers may encounter with Shakespeare's language. Finally, "Afterlife" deals with how his works have been received in publication, performance, criticism, and as adapted and recreated. Overall it is instructive enough for the marketing concept behind the book: a lengthier introduction, like the one in *Riverside*, the two *Norton* editions or the *New Oxford* would have entailed a heavier book.

The single-page introductions preceding each play, the sonnets, and the other poems, brief readers on publication facts, probable date of composition, and sources; provide a concise critical appraisal and an account of the play's afterlife; and succinctly state the early text on which the edition is based. They are more informative than those in the 1986 and 2005 *Oxfords*, but less extensive than the essay-like introductions in *Riverside* and the *Norton* editions and less "personal" than Jonathan Bate's introductions for RSC, and Bevington's.

The glossary, with approximately 2,300 entries, is more profuse than the popular *Alexander Text* or the "select glossary" in *Oxford* (1986; 2005), but many phrases and lines that are best clarified through paraphrase will still be difficult if readers have to rely on the final glossary alone. The glosses contain very few phrases (e.g. "to dine with Duke Humphrey" = to go without dinner), and also cover mythological, biblical, and literary figures, placenames, cultural references (Lent, "Edward shovel-board" = a shilling from the reign of Edward VI), and words and phrases in languages other than English. Without engaging in the debate over the advantages and drawbacks of notes/commentaries as footnotes instead of in a glossary at the end (in Arden well placed at the very end of the book where it is easily found), the fact is that a "complete works" edition of Shakespeare

aiming at the student readership and not printing same-page notes is unusual: this is only the case in *Oxford*. One wonders if Arden/Bloomsbury sought to fill up the market niche left by the early *Oxford* editions, and bet the commercial success of their *Complete Works* on the prestige of the textual scholarship inherited from the Third Series, for which the back cover of the volume here reviewed proclaims to mark its completion with an apt quotation from *Troilus and Cressida*: “The end crowns all.”

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How to cite this review:

Tronch, Jesús. Review of Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan,
and H. R. Woundhuysen, eds., *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works*
(London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020). *SEDERI* 32 (2022): 138-143.

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