

obscured by the arrangement of chapters, and establish a European context, but do not entirely make up for the lack of an index. But despite any minor shortcomings this book has the potential to promote an informed interest in medieval German literature among audiences that would otherwise pass this rich field by without a glance; as such it is warmly to be welcomed.

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Gibson, Colin, ed., *Six Renaissance Tragedies*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997; paper; pp. xxxii, 527; R.R.P. £12.99.

The six tragedies edited by Colin Gibson are *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Doctor Faustus* (in the 'A' version), *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Changeling*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. In principle an anthology of these six plays, intended for 'undergraduate students of English Renaissance drama, general readers and theatre practitioners' (p. xxx) would be useful either if it broke new ground, or if it brought together in a convenient, effective way, and with full acknowledgements, valuable work already done by others. In what follows I shall examine Gibson's activity as an editor to show why I think that he does not succeed in either of these objectives.

His handling of the texts of the plays is, to put it mildly, puzzling. Gibson says: 'Square brackets are used in the texts to indicate substantive emendation or addition' (p. xxx). This method would, in theory, give readers an idea of significant editorial departures from the copy texts. However, although Gibson does use square brackets to indicate stage directions added by him, he does not do so to signal his numerous substantive alterations within the texts of the plays themselves. As he has also decided generally not to 'record the history

of and authority for necessary and substantive corrections made to the original texts' (p. xxx), readers are left guessing about where significant departures occur, on what basis they are introduced, and how original his handling of the texts is. It is thus left to specialist researchers to find out just what he has done, and to report to would-be purchasers what merit there is in his actions.

This is a laborious task, for which no reviewer will thank him, but I have carefully studied his text in the case of *The Changeling* (which I edited for New Mermaids in 1990), and less extensively in other cases. Gibson's text of *The Changeling* is, although he does not mention the fact, in the matter of substantives largely identical to that by N. W. Bawcutt, who edited the play for the Revels series in 1958. Thus he includes for example in Acts 1 and 2 the following substantive editorial readings which also occur in Bawcutt's text (readings which according to Gibson's own announcement should have occurred in square brackets): 1.1.97: Will't (Q [the 1653 Quarto]: Wilt); 1.1.108: of (Q: or); 1.2.118: I'll warrant you I make (Q: Ile warrant you make); 2.1.68: wilt (Q: wil't); 2.1.138: him, and (Q: him, in his passions, and); 2.2.7: locked (Q: lock). At least two of these readings are controversial. Bawcutt's feeble 'I'll warrant you I make' (1.2.118) was not used by any previous editor, and G. W. Williams's 'I warrant you I'll' (see his 1969 edition) is obviously superior but not even considered. As for retention of Q's 'in his passions' in 2.1.138, in my edition I showed why that makes sense in its context. But, on the whole, Gibson stays with Bawcutt through thick and thin. Thus, although *all* editors prior to Bawcutt, and e.g. my New Mermaid after him, reject Q's 'pluckt' in 2.1.46, and instead read 'plucks', Gibson endorses Bawcutt's 'pluck'd'. Gibson's loyalty to Bawcutt's substantives at times leads to comical results. Thus when De Flores says 'we are left in hell' (5.3.163), Gibson follows Bawcutt in the next line, staying with Q, making Vermandero say: 'We are all there; it circumscribes here.' But clearly this sentence is not

English, as generations of editors, pre- and post-Bawcutt, have realised. Amazingly, Gibson not only does not explain what 'it circumscribes here' could possibly mean, but misquotes his own text—and in the process offers the necessary emendation—in his Introduction, where he has 'it circumscribes us [my italics] here' (p. xvii).

Sensible emendations in editions other than Bawcutt's are rarely accepted—so infrequently that it would have been wise for Gibson to acknowledge general agreement, in the matter of substantives, with Bawcutt, and to record quite simply as special cases the few instances where he agrees with others. The most important instance occurs in 4.3.1, where Bawcutt has 'Oh heaven! Is this the waiting moon?' (following Q's nonsensical 'waiting') but Gibson adopts—in a rare sign of respect for post-1958 editors - Williams's obviously correct 'waxing' (as I also did in 1990).

Such an adoption, however, creates yet another problem in Gibson's general procedure. On p. xxx, Gibson explains that his substantive corrections of primary sources like Q 'may be conveniently studied in the textual collations provided in the Revels editions'. 'Conveniently' is in any case the wrong word, for Gibson does not tell us, either through square brackets or in any other way, where, in his texts, his corrections occur. However, a reader tenacious enough to go to Bawcutt's Revels text to compare that with Gibson's will in a case like this *not* find Gibson's reading in Bawcutt, as 'waxing' post-dates that edition.

Of course an edited and modernised text does not consist only of substantives. Matters like punctuation, too, are crucially important. Thus we find in 1.1.111-2 of *The Changeling*: 'Such to mine eyes is that same fellow there,/The same that report speaks of, the basilisk'. Here Gibson's comma in 'of, the' is derived from my 1990 edition, where it was used for the first time, and where I say: 'Q (though followed by eds) is surely wrong in printing 'of

the', not 'of, the'. At first one is pleased to find one's interpretation accepted—but not when one realises that Gibson does not acknowledge his debt.

How about his handling of other plays? The same sort of situation prevails there. The text of *The Spanish Tragedy* is much like that of the Revels edition by Philip Edwards (1958) and J. R. Mulryne's New Mermaids text (2nd ed., 1989): the differences in Gibson's texts are minimal and unimportant. Mulryne influences Gibson especially in the form of his modernisation. But Gibson also adds little to Mulryne's explanatory notes. Thus, in relation to 1.1.10 Gibson glosses 'possessed' as 'took as my lover' where Mulryne had 'made love to'; and in the next lines we may compare e.g. G's 'killed with frost' with M's 'destroyed by frost' and G's 'extinguished the flames' with M's 'extinguished the flame of'. There are important matters he omits which his predecessors offer; in *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1.2.6, where Ferdinand says, 'Who took the ring oftenest?', it is vital that we see, with the New Mermaids edition (3rd ed., 1993) and the Revels edition (1964) the sexual implication of which the speaker—and it seems Gibson—is unaware.

A further major problem with Gibson's volume is that, despite his bland General Introduction, he does not offer readings of the plays as individual works. Nowhere in his volume does he mention, for example, that Ferdinand's feeling for his sister is that of incestuous love which he represses, and which thus leads to his insanity. The general conclusion one inevitably comes to is that Gibson's intended readers will continue to be better served by using, for example, New Mermaids volumes or the 'Revels Student Editions' which have recently been appearing.

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